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Inclusion in International Schools: Achieving Academic Excellence AND Education for All

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Inclusion in International Schools: Achieving Academic Excellence AND Education for All

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Abstract

Inclusion of students with diverse learning profiles is a rapidly growing trend, yet no research exists on the implementation of inclusive programming in international schools. As diversity becomes more important in the globalized world and it becomes more important to equip all students with job skills for the modern age, international schools will need to provide effective and efficient programming for a wide variety of learning profiles. At the same time, international schools must provide students with a high-quality academic education that yields top measurable results in order to ensure that their students remain competitive in an ever more competitive college admissions process.

This qualitative study compared inclusive programming in four international schools. Content analysis, interviews, and observations provided data to compare both the classroom and the schools as units of analysis, focusing on effective policy and practice, and how schools are successfully adapting to their unique social and cultural contexts.

The results of this study indicate that inclusion of diverse learners looks different in different international schools according to their demographics. The European schools in this study placed more emphasis on diverse learning profiles, while the Asian schools placed more emphasis on linguistic diversity. The Asian schools included a wider range of learners in the lower grades, while emphasis in the upper grades shifted to academic excellence. Schools creatively leveraged available resources to overcome potential barriers. Co-teaching is being widely used, and teachers are excited about this model both to support students and as a model of professional development.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the hundreds of students who have inspired me with their resilience and courage. You have enriched my understanding of humanity with your unique viewpoints, and the richness and diversity you bring to your schools helps build the foundation for a kinder, more tolerant future for us all.

The schools in this study have been code named after rare semi-precious stones. Like these gems, these students have each taken the common elements of the teenage experience, been placed under extreme pressure, and emerged as unique, beautiful individuals.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem

Schools today are challenged to deliver a rigorous education that is accessible to all students. For students with special learning needs, inclusive reform efforts have demanded that schools recognize the human right of all students to be educated alongside their peers (Hornby, 2015). Yet schools must also provide a high-quality education that enables students to compete in the ever more competitive college admissions process and global marketplace (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, & Bereded-Samuel, 2010a; Powell, 2011). International schools face special pressures and challenges in implementing inclusion because of their particular demographic, social, and economic positioning. An examination of these paradoxes in this unique context brings the possibility of an expanded comparative viewpoint to improve inclusive education (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014) for students with special needs and their peers in public, private, and international schools.

Despite the lack of research on inclusion in international schools, the need to understand inclusion is likely to increase in coming years. As the number of students with disabilities is rising worldwide, more students are being served in inclusive settings (McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2012). Effective inclusive programs have been shown to be an optimal educational setting for many students (Curcic, 2009; Liasidou, 2015; Peters, 2003). Kavale and Forness (2000) estimated that already 95% of students with exceptional needs worldwide are included in mainstream settings, but it is debatable if the implementation of inclusive programming is as effective as it could be, or if inclusion is being used as a veneer to mask ineffective educational models (Liasidou, 2015).

The implementation of effective inclusive programming is fraught with difficulties. Numerous models of diagnosing and categorizing who gets academic support often depend on a

combination of psychological deficits, economic disadvantage, and social inequality (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2010; Bierman & Powell, 2016; Liasidou, 2012). Trends in service delivery models shift rapidly in response to outside social, economic, and political factors (Liasidou, 2015), which are beyond the control of the school. Moreover, the current research base is limited and contradictory (McLeskey et al., 2014), leaving educational leaders with little guidance.

In this era of innovation and reform, international schools occupy a singular niche. The international school population is neither economically nor socially disadvantaged (Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016), narrowing the focus of academic support programs to those with psychological deficits and providing a unique vantage point on special education. This study explored inclusive programs in internationals schools through a case study of the policies and practices of four inclusive programs in different settings in order to aid education systems attain a wider perspective to generate innovative solutions and to expand the research base for international schools. The results of this study will enlighten educators to the possibilities of inclusion, describe different methods and solutions used by schools to serve exceptional learners, and inform the discussion on the most effective ways to deliver education to all students.

Background of the Study

Serving students with diverse learning needs has increasingly become a focus of the global education community in recent years (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Curcic, 2009; Gorannson & Nilhom, 2014; Mitchell, 2010; Norwich, 2008). Since the 1994 Salamanca Conference propelled inclusion to the forefront of discussion in international education, educators have risen to the challenge to move towards a vision of more equitable education for all students by implementing inclusive educational programs (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010;

Curcic, 2009).

Although inclusive reforms have been gaining momentum since the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, recently education systems around the world have responded to renewed urgency from a wave of international treaties and accords (Carrington, Tangen, & Beutel, 2018). Most notable was the 1994 Salamanca treaty, which called for education systems around the world to include all learners as a matter of social justice (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Curcic, 2009) and made inclusion the dominant theme in special education today (Gorannson & Nilhom, 2014; Mitchell, 2010). Driven by new conceptualizations of inclusion for all marginalized peoples, disability categorizations are moving from a medical model, which regards disability as a biological deficit, towards a social model, which focuses on constructive relationships between the learner and the education system (Berryman, Ford, Nevin, & SooHoo, 2015). Education systems are embracing models of human empowerment and schools are rising to the challenge to work towards the maximization of human potential for every student (Gidley et al., 2010a; Hornby, 2015; Liasidou, 2015).

Education systems must become more effective in empowering students with disabilities, because the number of students diagnosed with disabilities in the United States and other countries has risen dramatically (McLeskey et al., 2012; Powell, 2018). The costs of disability to the public are significant (World Health Organization, 2011), and the costs are even greater for those who cannot access education (World Bank, 2013). Inclusion has been found to be the most economical solution (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011; Peters, 2003) to increase access to education and the most effective means of integrating these youth into society (United Nations Education, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 1994). Inclusion has already increased dramatically in the last few decades, and it is likely to continue to increase. In the United States, 33.91% of students

with disabilities were educated in general education classrooms in 1990, but that number had increased to 65.47% by 2007 (McLeskey et al., 2012). This trend is likely to continue.

While schools and policy makers around the world are attempting to implement inclusive education programming to answer a moral call for social justice (Engelbrecht, Savolainen, Nel, Koskela, & Okkolin, 2017; Liasidou, 2012), the modern era poses a number of barriers. Neoliberal market reforms, in response to economic shifts in Western countries after the collapse of communism, have led to higher expectations for academic achievement and increased accountability for schools; but students who learn differently do not always fit the popular profile of an ideal, competitive worker (Liasidou, 2015). The demand for top quality education stands in apparent opposition to calls for universal access (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, & Bereded-Samuel, 2010b). The rapid pace of modernity pressures teachers to teach more content, separating high achieving students from students whose strengths are not academic, subtly reproducing hierarchies of ableism (Naraian, 2014). Teachers and educational leaders strive to produce "successful" citizens, in the image of success fostered by the current hegemony. This image may not include learners with different strengths, skills, and abilities. At the same time that educational systems are under pressure to include more learners in their conception of success, they must also prepare students for a competitive college application process and an unforeseeable future job market.

Schools hoping to implement effective strategies for the education of a broader spectrum of learners must contend with rapidly shifting trends in education (Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robson, 1999**)** and an inadequate research base for evaluating effective models of special and inclusive education (Hornby, 2015; McLeskey et al., 2014). International schools face a particular problem in designing and implementing inclusive

programs, as no research has been done on special education in this setting. These schools face a number of paradoxes created by shifting socio-economic factors, conflicting cultural contexts, and their unique population demographic. In addition to informing international schools, research in this context would provide a unique lens and wider comparative frame to inform other schools of effective inclusive programs.

Statement of the Problem

The goals of the Education for All movement have been making access to education more equitable and distributing rights more fairly to improve access, participation, and outcomes for all students (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). These efforts have been made because research has shown students with special needs achieve better outcomes when they are educated alongside their peers in inclusive educational settings (Curcic, 2009; Liasidou, 2015; Topping, 2012). Additionally, inclusion can result in better outcomes for all learners by improving the quality of instruction (Liasidou, 2015; McLeskey et al., 2014; Robo, 2014; Topping, 2012) because inclusive programs enable schools to manage the learning differences of all students (Clark et al., 1999) and support a broader acceptance of all humanity (Jokinen, 2018). As globalization blends countries, cultures, and people, schools will need to continue to find new ways to celebrate diversity through inclusion (Armstrong et al., 2010; Flem et al., 2004). Building a better research base to implement inclusion will help international schools implement effective inclusion.

Public, private, and international schools need to focus on inclusion because exclusion and inadequate education for marginalized groups have negative economic and social ramifications that will become harder for society to ignore (World Bank, 2013). The World Bank (2013) claimed that excluding people with disabilities from education has "deleterious

consequences for human capital development" (p. 2). In particular, access to higher education has become an important entry requirement for access to labor markets (Pfahl & Powell, 2011; Powell, 2016; Powell, 2018), making it crucial for students with disabilities to obtain an education that enables them to avoid economic marginalization through "[lifelong] disablement and reduced life chances" (Bierman & Powell, 2016, p. 210). Further consequences of social exclusion include the (re)production of inequalities destructive to economic growth, loss of economic productivity due to lack of access to the labor market, occupational segregation, conflicts between marginalized and non-marginalized community members, mental illness, loss of social capital, and even potential violence against those who are marginalized (World Bank, 2013). Without an adequate education, many excluded people may not be able to contribute to the labor market and forced onto social welfare (Powell, 2018).

Even though many educational systems claim to have inclusive policies, exclusive and ineffective practices often remain (Capper & Young, 2014; Curcic, 2009; Flem et al., 2004; Kavale, 2007; Kozleski et al., 2011; Liasidou, 2015). More broadly, educational systems face political, social, and ideological resistance to inclusive reforms (Powell, 2011). Students are granted access, but not full participation. As one example, sometimes students with disabilities are placed in a mainstream class without any support or tailored instruction, a process Liasidou (2015) termed "maindumping." As another example, sometimes students are physically placed in a mainstream class, only to work on a separate curriculum with an aide (Curcic, 2009). Liasidou (2015) further noted that some institutions use inclusion as a "veneer" (Liasidou, 2015, p. 25) to bolster the status quo, rather than to challenge fundamental educational inequalities because real change might threaten existing power structures. Truly implementing inclusion goes deeper than just reversing exclusive policies and entails confronting negative assumptions,

stereotypes, and beliefs (Liasidou, 2015). Schools need whole-school reforms to shift away from the medical model that focuses on student deficits to a social model that focuses on the mismatch between the learner and the school (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Flem et al., 2004; Pfahl & Powell, 2011; Zaretsky, 2005**).** Public, private, and international schools need research on successful transformations to enable access, participation, and empowerment for all students.

Schools need to work toward more effective educational strategies, both for marginalized students and non-marginalized students, in order for inclusion to be effective (Flem et al., 2004). Though a number of models of inclusion exist, the research base on the effectiveness of these models is unclear or lacking (Clark et al., 1999; Hornby, 2015; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016). Amor et al. (2018) found specifically that studies on effective interventions implemented in inclusive settings is lacking. Research in special education is hindered by the lack of a consistent conceptual basis due to differing definitions, the lack of empirically based studies, the lack of solid research methodology, and the lack of longitudinal studies (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014).

Moreover, little or no research exists specific to international schools, leaving these school leaders with little guidance in choosing among numerous educational trends that are rapidly shifting in response to morphing socio-political influences (Liasidou, 2015) in a turbulent policy environment (Armstrong et al., 2010; Clark et al., 1999). This is especially important when one considers that research on international schools will further help public school leaders refine their inclusive programs to attain higher outcomes by widening the comparative frame to international settings to allow new perspectives, paradigms, and solutions to emerge.

While the need to shift toward a more effective inclusive model is clearly beneficial, schools face many barriers in implementing reforms (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010). Special

education is highly influenced by cultural, social, economic, and political factors (Armstrong et

al., 2010; Richardson & Powell, 2011), and international schools must mitigate these shifting

markets (MacDonald, 2006) and educational landscapes (Bunnell et al., 2016). Schools must

choose from a wide variety of service delivery models, such as mainstreaming, integration, co-

teaching, response to intervention, and universal design for learning. These models change with

educational trends (Kiuppis, 2016), but lack a sufficient research base on their efficacy

(Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Ronaldo, 2010).

Another barrier is that stigmatizing attitudes and subtle biases can impair a school's

ability and willingness to include all students in mainstream classes (Hornby, 2015; Liasidou,

2015; Mariga, McConkey, & Myezwa, 2014; Norwich, 2008; Powell, 2016). Researchers have

found much of the reluctance to embrace diverse learners stems from a lack of training and skills

on the part of teachers and administrators (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Chan &

Yuen, 2015; European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities [EASPD],

2012; Hornby, 2015; Yan & Sin, 2015). Moreover, Naraian (2014) concluded existing teacher

training programs are ineffective to fully prepare teachers to include learners with ever more

diverse learning needs. Finally, inclusion is problematic because of the labelling dilemma:

labeling a student as having a disability can lead to social exclusion, yet a formal label is

required in order to access services (Liasidou, 2015; Powell, 2016).

Finally, a lack of resources is another critical barrier to schools in implementing

inclusion. Specifically, a lack of instructional and planning time may be another critical issue for

the success of inclusion (Liasidou, 2015; Tarr, Tsokova, & Takkunen, 2012).

Globalization in the postmodern world has created special paradoxes for international

schools. Definitions of disabilities, systems of categorizing learning needs, and the meaning of

inclusion differ from country to country (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Liasidou, 2015; Powell, 2016), creating conflicting expectations for international schools. The lack of an agreed upon definition of success and outcome measures for accountability in special education (Armstrong et al., 2010; Kavale, 2007; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010) makes it difficult for international schools to assess if they have reached their goal of inclusion and high standards of education for those with disabilities.

Interconnectedness between parents, community partners, outside resources, and the school is critical to the success of special education (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Dunn, 1968; Ekins, 2015; Mariga et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2018), yet international schools may be isolated from the surrounding community culturally, socially, and linguistically. Many cultures have fears and taboos about disabilities (Hornby, 2015), so students with disabilities must make a difficult decision when they seek a formal diagnosis to access services. Private international schools are further isolated because they are not generally bound by many of the educational laws of their home country or their host country (Bunnell et al., 2016), and so they are under no legal imperative to implement inclusion. Researchers have noted that change proceeds more quickly in countries with strong centralized governments (Richardson & Powell, 2011) or strong institutions (World Bank, 2013), as legal mandates are often the driving force of reform (Peters, 2003; Powell, 2016). Schools in a decentralized system face a heightened potential for parent conflicts (Richardson & Powell, 2011) because parents feel the need to advocate for their students' rights in the absence of legal mandates.

Another critical paradox for international schools operating in today's competitive globalized markets is the demand to maintain high academic standards and a good reputation so that students can compete for postsecondary placements (Gidley et al., 2010a), while at the same

time including learners who do not fit the idealized profile of a successful global market

competitor (Peters, 2003). Furthermore, international schools may not be able to offer the

continuum of services that would enhance inclusion (Hornby, 2015; Zaretsky, 2005) and allow

them to offer services to both high-performing students and those who need extra help.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of inclusive programs in

international schools. The comparisons from this research examined the supports and barriers

for implementing inclusive reforms in schools of different sizes in different cultural contexts.

Research Questions

Research question #1. What factors, if any, influence inclusive programming in high

school programs in international schools?

Subquestion #1. How do size and social, political, economic, and cultural contexts

influence programming?

Research question #2. What are characteristics of a successful, inclusive classroom?

Subquestion #2. What are the supports and barriers to implementing inclusion in high

school learning support programs in international schools?

Significance of the Study

With the paramount need to implement effective models of inclusive education, this

study intended to fill the research gap to help schools better implement inclusive education.

Successful, inclusive schools are not well documented in the literature generally. McLeskey et

al. (2014) noted that only one case study of a highly successful, highly inclusive school existed

in the literature. Studies on effective programs for international schools are lacking completely.

Expanding the limited research that has been done on inclusion to other contexts is critical to research in the field of education (McLeskey et al., 2014) because educators need models of successful, highly inclusive schools upon which to base their programming. Furthermore, research on schools in the United States should be bolstered by research on American international schools. This outside perspective would lend new insights to existing barriers and suggest solutions from other contexts. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) argued for the necessity of "an international comparative framework, so that a general knowledge base that sheds light on the issues and tensions in the conceptualization as well as the implementation of inclusive education in general-education classrooms in dissimilar contexts" (Engelbrecht et al., 2017, p. 688). Furthermore, McLeskey et al. (2012) called for further research on the efficacy of inclusion in improving student outcomes in inclusive settings.

The aim of this study was to inform international schools of more effective ways to implement inclusion. By examining both large and small schools in both Western and non-Western contexts, this comparative case study shed light on the range of options available in inclusion, helped schools tailor their offerings to their unique circumstances, and guided stakeholders in evaluating the efficacy of their programs based on the needs of their constituencies. These findings specifically helped schools better understand teacher practice, leadership models, allocation of resources, school policy, and the influence of local culture. By understanding the complex interactions of the many elements necessary for inclusion, this study helped international schools improve their programs.

These findings are important to the broader field of education because many characteristics of international schools are shared by public and private schools. This research study may give teachers, administrators, and policy makers a wider, more robust lens to design,

implement, and evaluate inclusive programming in public and private schools. McLeskey et al. (2014) specifically called for more research on successful, highly inclusive schools in diverse contexts. Inclusion is complicated because special education tends to encompass disability, disadvantage, social marginalization, and inequality (Bierman & Powell, 2016). By studying international schools, this research focused on only the first factor, allowing educators to understand the intricacies of including students with disabilities with fewer mediating variables. At the same time, inclusion in public and private schools is sometimes complicated by the wide racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of their students. This diversity is a hallmark of international schools. This study was designed to help schools define what success looks like for diverse learners to shape assessment and accountability measures.

More broadly, this research intended to inform educators how to manage an educational trend that is growing. These findings are further important to the practice of education because efforts to improve inclusion for marginalized groups will benefit all learners and future citizens (Peters, 2003). As the need for special education and inclusion increases, schools will need to find ways to make the most effective use of resources to serve a wide range of learners (Björn, Aro, Koponen, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2018). Inclusive programs are more cost effective (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011) and enable schools to manage the learning differences of a wide range of students (Clark et al., 1999), resulting in higher outcomes for all students (Idol, 2006). Inclusive reforms help schools restructure their learning cultures, policies, and practices to celebrate the diversity of all learners (Mariga et al., 2014; Warnock, 2010). Liasidou (2015) pointed to the high outcomes that have been documented as a major motivation for schools to increase inclusive efforts. For example, Tremblay (2013) found in a study of the outcomes of co-teaching that students with learning disabilities in co-taught classrooms scored higher in reading/writing

than students in separate special education classrooms. In a report for the World Bank, Peters (2003) pointed to many districts and countries that have attained higher outcomes through implementing inclusion. Beyond academics, schools pass cultural norms and social standards to the next generations. Including students with disabilities in mainstream classes paves the way for peer acceptance (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016) and later social inclusion in the community. Anderson (2015) explained, "Only as fear of disability is reduced through increased knowledge and living in community with persons who have a disability will the gifts these individuals have and are be appreciated" (Anderson, 2015, p. 194). This study aimed to explore a variety of academic and social inclusion programs for other schools to follow.

Finally, this study intended to guide discussion about the ways current educational structures marginalize certain groups and provoke thoughtful action towards more equitable educational opportunities for all learners. Comparative case studies of special education models show how school systems reproduce inequalities and can shed light on "the (re)production of educational inequality and dis/ability in the process of appropriating the right to inclusive education in diverse contexts" (Bierman & Powell, 2016, p. 226). This research used two comparative axes, size and setting, to illuminate how programming can be restructured to move towards academic and social inclusion. Removing the barriers to academic and social inclusion combats discriminatory attitudes, builds an inclusive society, and moves toward achieving education for all (United Nations Education, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 1994).

Rationale

International schools wanting to implement inclusive programs lack a research basis to implement evidence-based programs (McLeskey et al., 2014). While researchers have studied inclusion in American public schools and in public schools in other countries, inclusion in

international schools has not been studied. Schools run the risk of sacrificing quality instruction

for the appearance of education for all **(**Kauffman & Badar, 2014**)**. These authors criticized

schools implementing thoughtless inclusion, "In itself, inclusion might be considered 'a bridge to

nowhere' for instructional purposes, as it does not address special education's core issue"

(Kauffman & Badar, 2014, p. 14), which is the adequate education of students with diverse

learning needs. Inclusion can be used as an excuse for failing schools to avoid confronting and

solving real problems (Armstrong et al., 2010; Liasidou, 2015). Without further research on

effective inclusive education models that help students achieve high outcomes, international

schools will not be able to fulfill their moral and social duties.

Definition of Terms

Conflicting definitions of inclusion are prevalent in the international scene (Peters, 2003)

and a more thorough discussion of terms can be found in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

Inclusion. This study will use the definition of inclusion stated in the 1994 Salamanca

treaty, "The fundamental principle of the inclusive schools is that all children should learn

together, whenever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have" (United

Nations Education, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 1994, p. 11). Specifically, this study

will explore schools and classrooms where students with a wide variety of learning profiles are

educated together with their peers. This includes "raising achievement through the presence

(access to education), participation (quality of the learning experience) and achievement

(learning processes and outcomes) of all learners" (European Agency for Special Needs and

Inclusive Education [EASNIE], 2014, p. 11).

International schools. This study will focus exclusively on the type of international

school defined by Bunnell et al. (2016) that is privately funded, has a large cultural mix of

children, and focuses on offering education to globally mobile families.

This study will seek private schools in foreign countries that follow an American model. These schools use a challenging college preparatory curriculum such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or Advanced Placement (AP) curricula. Instruction in these schools is in English.

Disabilities. This study will use a definition of disability based on the social model, which defines disability as the result of the interrelationship among individual impairment, the individual's response to these circumstances, and the social/educational environment (Hosking, 2008), which results in a student's need for extra support to access the curriculum.

Assumptions and Limitations

Self-disclosure is important to judge the credibility of any study, as no research can ever be completely objective (Orcher, 2014). This researcher has worked in special education for fifteen years. She worked for six years in a life skills program in a large, Midwestern, suburban district, which took great pride in their innovative strides to include students with moderate to severe disabilities in high-achieving, mainstreamed classrooms. She worked for six years in an alternative school in Asia with many students who could not be admitted to more selective schools or who had been asked to leave those schools. Finally, she worked for three years in an international school in the Middle East, which focused on high academic results and used a co-teaching model to support inclusion.

These experiences have given the researcher depth of insight into the nuances of special and inclusive education. This study aims to investigate the supports and barriers to inclusion and how effective, inclusive classrooms operate but does not aim to determine if students with

special needs should be educated in international schools or if inclusion is the best method of instruction.

The researcher assumed that all administrators and teachers have good intentions to provide the best education to all students. The assumption underpinning this study was that all students are capable of learning and that all teachers are capable of teaching, given the proper supports. Furthermore, this work rested on the premise that it is worthwhile to work around barriers to inclusion and to provide the best possible education to all learners. The researcher believes that administrators and teachers share this assumption.

The study's scope was limited to classrooms and schools through interviews with teachers and administrators and did not attempt to interview students or parents. The sample in this study was limited to four international schools and was not intended to be generalized. No comparison with local schools was attempted. The study did not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, but rather described the programs and explored possibilities.

Nature of the Study

This chapter presented the growth in inclusive education worldwide and the need for more research on successful, inclusive programs (McLeskey et al., 2014). While it is clear that inclusion is a dominant theme in education today (Mitchell, 2010) and that students with exceptional learning needs benefit from access to inclusive programs (Curcic, 2009; Liasidou, 2015), a number of barriers exist to implementing inclusive reforms. The need is particularly critical for international schools, where no research currently exists on the effective implementation of inclusive reforms.

This comparative case study explored the implementation of inclusion in four international schools. This study used data from document analysis, interviews, and

observations to report a thick, rich description of schools and classrooms that have successfully included learners with a variety of needs. Because school policy forms the basis for classroom practice, and the classroom is where learning occurs for most students, both the school and the classroom as units should also be analyzed. By comparing schools of different sizes in different cultures, this study informed the discussion of effective inclusive programming, broadened perspectives on inclusion, generated new ideas to overcome barriers, and fostered increased support for a diversity of learners.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This chapter introduced the current research study. Chapter two presents a review of the current literature. Chapter three describes the research design, theoretical framework, methodology, limitations, and ethical considerations. Chapter four reports the findings of the case studies. Chapter five addresses conclusions and implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

History of Reform Movements

Inclusion has become "One of the most dominant and controversial issues confronting educators around the world today" (Mitchell, 2010, p. 15). A steadily increasing trend in the number of students needing extra support to access educational opportunities has forced schools to expand their services to include support for students with exceptional needs (Hedegaard-Soerensen, Jensen, & Tofteng, 2018).

The trend toward inclusive educational reforms in special education in the United States and other Western countries can be traced back to the late 1800s, when segregated schools and asylums educated the blind and deaf to prepare them for the labor market (Powell, 2016). This represented a reversal of the discrimination that was institutionalized during the period when industrial capitalism began to flourish and social Darwinism held sway (Barnes, 2012). These schools represented the first steps in the Education for All movement, but they remained separate schools, strictly segregated from the mainstream (Powell, 2016). Education for those with special needs at that time was driven by the question of how much education should be given to the working classes for them to engage in the economy (Tomlinson, 2012). Veterans returning from the world wars drew increased public attention to the plight of disabled people, which necessitated the enactment of a more robust disability policy to fill a moral obligation (Barnes, 2012; Powell, 2016). For example, in the United Kingdom in 1946 only 2% of students were enrolled in special education, but that number had increased to 20% by 1970.

Segregation and exclusion of those with special needs gradually declined until the 1960s, when the rise of the Civil Rights movement encouraged the growth of disability advocacy groups (Powell, 2016). Concerns at that time were closely related to over-representation of racial

minorities in segregated classes, the stigma associated with labeling, and the impingement on human rights to those denied an equal education (Florian, 2014). At the same time, the Independent Living Movement was gaining a foothold in the United States (Barnes, 2012). The ensuing policy, which was based on litigation, mandated specific rights for students (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). Marketplace principles, such as standards-based reform and accountability, also began to influence educational policy (Florian, 2014). Although the paradigm to define and classify disabilities began to shift from a medical model, where flaws are located within the child, to a social model, where the problem stems from a mismatch among individuals, institutions, and social structures (Powell, 2016), definitions of disability rooted in deficit remain today. Goodley (2013) described this as a movement to "sever the causal link between the body and disability" (p. 634).

The debate intensified in 1968 when Lloyd Dunn wrote an article entitled "Special Education for the Mentally Retarded -- Is Much of It Justifiable?", questioning the morality and effectiveness of segregated educational settings (Dunn, 1968; Lindsay, 2007). This article and the subsequent controversy fueled the reform movement by drawing public awareness to the potential of inclusive education (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Some argued, however, that Dunn created a rift between groups advocating for rights for people with disabilities and the Civil Rights Movement by suggesting the overrepresentation of minorities in classes for the mentally retarded was biologically and genetically based (Semmel, Gerber, & MacMillan, 1994). This overrepresentation continues today.

Legislative action in the United States soon followed. The United States led the world in formalizing mainstreaming efforts when Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). Legislators reauthorized the bill in 1990

as the Individuals with Disabilities Act, which mandated placement for students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (Kavale & Forness, 2000; McLeskey et al., 2012; Norwich, 2008**).** In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which mandated strict accountability from schools in the form of standardized testing and highly qualified teachers (Annamma, Boelé, Moore, & Klingner, 2013; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010). This act required schools to document and be accountable for annual yearly progress for all students, including those with disabilities, with exemptions for only a small percentage of students (McLeskey et al., 2012; Mintrop & Zane, 2017). Some would argue that social justice motivated the move towards inclusion, but Tomlinson (2012) posited that since the 1980s, capitalist, marketplace ideology has impelled reforms with the hope that improved schools would lead to national prosperity.

On an international level, many conferences have called for action to educate students in inclusive settings (Bierman & Powell, 2016). Two of the most influential conferences were the Salamanca Conference of 1994 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2005 (Bierman & Powell, 2016). The 1994 Salamanca Conference brought international attention to the moral imperative for inclusion and called upon signatories to increase efforts to adequately educate all students (Curcic, 2009; Kiuppis, 2016; Mitchell, 2010; Richardson & Powell, 2011). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2006 further emphasized accessibility and mandated inclusion (Armstrong et al., 2010; Powell, 2011). Other conferences and treaties include the 1978 Warnock Report, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, the 1993 Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the 2000 Framework from the World Education Forum in Dakar, the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2008 International Conference on

Education by UNESCO (Amor et al, 2018; Anastasiou & Keller, 2011). The United Nations declared 1981 to be the International Year of Disabled Persons, and the World Bank has adopted "mainstreaming disability" as its official policy (Barnes, 2012). As a result of these international conferences and treaties, education systems around the world have begun implementing inclusive reforms.

Contextual Factors: Modern Trends and the Rapid Pace of Change

Although inclusion has become special education's dominant theme in the modern age (Mitchell, 2010), it is intimately related to context (Lim & Thaver, 2014). As Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) explained, "Values and principles have to be enacted in particular institutional contexts, nested within particular local and national policy circumstances, and that this can make it far from obvious how they should be put into practice" (p. 3). Some contend this trend has emerged as a response to new categories of disabilities (Mitchell, 2010; Powell, 2016), such as attention deficit disorders and other health impairments (McLeskey et al., 2012). The U.S. Department of Education noted that the increase in overall numbers of students being served in special education between 1976-1977 and 2004-2005 was mostly due to the rise in students diagnosed with learning disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Students labeled as Other Health Impaired have also risen dramatically, due to the rise in students diagnosed with attention deficit disorders (McLeskey et al., 2012). The rise in students needing special education support has led to a paradoxical increase in both the percent of students in inclusive settings and the number of students in segregated settings (Powell, 2011).

Inclusive reforms have necessitated a paradigm shift in the definition and categorization of students with special needs (Berryman et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2010; Peters, 2003; Zaretsky, 2005). Special education was once based on a medical diagnosis, which labeled students based

on disabilities that could be treated or cured by a doctor. Sailor, McCart, and Choi (2018) argued that the medical model was adopted by Congress in the United States after heavy lobbying from the educational testing industry. Traces of *mental measurement* techniques from psychologists of the twentieth century are still strongly felt in definitions of disability (Tomlinson, 2012). The economic need of a thriving capitalist system, which needed to convert manufacturing jobs to service-based jobs, further bolstered the adoption of a medical model. The medical model emphasized diagnosis and medical testing and supported employment for large multi-disciplinary teams.

In recent times, inclusion has been nurtured by a shift from a deficit model to a social model (Berryman et al., 2015; Hornby, 2015) or a socio-cultural model (Gibson, 2012), both of which regard disabilities as the result of environmental barriers and mismatches between the child and the education system. Oliver coined the term *social model of disability* in 1981 after American universities began forging the field of disability studies (Barnes, 2012). Topping (2012) described how the paradigms of policy makers have become more "ecosystemic" (p. 11), acknowledging the complex interaction of multiple variables in the shaping of students' educational experience. Liasidou (2015) explained how the medical model hampers inclusion efforts by focusing attention on the pathology of the child and ignoring socio-cultural underpinnings and institutional failures. Barnes (2012) explained the drawbacks of the medical model in that it further disables by drawing attention to limitations of the person, whereas the social model draws attention to the limitations caused by "disabling environments, barriers, and cultures" (Barnes, 2012, p. 18).

Inclusive schools have adopted a social or a socio-political model to reduce attitudinal, institutional, societal, and environmental barriers (Kusuma-Powell & Powell, 2016). Thinking

has shifted away from -emic conceptions of disability, that focus on problems within the child, to -etic perspectives that focus on flaws in the system (Naraian, 2014). Sailor et al. (2018) described this as the Human Capability Model, which encourages schools to focus on allocating resources to make sure that each student achieves his or her maximum potential and can contribute to the economy.

The advent of Critical Disability Theory, which parallels Critical Race Theory and Critical Feminist Theory, has reinforced this shift (Hosking, 2008). Goodley (2013) used a Marxist model to trace the development of Critical Disability Theory. In the early years of capitalism, manufacturing and machinery replaced the role of people with disabilities in small industries. With increased industrialization and migration, people unable to compete in the workforce became unemployed and impoverished. As capitalism advanced, the human services industry grew, and the people who had been excluded demanded their rights to live in the mainstream (Goodley, 2013). Critical theories call into question how existing power structures in schools continue to promote marginalization and the dominance of the current hegemony (Brantlinger, 2006; Liasidou, 2015; Nguyen, 2010). The questions raised by Critical Disability Theory are meant to illuminate issues relevant to all members of society. As Goodley (2013) explained, "Disability is the space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all" (p. 157).

Critical Disability Theory calls on a sense of social justice to motivate schools to implement inclusive reforms (Gidley et al., 2010; Naraian, 2014). This conception of social justice demands that schools go beyond granting access to those with special needs and promote active and equitable participation for people who had been marginalized (Naraian, 2014). Critical Disability Theory is linked to human empowerment models, which demand that schools

help all students reach their full potential. These models have facilitated a drive for social

inclusion, the idea that people should be fully accepted and included in all facets of community

life, has become an important outcome in education reforms today (Gidley et al., 2010a). Barnes

(2012) pointed out that the political attention given to disability as a status has fostered a

burgeoning culture and arts movement.

Some researchers also point to economic factors to explain the rise of inclusive reforms.

Neoliberal reforms have dramatically altered the socio-economic world for which schools must

prepare students (Larsen, 2016; Liasidou, 2015). At the end of the Cold War, the capitalist

economic model of market competition and individualism encouraged neoliberal reforms and

marked the beginning of intensified market demands for higher academic outcomes (Nguyen,

2010). Neoliberalism called for governments to remove regulations and social welfare and allow

markets to operate freely (Marling & Baker, 2012). Parallel movements can be seen in schools

in the form of vouchers for private schools, high-stakes standardized testing, data-driven

decisions, charter schools, single-sex schools, prescribed curricula, deprofessionalization of

teachers, accountability, alternative teacher certification, the rise of the tutoring industry,

backlash against teachers' unions, deregulation, competition, and removing funding from public

schools (Lakes & Carter, 2011; Marling & Baker, 2012). Neoliberalists hoped that subjecting

schools to market forces would encourage innovation and improvement (Marling & Baker,

2012), but students with disabilities have been put at a disadvantage. Neoliberal trends reinforce

schools for high-achieving students and remove the regulations that protect the rights of those

needing extra support (Marling & Baker, 2012). Furthermore, societies are finding they can no

longer afford to support large sections of populations who do not have access to the job market

(Tomlinson, 2012).

Shifting competitive markets have framed inclusion in economic terms and caused schools to embrace inclusion models that use human empowerment as a means of economic mobilization (Gidley et al., 2010a; 2010b). Schools are now under intense pressure to produce better academic outcomes to prepare students for a highly competitive, globalized workforce (Liasidou, 2015; Powell, 2016). Tomlinson (2012) argued that special education was created as a means of social control to separate students who were not able or willing to compete in a system designed to create elites. Access to secondary education is becoming both more critical for access to the labor market and more selective. Schools must align with economic demands for "effectiveness, value for money and competitiveness" (Liasidou, 2012, p. 174). Neoliberal reforms have strengthened existing social, economic, and cultural gaps in schools (Marling & Baker, 2012), marginalized groups, and disadvantaged students who are at higher risk of being excluded from economic and educational opportunities (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Curcic, 2009). In the wake of these market shifts, inclusion has become a means of poverty prevention (Robo, 2014), as well as the solution to the paradox of education for all and improved academic outcomes (Tomlinson, 2012).

The economic reality of globalization necessitates that education systems increase efforts to reach marginalized groups, including people with disabilities and minorities (Berryman et al., 2015), since globalization emphasizes the contributions of diverse cultures. This poses a challenge to special education reform efforts, which must overcome the stigma many cultures place on disabilities (Meynert, 2014). At the same time, racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities are overrepresented in special education programs around the world (Mitchell, 2010; Powell, 2016). As reform efforts have taken hold worldwide, inclusion has become more about adapting to the needs of all learners, not just those with diagnosed disabilities (Clark et al., 1999; Robo,

2014), and providing the best possible education for all future citizens. Powell (2016) suggested that despite its checkered past with racial minorities, America has emerged as a forerunner of inclusive reforms, and he pointed to America's founding as an immigrant nation with the motto *e pluribus unum* "from many to one" as one reason it has led inclusive reforms.

Not only have schools in the United States taken an active stance in promoting inclusion, but the number of international schools worldwide operating with an American curriculum and philosophy has increased dramatically in recent years as well (Bunnell et al., 2016; MacDonald, 2006; Wechsler, 2017). In 2011, 2.5 million students attended international schools, a number which grew to 4.2 million in 2016 and is expected to increase to 8.26 million by 2025 (Bunnel et al., 2016). Neoliberal reforms have led to increased competition among education institutions in general (Larsen, 2016) while globalization and the boom in new schools has forced international schools into even starker competition in an emerging market (MacDonald, 2006).   The changing market may impact the need for international schools to adapt inclusive education.

The need for a higher standard of education for all learners, including rising numbers of students with disabilities, has diffused around the world to public, private, and international schools. Powell (2016) suggested three mechanisms of institutional diffusion to explain the spread of inclusive education: mimetic, normative, and regulative. In response to uncertainty, organizations will copy other successful organizations (mimetic), attempt to follow established best practice (normative), or conform to external regulations (regulative). These mechanisms help to explain how and why certain schools do or do not adopt inclusion.

Today's Post-Digital Renaissance Age is one of rapid change and ideological trends that affect the vision, policy, and practice of inclusion. Anxiety-provoking shifts in modern life include job outsourcing, downsizing, and trade agreements (Lakes & Carter, 2011). To combat

these anxieties, schools are held to higher standards of effectiveness in today's environment, as school are the "shock absorbers for societal change" (Carrington & Robinson, 2004, p. 142).

Caveats on Definitions of Terms

  Inclusion. Inclusion has many different meanings, and differing conceptions of what inclusion entails can create problems for educational systems (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014) and has hindered the development of a research base (Lindsay, 2007). Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, and Christensen (2007) called inclusion an idea that "has outpaced its practice" (p. 57). The definition of inclusion can be interpreted broadly as a statement of desired outcomes and educational philosophy (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014) or simply as one school for all children (Jokinen, 2018). The concept of inclusion is further muddled because the literature has focused on three separate approaches: student-centered issues about placement, school-centered issues about structure, and teacher-centered issues about pedagogical practice (Florian, 2014). Furthermore, Kiuppis (2016) explained that inclusion could refer to a word, a term, an idea, or a pedagogical concept; because the concept has become widespread in many different contexts it has gained diverse and often contradictory meanings.

  The myriad ways of defining inclusion can be encapsulated in the question: "Inclusion for whom, into what and for what purpose?" (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spangadou, 2010, p. 31), but the debate surrounding the definition of inclusion is becoming ever more unclear. Definitions are heavily dependent on policy and can become fragmented though different implementations (Armstrong et al., 2010). Ainscow et al. (2006) noted six different types of definitions of inclusion: education of students with a diagnosed disability or special educational need, a response to segregation for disciplinary reasons, inclusion for vulnerable or marginalized groups, schooling for all, Education for All, and a general educational philosophy. They further

argued that thinking in England focuses on the first type of definition, but the concept of inclusion is no longer limited to students with disabilities, but now includes gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, socio-economic, gifted, and age diversity (Dare & Nowicki, 2018).

Inclusion is more complicated than the opposite of exclusion (Robo, 2014), and inclusive reforms are different than mainstreaming or regular education initiatives. Inclusion involves actively combatting exclusionary paradigms and practices (Ainscow et al., 2006). According to Kavale and Forness (2000), mainstreaming fulfilled the least restrictive environment mandate by providing access to education. As reformers sought more inclusive placements, the regular education initiative pivoted on the assumption that students are more alike than different. Inclusion focuses on high incidence disabilities with the goal of reducing special education services (Kavale & Forness, 2000). Inclusive education moves beyond deficit-based models of students with disabilities towards a more comprehensive approach to meet the needs of all students (Amor et al., 2018). Rapid development of new types of schools and the increased collaboration between segregated schools and mainstream schools further blurs the opposition between inclusion and segregation (Lindsay, 2007).

Hornby (2015) discussed the important difference between inclusive education and special education. His definition of inclusive education is similar to Kavale and Forness's (2000) definition of mainstreaming, whereas special education focuses on tailoring instruction to individual needs, also when separate instruction may be needed in segregated settings. Special education offers students with exceptional learning needs the flexibility to tailor instruction to fit their individual learning needs (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016), while inclusive education offers students access to their peers. Modern reform efforts seek to bridge this gap

(Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016). Jokinen (2018) pointed out that in the case of deaf and

blind students, instruction must be delivered in the most appropriate language and modes of

communication in order for students to access the curriculum and for the placement to be truly

inclusive. The debate whether inclusive education or special education is better for students with

disabilities is a critical point of contention, especially for international schools.

Goransson and Nilhom (2014) reviewed the literature on definitions of inclusion and found four categories of definitions: placement definitions, specified individual need definitions, general individualized definitions, and community definitions. Placement definitions are common but inadequate in the literature and in practice. For example, in their comparative case study, Buli-Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016) defined inclusion: "Inclusive Education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community" (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016, p. 119). Amor et al. (2018) argued that placement definitions substitute integration for inclusion to avoid a shift in practice because integration implies that the child adapts to the school. Lindsay (2007) argued the term integration is politically neutral, whereas inclusion is rights based. This implies the school should adapt to the needs of the child and is more contentious. On the other hand, Warnock (2010) stated that the intended usage of the term "integration" in the 1978 Warnock report denoted an ideal classroom with "children living peacefully beside each other" with their "differences recognized" (Warnock, 2010, p. 125). Such an ideal world did not come into existence as a result of the report, although many children were placed in mainstream classes. Many argue that being physically present in a classroom is insufficient, but schools should ensure that all children can access the curriculum successfully and celebrate diversity of all students (Topping, 2012) so that everyone feels accepted (Dare & Nowicki, 2018).

On the other end of the spectrum, a community definition of inclusion overlaps with the drive for social inclusion. Gidley et al. (2010a) explained the importance of social inclusion, which encapsulates notions of equity and equality that penetrate to the core of what is understood as democracy. "Increasing social inclusion is about human rights, egalitarianism of opportunity, human dignity, and fairness for all … its primary aim is to enable all human beings to participate

fully in society with respect for their human dignity" (Gidley et al., 2010a, p. 134). The sociocultural theory underpinning social inclusion derives from the work of Vygotsky and is linked to critical theory (Gibson, 2012).

Warnock (2010) remained skeptical of the value of social inclusion, as focusing on social outcomes detracts attention from educational goals. She argued that inclusive reforms were the result of anti-discrimination legislation being linked with special educational needs, and that inclusion is "connected with citizens' rights, not needs" (Warnock, 2010, p. 133). The debate over definitions of inclusion highlights the power dynamic underpinning who belongs in the mainstream in a democratic society (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014). Discussion of including those in the margins of society can only be made by those in power in the center (Florian, 2014). Thus, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s idea of integration remains a dream: "the ultimate goal of our national community" (Capper & Young, 2014, p. 159).

International schools. The definition of international schools lacks universal agreement, as any school could add the word international to its name (MacDonald, 2006). Bunnel et al. (2016) explained that in recent years there has been a rapid growth in the number of schools that are located in foreign countries and call themselves international schools because they use an English curriculum. These authors distinguished three types of international schools: traditional, ideological, and non-traditional. The traditional type is privately funded, has a large cultural mix of children, and focuses on offering education to globally mobile families. The ideological school focuses on educating internationally minded citizens, and these schools may enrich their curriculum with international curricula such as the International Baccalaureate. A third, more recent addition to the market is the non-traditional school. These schools are privately owned, make a profit for their shareholders, and enroll mostly local students (Bunnell et al., 2016). The

newly created market competition is one of the contextual factors that has created tension for learning support in international schools.

Disabilities. Because of the ever-evolving nature of special education and disability, these terms are dynamic and difficult to define. The World Health Organization (2011) noted that conflicting classifications and categorizations have made even collecting data on people with disabilities difficult. Tomlinson (2012) noted that although many definitions remain rooted in physical or sensory disabilities, students with social, cultural, or economic disadvantages continue to be predominant in special education programs.

How one defines disability depends on if one adopts a medical or social model. Medical models hold the disability to be located within the child (Naraian, 2014). An example of a medical definition is the definition from the American with Disabilities Act (ADA):

> An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009, para. 3)

The United Kingdom defines disability as "all children who have developmental differences that affect: their learning, their behavioral, emotional and social development; their communication; and their ability to care for themselves and gain independence" (Lindsay, 2007, p. 3). Although this definition was intended to replace disability categories, categories are still used in policy and practice. The definition was intended to define severity without a categorical basis but is still closely linked to politics (Lindsay, 2007).

The United States has started using the term exceptional or exceptionality to encompass learning differences on both sides of the spectrum, including both physical and mental

differences. Learners can also be twice exceptional or dual exceptional, being both gifted and disabled (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011).

In Europe and the United Kingdom, the wording special educational needs (SEN) is widely used as an alternative to disability. The term was introduced by the Warnock Report in 1978 (Lindsay, 2007), which concluded that a more positive, more encompassing, less categorical approach was needed:

> We wish to see a more positive approach, and we have adopted the concept of SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED, seen not in terms of a particular disability which a child may be judged to have, but in relation to everything about him, his abilities as well as his disabilities — indeed all the factors which have a bearing on his educational progress. (Warnock, 1978, p. 37)

Some countries extend this concept to cover other vulnerable or marginalized groups such as nomadic or immigrant, lower caste, economically deprived, homeless, racial minority, and gifted and talented children (Lindsay, 2007). However, 32 years after the publication of this report, the chairperson of the committee wrote that she is surprised that efforts to move to a non-categorical system have failed. People prefer familiar ways of speaking. She traced how the terms used in her report were first shortened to abbreviations, then changed to adjectives. English speakers place adjectives before the noun.   She claimed the final blow to the intentions of her report was the joining of the disability movement with anti-discrimination legislation, which qualitatively shifted the focus away from celebrating diversity (Warnock, 2010).

Many others have argued for non-categorical definitions. Ainscow et al. (2006) argued that categorically based definitions can be used to obscure over-representation of racial and cultural minority groups. Farrell (2010) proposed a dimensional scheme to define disability. The

first axis consists of functioning and health limitations, while the second level consists of interactions between the individual and the environment. He argued that such a scheme would avoid unnecessary categorizations. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Europe suggested a three level model: students with physical or sensory impairments, students with learning problems, and students marginalized through economic or cultural disadvantage (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010).

Contemporary Models of Learning Support

Schools must take care to implement models of inclusion that are most effective for students. Because of the lack of conceptual clarity regarding concepts of inclusion, "all manner of activity can be passed off as inclusive" (Florian & Spratt, 2013, p. 120). Liasidou (2015) described how school systems sometimes use inclusion as a "veneer" (Liasidou, 2015, p. 25) to hide ineffective or exclusionary practices, which caused critics like Hornby (2015) to question the differences and advantages of inclusion over special, segregated education. Although many researchers have found that students in inclusive settings have higher learning outcomes than excluded students (Capper & Young, 2014; Curcic, 2009; Liasidou, 2015; Peters, 2003), other research is unclear about outcomes and advantages (Amor et al., 2018).

Armstrong et al. (2010) suggested three perspectives schools can use to consider advantages and disadvantages: an organizational perspective, a principled perspective, and a political perspective. Implementation can be viewed from an organizational perspective, focusing on increasing access and participation. To demonstrate the principled perspective, the authors pointed to the seminal *Index for Inclusion* of Ainscow et al. (2010), which guides schools in focusing on allocating resources to meet certain values. Reform efforts can also be seen from

a political perspective, where inclusion is a process of continuous change in a shifting policy environment.

Instructional techniques. Schools must choose from a wide variety of practical options and teaching strategies (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010), but they lack an adequate research base to make informed decisions (Amor et al., 2018; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Clark et al., 1999; Hornby, 2015; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Peters, 2003). Florian and Spratt (2013) noted there is a distinct lack of guidance on classroom implementation due to conceptual confusion.

Mitchell (2018) identified a number of techniques commonly used in classrooms serving learners with special needs. Techniques applicable to international schools, relevant research, and Hattie's effect sizes from 2018 are synthesized below. Hattie's effect sizes are derived from a meta-analysis of 1200 studies. Because the average effect size of all interventions in this meta-analysis is 0.4, any intervention with an effect size of greater than 0.4 is considered to be effective. Since the research base for many of the interventions is large, a representative sample was chosen to be summarized below.

Cooperative group teaching. Learners working together to teach each other in small groups is called cooperative group teaching. Students can be arranged in cooperative groups or mutual assistance groups, such as the jigsaw method where students rotate groups to teach each other what they have learned. Groups can be homogeneous or mixed ability (Mitchell, 2018), though evidence shows that ability grouping, though widely used, is not effective. The technique draws from sociocultural theory, which espouses that learning occurs both through individual cognition and through social interaction and is supported when students can "listen to, learn from, and build on each other's ideas" (Boardman et al; 2016; p. 3). Teachers should foster

learning situations that encourage collaboration. Four criteria of cooperative group teaching include interdependence, individual accountability, cooperation, and evaluation (Mitchell, 2018).

For example, Boardman et al. (2016) studied the effects of the Collaborative Strategic Reading program. The Collaborative Strategic Reading method involves teachers activating prior knowledge and setting the purpose before reading, students working together to monitor understanding during reading, and helping each other to answer questions after reading. They randomly assigned groups of fourth grade and fifth grade students and teachers to either the treatment group or the control group. They found that typical students made the same gains in both the experimental group and the control group, students diagnosed with learning difficulties made greater gains in the Collaborative Strategic Reading condition. They furthermore observed that implementing this strategy increased group work in these classes generally. They suggested that students with learning disabilities benefit from having structured opportunities to participate in class discussions and more frequent feedback from teachers.

Cooperative group teaching can also be used to foster inquiry based learning. For example, Gillies and Nichols (2014) studied the effects of using cooperative learning to foster inquiry based pedagogy in grade six science. They hoped that cooperative learning would increase student interest and engagement, and they classified the discussion generated through cooperative learning as a means of scaffolding. Post intervention interviews with teachers indicated that teachers reported collaborative learning to be a positive experience that enhanced students' interest and promoted the inquiry process.

In implementing cooperative group teaching, teachers should take care to select group members who will interact well together, structure and instruct norms of collaboration, and not rely solely on this method. Teachers must also consider that some cultures are accustomed to

passive means of instruction and may need explanation of the underlying principles (Mitchell, 2018).

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of the jigsaw method to be 1.2, cooperative versus competitive learning to be 0.53, and cooperative learning to be 0.4.

Peer tutoring. This is a strategy based on effective teaching theory, eco-behavior analysis, and social learning (Cook, Cook, & Cook, 2017) where students ask each other questions and help each other to review material (Mitchell, 2018). Alzahrani and Leko (2018) noted that peer tutoring can take many forms such as peer-assisted learning strategies, cross-age tutoring, reciprocal peer tutoring, and classwide peer tutoring. Peer tutoring may be particularly advantageous for students with learning disabilities who might otherwise be passive learners (Tsuei, 2014) and has been shown to have positive effects on social skills and behavior, both as a direct result of targeting these skills and as a windfall from improved academic skills (Bowman-Perrott, Burke, Zhang, & Zaini, 2018). Furthermore, peer tutoring can increase the amount of feedback that students receive without increasing the burden on teachers (Cook et al., 2017).

Peer tutoring in reading and mathematics instruction is widely studied (Tsuei, 2014). Bowman-Perrott et al. (2018) surveyed the existing literature on peer tutoring and reported that all six of the published meta-analyses reported positive results in areas including academic gains, student self-esteem, self-concept, and other behavior outcomes. In their own meta-analysis on peer tutoring, they examined the effects of various moderating variables and determined that programs using reward structure yielded higher outcomes than those using no rewards, though they found that social skills interaction had the same effect size, suggesting that social interactions could be their own reward. Non-reciprocal tutoring was more effective than reciprocal, and cross-age was more effective than same age. They also found a significant effect

on maintenance of skills. In their study on including students with severe disabilities, Fisher and

Frey (2001) described how peer helpers assisted in keeping materials organized and creating

presentations. They offered this as an effective technique to include students with severe

disabilities in the mainstream. Leung (2015) used meta-analysis to investigate the effect of

gender and age on peer tutoring of measurements of achievement for tutees. Overall the study

found that peer tutoring had a positive effect on achievement, with the greatest effect for students

in secondary school who had high ability. The author concluded that same-age, cross-age,

reciprocal, and non-reciprocal peer tutoring had similar effect sizes and that same gender pairs

were more successful. The only significant variables found were tutor training, reward structure,

gender pairs, structured provided for sessions, and mathematics subskills. Moreover, studies

revealed, paradoxically, that fewer training sessions per week produced a greater benefit.

Other researchers cast doubt on this method. In their review of the research base for peer

tutoring for secondary students, Alzahrani and Leko (2018) found a large number of research

studies on peer tutoring, but only one that met the quality indicators espoused by *The Council for*

Exceptional Children (CEC). They therefore concluded that peer tutoring is at best a potential

evidence-based practice. In a similar review of literature, Cook et al. (2017) surveyed 16 studies

involving 125 students and found that none of them met all of the quality indicators espoused by

CEC. Of the four studies that did have sufficient internal validity, only two to the studies

reported positive effects for classwide peer tutoring.

Tsuei (2014) investigated the use of online peer tutoring systems to support students with

learning difficulties with mathematics instruction. The advantages of online peer tutoring include

the ability to scaffold social and self-help skills, which students with disabilities sometimes lack,

the ease of presenting multiple representations of the information, and that the program includes

a learning management system for teachers. The research studied the effects of an online

mathematics peer tutoring platform, where students with learning difficulties were paired with

other students from the same class. Although all four students with learning difficulties made

gains in mathematical outcome measures, it should be noted that no outcome measures were

taken for the peer tutors or for the other students in the class.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of peer tutoring to be 0.53.

Social skills training. Social skills training is when social skills that most children learn

naturally are explicitly taught to students who have poor social perception. These skills include

social sensitivity, role taking, social insight, moral judgement, social communication, and social

problem solving (Mitchell, 2018). Good social skills are critical in the classroom for students to

work with each other and to form a good relationship with the teacher, while poor social skills

can lead to conflicts, which reinforce negative images (Flem et al., 2004). Mitchell (2018)

suggested that certain skills may need to be decoded and explicitly taught: conversation skills,

coping with conflict, friendship skills, and group skills. Flem et al. (2004) case study of an

inclusive classroom found that the teacher's role was to provide a role model, reinforcement, and

contingency management for the development of social skills in these areas. More broadly,

schools at all levels should actively address issues such as friendship skills, bullying, and peer

mentoring (Gibson, 2012).

Teaching social skills is based on the concept of social and emotional learning (SEL),

which emphasizes that relationships are the basis for learning. An effective program of social

and emotional learning creates lifelong adjustment and promotes learning by enhancing memory,

motivation, and perception. Key concepts in social and emotional learning are attachment,

communication, respect, attention to learning, interpersonal skills, decision making, problem

solving skills, influence and negotiation, personal responsibility, self-esteem, listening, self-management, and integrity (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010). For example, Kavale (2007) found positive social outcomes included increased tolerance and social support from students without disabilities, while negative social outcomes included reduced self-confidence, poor self-perception, and inadequate social skills.

Hattie (2018) found social skills programs have a 0.39 effect size.

Co-teaching or collaborative teaching. Co-teaching, team teaching, or collaborative teaching have become nearly ubiquitous (Mitchell, 2018). Collaboration can involve two teachers working together in the same classroom, as is commonly the case in the United States and United Kingdom. Co-teaching involves shared planning, instructing, and assessing students, and it can be either direct, where the specialist works directly with targeted students, or indirect, where the specialist consults with teachers (Hedegaard-Soerensen et al., 2018). In Japan, collaboration takes the form of *Jugyokenkyu,* where teachers work together to evaluate the effectiveness of their work (Mitchell, 2018).

Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) surveyed a wide range of inclusion options and found while co-teaching is the most inclusive model, it is also the least frequently implemented. Buli-Holmberg and Jeyaprathaban (2016) studied Norwegian schools and found more student-teacher interaction when two teachers are present in the room, but their study included no information about outcomes. In their case study, Fisher and Frey (2001) found the benefits of co-teaching included getting new ideas from other adults, abandoning individualism, and becoming more reflective. Björn et al. (2018) noted that co-teaching is an ideal way to increase collaboration in a classroom but did not measure the efficacy of that collaboration. In Flem, Moen, and

Gudmundsdottir's (2004) case study, they found that school leadership had a critical role in establishing a climate where collaboration among teachers could thrive.

Interdisciplinary collaboration can also be used creatively. For example, Hedegaard-Soerensen et al. (2018) reported on a Danish model, where schools that had exclusively served students with special needs in segregated settings are transforming into knowledge centers. Through a series of workshops, specialist teachers have been collaborating with mainstream teachers from nearby schools. The researchers found that the teachers developed productive collaborative relationships that fostered implementing new teaching practices, while avoiding the problem of lack of time that hinders other co-teaching arrangements.

Hattie (2018) found co- or team teaching to have an effect size of 0.19.

Parent involvement and support. Parent involvement is critical to the success of an educational program because parents have the best knowledge of their children (Flem, Moen, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004). To fully educate students, schools should take into account their family background and identify and actively engage parents and caregivers (Ainscow et al., 2006). According to Mitchell (2018), parents should have a role in developing educational programs for the children and making placement decisions. He identified five levels of parent involvement: being informed, participating in activities, discussing, participating in decision making, and acting as partners. Elbertson et al. (2010) surveyed the literature and found numerous studies to support their contention that parent involvement is linked to high academic and social outcomes for students, but they noted that parent involvement tapers as students enter adolescence.

Although teachers may worry about family variables that are beyond the control of schools, Hattie (2018) found the effects of family variables on learners' outcomes to be

insignificant. He found the effect size of having an intact two parent family 0.23, employed parents 0.03, and parents deployed in the military -0.16.

The effect size of parental involvement is 0.5 and parent autonomy support is 0.23.

Cognitive strategy instruction. This strategy involves actively teaching children how to develop knowledge of their own cognition and manage their learning by explicitly instructing skills such as visualizing, planning, self-regulation, remembering, analyzing, predicting, and thinking about thinking. While many students pick up these skills naturally, students with learning disabilities demonstrate poor cognitive strategies and a lack of awareness of their own thinking, which can lead to undesirable academic results and behavior problems (Mitchell, 2018). Lehtinen, Hannula-Sormunen, McMullen, and Gruber (2017) noted that metacognitive facility is necessary for effective practice of skills because in order to develop expertise, students need a level of awareness of what is known and what information needs to be sought. They reported that experts show higher levels of self-monitoring and regulation when practicing skills.

Mitchell (2018) described the Cognitive Strategy Instruction program developed in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s. This program encouraged students to *think ahead*, *think during*, and *think back*. The program includes a number of teacher strategies including modeling effective strategies, task analysis, strategy instruction, peer coaching, and self-evaluation. He pointed out that this strategy may not be amenable to groups of diverse learners and may need to be simplified for learners with more severe needs. Mitchell (2018) summarized a large number of studies pointing to the effectiveness of cognitive strategy instruction.

The most effective methods to teach students how to learn is subject to debate. For example, Kavale (2007) conducted a meta-analysis to determine the effect sizes of commonly used strategies. Of the many process interventions found in the research, only psycholinguistic

training had a small-medium effect. Effective special education instruction techniques included only handwriting, oral language, and reading instruction with effect sizes around the 90th percentile. Of the special education activities included in the study, only memory training had a significant effect. However, schools continue to use many of the strategies and learning activities Kavale (2007) found to be not effective.

Cognitive strategy instruction can be embedded in general instruction. In their case study, Flem, Moen, and Gudmundsdottir (2004) found that mainstream teachers engage in subtle cognitive training. They described how the teacher used questions, answers, and other utterances to form links in a communication chain to scaffold language. This scaffolding helped students form the cognitive structuring required for metacognition and self-regulation. Hott, Isbell, and Montani (2014) noted that math teachers can support metacognitive strategies through think alouds, usage of graphic organizers and visual imagery, and explicit modeling of self-monitoring, self-checks, and self-talk.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size for cognitive task analysis to be 1.20 and meta-cognitive strategies to be 0.6.

Self-regulated learning. Self- regulation, "the control of actions, thoughts, and emotions" (Titz & Karbach, 2014, p. 862) has been shown to be a predictor of academic success. Self-regulation can be considered as a variety of strategies, which students choose according to motivation and context (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2014). Self-regulation is critical to reading comprehension, as students must constantly monitor their comprehension and choose appropriate strategies appropriately (Katzir, Markovich, Tesler, & Shany, 2018). Self-regulation can be helpful in teaching writing as a way of helping students mimic the cognitive processes of

proficient writers (MacArthur, Philippakos, & Ianetta, 2015). Students with learning disabilities often struggle with self-regulation (Lichtinger & Kaplan; 2014).

Self-regulated learning instruction includes teaching students to set their own goals, monitor their own learning, make their own action plans, monitor their progress to the goal, and adjust their strategies accordingly (Mitchell, 2018). Lichtinger and Kaplan (2014) noted that students use a variety of self-regulation strategies in a cyclical process: appraisal of personal resources, assessment of academic demands, goal setting, strategizing, metacognitive monitoring, and evaluation of outcomes to determine which strategies to be continued. Mitchell (2018) pointed out that these skills are critical to functioning in a democratic society. Related strategies include co-regulation, where a peer mentor assists a student developing these skills, and socially shared regulation, where a group collectively regulates its behavior (Mitchell, 2018). Schools are increasingly implementing mindfulness training to improve self-awareness and regulation in students (Titz & Karbach, 2014).

Motivation plays a critical role in self-regulation (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2014; MacArthur et al., 2015). Some students have goal-oriented motives, while others have performance-oriented motives (Lichtinger & Kaplan, 2014). Furthermore, some students are approach oriented while others are avoidance oriented. Lichtinger and Kaplan (2014) suggested that a mastery-approach goal-oriented motivation is most effective for the implementing self-regulation strategies. They pointed to strategies that increase self-efficacy and motivation as being effective in increasing self-regulation skills. In their case study of self-regulation with a fourth-grade student with learning disabilities, they found her success was curtailed by lack of skills in regulating her attention, monitoring completion of the assignment, asking for help, and monitoring the accuracy

of her efforts. Comparing data from her case to eight other students, researchers determined that self-regulation instructing should be tailored to individual motivation and orientation.

Even older students benefit from explicit instruction in self-regulation. For example, MacArthur et al. (2015) described a quasi-experimental study in which college students were instructed in the self-regulation strategies of goal setting, progress monitoring, task management, and reflection. They found that while the length and overall quality of writing increased in the treatment group more than the control group, self-regulation had no significant effect on grammar. Moreover, the found that self-regulation strategy instruction improved motivation in the areas of goals and self-efficacy, but not in beliefs or affect.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of self-regulation strategies to be 0.52.

Memory strategies. Working memory is key to academic achievement (Titz & Karbach, 2014), yet students with learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities often have less working memory capacity (Danielsson, Zottarel, Palmqvist, & Lanfranchi, 2015). Teachers can explicitly teach students how to remember information more effectively by using such strategies as identifying key facts to store in primary memory, mnemonics, focusing on important information, rehearsal, mental representations, and chunking (Mitchell, 2018). Research has shown that working memory and executive functioning training can be effective and transferred to other tasks (Titz & Karbach, 2014). Kavale (2007) noted in his meta-analysis of the literature regarding effective special education that teaching learning practices such as mnemonics shifts the focus from special education interventions to generally effective instructional practices. He found a positive effect size for mnemonics and memory training. Hott et al. (2014) reviewed effective practices in math instruction and called on math teachers to use mnemonics to help students master vocabulary.

Peijnenborgh, Hurks, Aldenkamp, Vles, and Hendriksen (2016) pointed out that students with documented working memory problems can be supported in the classroom in two ways: either by strategically reducing the load on the working memory or by actively stimulating and training working memory skills. Two types of strategies can be used to train working memory. Implicit working memory training involves repeated exposure to tasks that require working memory, whereas explicit working memory training involves labelling and elaborating on particular skills. The researchers noted that these programs have evolved from pencil and paper tasks to computerized games since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Titz and Karbach (2014) similarly found that most process interventions today are computer based. In their meta-analysis of 13 research studies on the effects of memory training on working memory, Peijnenborgh et al. (2016) concluded that the implicit training programs they reviewed are generally effective for students with learning disabilities. They noted that in the area of verbal working memory, training programs were slightly more effective for students older than 10. Improvement in both verbal working memory and visual spatial working memory would be sustained over a period of months. They also found a smaller effect on decoding. Danielsson et al. (2015) conducted a similar meta-analysis of working memory training strategies with students with intellectual disabilities and found generally that different types of working memory training yield varying results for different individuals. They noted that individuals with different diagnoses typically have deficits in different areas of working memory: verbal, visuospatial, or mixed.

Swanson, Orosco, and Lussier (2014) examined the effects of training students with diagnosed math difficulties in math strategies to reduce the load on the working memory. They found significant interaction between working memory capability and the working memory

treatment, indicating that children with greater working memories are better able to make use of strategies, because they have working memory to spare to utilize the strategies. In a follow up study, Swanson (2015) administered similar strategy instruction, which had no significant effects for students without math difficulties. The strategy instruction was most effective for students with higher working memory capability, certain strategies were more effective for certain students than others, and he found some evidence of strategies instruction transferring to working memory measures.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of mnemonics to be 0.77 and rehearsal and memorization to be 0.75. He also found that the effect of working memory strength, a background characteristic of students, to be 0.57.

Review and practice. Students should review and practice the same information at different times and in different contexts (Mitchell, 2018). Homework and drills are common means of fostering student review and practice for all students, and Hott et al. (2014) suggested drill and practice is an effective strategy specifically for students with math disabilities. Deliberate practice, that is practice that is targeted to specific performance goals, is needed for the development of expertise in many areas. In areas such as mathematics, such practice serves to automatize lower level, procedural skills to free cognitive capacity for higher level reasoning (Lehtinen et al., 2017). These researchers note that not all practice is deliberate practice, but rather it should challenge the learner:

> The 'art of deliberate practice' obviously includes the ability and willingness to conduct
> highly concentrated activities which might be, to some degree, aversive in nature …
> However, less experienced individuals like novices tend to focus their practice on more
> pleasant levels of effort … They try to avoid errors and failures and they do not

challenge their own learning … In the realm of mathematics education, a distinction

should also be made between routine practice with existing skills and the types of

deliberate practice that push students to develop their emerging skills and knowledge

structures. (Lehtinen et al., 2017, p. 627)

For this reason, expert guidance and feedback is critical for effective review and

practice, and guided instruction from the teacher should accompany skill practice (Lehtinen et

al., 2017).

Students and teachers should be strategic in how they review and practice. Weinstein,

Smith, and Caviglioli (n.d.) compiled research to create a guide of six principles for effective

review and practice. Spaced practice means that students should review material over a period of

time and multiple sessions, rather than cramming before a test. Retrieval practice should be

implemented to make sure that students are practicing retrieving material from memory.

Elaboration means that practice is most effective when students build on the material presented.

Interleaving means that students should rotate among subjects studied to increase long-term

retention. Dual coding means that students should try to remember information in more than one

format.

Technology can be used to facilitate drill and practice. For example, Erbey, McLaughlin,

Derby, and Everson (2011) studied the effects of Reading/Math Racetracks, a game designed to

drill discrete reading skills, and traditional flashcards on two students with a learning disability

and one with attention deficit. Although they found that all participants improved their academic

performance in targeted areas, they noted the need for further research to determine which

method of drilling is effective for which learning profiles. Lehtinen et al. (2017) reported

positive results with the Number Navigation Game, a computer application designed to increase arithmetic fluency through targeted practice.

Review and practice may not be ideal for all students. Lehtinen et al. (2017) pointed to the "expertise reversal effect" (p. 631) whereby increased practice and instruction designed to reduce cognitive load become less effective for more advanced students. They also reported on a study of high school geometry students that showed that deliberate practice was not effective for less knowledgeable learners who were not able to access the information.

Hattie (2018) found the effect sizes for deliberate practice to be 0.82, spaced versus mass practice to be 0.6, and interleaved practice to be 0.21.

Reciprocal teaching. In this strategy, teachers begin by actively modeling engaging in a text then gradually withdraw support. Teachers ask students to read, predict, question, clarify, and summarize (Mitchell, 2018). The strategy is based on social constructivism (McAllum, 2014) and three principles from Vygotsky's theory of learning: the social origin of higher levels of cognition, the zone of proximal development, the necessity of contextualized, holistic learning. Reciprocal teaching was specifically designed in 1984 to remedy the discrepancy in students who demonstrate strong decoding skills but weak comprehension skills (McAllum, 2014). The strengths of the strategy are that it explicitly instructs multiple strategies simultaneously, shows students how to manage multiple strategies, and is social (Reichenberg & Löfgren, 2014). McAllum (2014) characterized reciprocal teaching as an inclusive practice, because students with different backgrounds and abilities can contribute their unique perspectives to the discussion, and further noted that the strengths of the method include power-sharing, responsiveness and affirmation of student background experiences, engagement, and group cohesiveness.

Reichenberg and Löfgren (2014) reported a positive effect of reciprocal teaching intervention in a low-income Swedish public school. The intervention was conducted twice a week over twelve weeks and included specific strategies to learn new words, video recordings of some text talks, and seminars. They suggested the significant improvement in students' reading was partly due to students taking the lead in facilitating the text talks and questioning. The researchers acknowledged the limited generalizability of these findings because the intervention was only conducted in a large group and without a control group.

Meyer (2014) applied reciprocal teaching strategies to mathematics word problem solving. They adapted the traditional four stages of reciprocal teaching to suit mathematics, and added giving feedback, using graphic organizers, and using interactive notebooks as scaffolds. The modified stages of instruction became predicting, clarifying, questioning, visualizing, connecting, calculating, summarizing, and giving feedback. Positive anecdotal evidence was reported, but no empirical validation was attempted.

McAllum (2014) cautioned that studies on reciprocal teaching have been focused on settings with low student-teacher ratios and that not all teachers may be "comfortable as facilitators of learning rather than directors of learning" (McAllum, 2014, p. 33).

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of reciprocal teaching to be 0.75.

Behavioral approaches. Mitchell (2018) defined behavioral approaches broadly as focusing on what happens before or after children do something. These variables can then be manipulated to encourage desired behavior in children (Farrell, 2010). Positive reinforcement is most effective, and teachers should carefully control the task difficulty and provide advance organizers. Schools should take data to measure baseline and progress toward goals for students with special needs (Mitchell, 2018).

Two common methods are functional behavior assessment and cognitive behavior therapy. Functional behavior assessment identifies the purposes of a particular behavior by looking at what a student gains or avoids by engaging in a particular behavior. This information can be analyzed to create a plan whereby the student reaches the same goal using pro-social behaviors. Cognitive behavior therapy helps students to reshape negative ways of thinking to eventually avoid negative feelings and change behavior. This strategy is mostly used with students with psychological disorders (Mitchell, 2018).

Farrell (2010) surveyed a number of behavioral approaches for different types of students and settings. Classroom group contingencies use group rewards or token economies to encourage desired behavior. For students with unruly behavior, schools can use behavior contracts or time outs. These behavior methods can help students with attention deficit disorders reduce their medication. He claimed that behavioral approaches can be effective for selective mutism, anxiety disorder, school refusal, and phobias. Although critics can claim that over-reliance on behavior approaches can lead to over-simplification and a barren curriculum, but an over-reliance on any one strategy can be problematic (Farrell, 2010).

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of behavioral intervention programs to be 0.62, behavioral organizers to be 0.42, and cognitive behavioral programs to be 0.29.

Direct instruction. Direct instruction is the explicit teaching of knowledge and skills and frequent assessment to achieve a high level of success for all students (Mitchell, 2018). The technique was formally developed at the University of Oregon in the 1960s by Engelmann and Becker through the federally funded program Project Follow Through (Farrell, 2010). Farrell (2010) pointed to a large research base of positive outcomes associated with direct instruction, which could explain why this technique is most commonly used in school reform. Botts,

Losardo, Tillery, and Werts (2014) noted that this method allows for instruction that is "clear and free of misinterpretations" (p. 121), emphasizes small learning increments, gives explicit step-by-step instruction, provides for mastery learning through error correction, allows adequate practice, and provides cumulative review.

Direct instruction has been found to be effective in reading instruction. In a meta-analysis of interventions for students with reading disabilities, Galuschka, Ise, Krick, and Schulte-Kröne (2014) found direct phonics instruction is not only the most investigated intervention, but also the only intervention with a confirmed positive effect on reading comprehension and spelling. They found that phonics instruction has only been studied in English, Spanish, Italian, and Finnish speaking countries. Botts et al. (2014) compared the efficacy of embedded direct instruction to activity-based interventions for the acquisition of literacy skills in preschool children and found direct instruction to be more effective and efficient, and embedded direct instruction also resulted in slightly higher retention rates. In a descriptive case study of the application of direct instruction to students with more severe disabilities, Kanfush (2014) found that although teachers reported lacking adequate training to implement the method with fidelity, both parents and teachers were highly satisfied with the program. She called for better training programs for teachers and more communication with parents to adequately inform them about the programs used with their children. Seines, McLaughlin, Derby, and Weber (2015) reported a positive result in using flashcards to teach sight words to a third grade student with a learning disability. At an even more basic level, Shillingsburg, Bowen, Peterman, and Gayman (2015) found the *Language for Learning* direct instruction program for teaching language to students with autism to be effective.

Direct instruction has also been found to be effective in math. Cravalho, McLaughlin, Derby, and Waco (2015) studied the results of direct instruction in math on three elementary students with learning disabilities and/or autism using flashcards. They found increased performance on the targeted skill of number identification, which were also generalized to other settings. They also found improved social behavior because students no longer needed to engage in antisocial behavior to avoid overly difficult academic tasks, they enjoyed the one on one attention, and the routine because familiar and predictable. The authors further noted that the method is cost-effective and easily passed on to family members for further training. It should be noted that this study only included three students and a small range of targeted skills.

Critics point to research that suggests a correlation between students who were taught with direct instruction and those engaging in crime, though the cause of the correlation has not been explained (Farrell, 2010). Other critics suggest that the success of direct instruction is due to the high-level of funding such programs receive.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of direct instruction to be 0.6.

Formative assessment. Formative assessment evaluates the level of knowledge and understanding of a subject while is it being taught and provides teachers and students the opportunity to modify their approaches (Mitchell, 2018). This is distinct from summative assessment, which occurs at the end of a unit for evaluative purposes. Effective feedback is timely, explicit, understandable to the learner, and focused on the learner's approach. Formative assessment can take the form of quizzes, observations, student journals, or discussions (Mitchell, 2018). Feedback is helpful to students not only because it pinpoints the gaps between their knowledge and their goal, but also because it emphasizes that students can improve with additional effort (Mehmood, Hussain, Khalid, & Azam; 2012). Teachers can also use formative

assessment to increase student motivation, model achievement objectives, and signal what information is important (Bonner, 2013). Teachers who are trained in formative feedback have more accurate perceptions of their students' attainment and are more flexible with their teaching methodology (Mitchell, 2018).

Mehmood, Hussain, Khalid, and Azam (2012) conducted an experiment to determine the efficacy of formative feedback on academic achievement for secondary students. They matched 60 students into experimental and control groups. Although they reported that students who received formative feedback got significantly higher scores, the researchers reported few details of the procedure.

Hays, Kornell, and Bjork (2010) questioned the universal benefit of formative feedback, because providing feedback takes valuable time away from other learning activities. In their experiment with undergraduate students, they allowed students the option of skipping feedback in favor of a greater number of retrieval attempts in a fixed time. Skipping was either controlled by the participants or by the computer. The results showed a difference in skipping between the computer controlled and participant-controlled conditions, indicating that participants were not always aware of incorrect performance. Outcome measures were higher with more retrieval opportunities rather than feedback. Bonner (2013) described the complex process of adequately validating an assessment instrument and pointed out that most teachers are limited by lack of detailed training in this area. Mitchell (2018) warned the possible drawbacks of formative assessment are that it is not aligned with the curricular objectives, some objectives may be missed, too much assessment may take away from teaching time, and it may be deficit driven.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of formative evaluation to be 0.48. The effect size of feedback is 0.7.

Assistive technology. The rapid increase in technology has brought many new possibilities to make learning more accessible to students with disabilities. This has been a growing field, starting in the United States with the passage of the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities in 1988 (Maor, Currie, & Drewry, 2011). Assistive technology is anything that is "aimed at assisting or expanding human function or capabilities" (Maor et al., 2011, p. 284) and can refer to low-tech aides such pen grips, hearing aids, or reading glasses, or to high-tech solutions such as specialized reading software for dyslexics and computerized communication systems (Ahmad, 2015). A few of the examples that Mitchell (2018) listed are aides for students with visual impairments in seeing text, assistance for students with auditory impairments in amplifying sound, personal listening devices for students with auditory processing disorders, organizational and computational help for students with dyscalculia, audio books and electronic readers for students with dyslexia, writing aids for students with difficulty forming letters, mobility aids for those with physical impairments, and augmentative and alternative communication devices (Mitchell, 2018). Akpan and Beard (2014) examined the range of assistive technology options in mathematics including talking calculators, online math simulations, drills, practice worksheet generators, concept visualizations electronic support for writing, concept mapping and graphic organizers, and interactive whiteboards. Alnahdi (2014) further pointed out that assistive technology helps schools prepare students for the high-tech, digital world.

Technology can be used together with concepts from Universal Design for Learning to make instruction available to all students. Assistive technology can promote flexibility in the manner information is presented, how students can engage with the information, and the ways

students can express their understanding. By making the curriculum more accessible to everyone, assistive technology reduces the need for later individual accommodations (Alnahdi, 2014).

Some teachers are working to integrate mobile technology and personal devices into instruction. Sung, Chung, and Liu (2016) pointed out that incorporating mobile devices can facilitate cooperative learning, encourage exploration outside the classroom, and incorporate game-based teaching techniques. However, in their meta-analysis of research on incorporating mobile devices they found mixed results with an overall effect size of 0.53. They did not evaluate technology specifically for students with special needs. Ahmad (2015) explained that assistive technology may not be a solution in all cases, but should be evaluated on its sustainability, cost, and ease of use. The choice of assistive technology must be culturally accepted in the local context, appropriate to the specific user, and available given cost and location constraints. Ahmad (2015) further pointed out that attitudinal barriers, lack of training, and workload may further constrain the adaptation of assistive technology. Technology must be appropriate to the curriculum, and both students and staff must be trained in its use. Akpan and Beard (2014) reported that funding for high-tech assistive technology solutions may not be available in all cases. In a meta-analysis of randomized controlled studies of reading interventions, Galuschka et al. (2014) found no significant difference in the effect size of computer assisted interventions with a teacher versus other settings.

In their literature review Maor et al. (2011) pointed out that the field of assistive technology is so vast and so rapidly changing, that it is difficult to establish an adequate research base and particularly difficult to conduct long-term longitudinal studies on specific devices, programs, or interventions. They pointed out that high level of monetary investment being doled out by schools should warrant more extensive research.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of technology with students with special needs to be 0.57.

Quality of the environment. An optimal classroom environment includes attention to the furniture and physical space, lighting, temperature, humidity, ventilation, acoustics, and safety (Mitchell, 2018). Spaces should be kept neat and attractive. Different standards recommend different optimal temperatures. For example, the World Health Organization recommends temperature between 18 and 24 degrees Celsius, while the New Zealand Ministry of Education finds 29 on the Heat Stress Index to be the maximum allowable. Lighting should account for students' need to switch between *heads-down* reading and *heads-up* reading, glare should be reduced, natural light maximized, and optics of computer usage should be carefully considered. For optimal acoustics, teachers should consider the optimal signal-to-noise ratio, sound reverberation, and the level of ambient noise. Sound field amplification is effective for some learners, but can be costly (Mitchell, 2018).

Higgins, Hall, Wall, Woolner, and McCaughey (2005) conducted a review of the literature and found evidence that many different elements could impact student learning: temperature, air quality, noise, light, color, outdoor spaces, pathways, space for physical and social engagement, furniture, classroom layout, displays, storage, and technology. They further found evidence of improved results when key stakeholders such as students and teachers were involved in the design process. They concluded, however, that the research in these areas is not sufficient and that there is a particular lack of research in how these areas combine.

Sleegers et al. (2013) pointed out that the effects of quality lighting on overall human health are well-documented. Today, schools can choose between static lighting, where the quality and intensity of the lighting stays the same throughout the day, and dynamic lighting,

where the illuminance and color temperature of the light can vary with setting and time to enhance alertness and concentration. They reported on three experimental research studies in the Netherlands on a lighting system where the teacher can choose from four settings: energy, focus, calm, and standard. Two of the three studies reported significantly improved success on measures of concentration with the dynamic lighting system.

Research results in this area are mixed. In Gibson's (2012) case study of inclusive university programs, she found that lighting, lecture hall size, and paper color were less important than social factors such as peer mentoring and contact with faculty. Tanner (2008) conducted a descriptive study of the effects of design on academic attainment on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in third grade students in 24 school in the United States. All four aspects he surveyed had a positive impact: movement and circulation, large group meeting places, natural light and views, and large group spaces, though movement and circulation had the greatest effect. Mitchell (2018) called for further research to determine the interaction effects of different environmental aspects.

All of the studies that this researcher was able to find are based in the West and in public schools. Different cultures have different standards of social interaction and interaction with physical spaces, so this researcher questions the applicability of these findings to international schools.

Hattie (2018) did not survey quality of the environment or any of the elements listed above.

Universal design for learning. Universal design for learning (UDL) involves adapting the educational experience in three ways: flexible instruction, flexible means of processing information while maintaining high expectations, and flexible ways of assessing if the instruction

has been understood and retained. Initially developed from ideas in architecture, the key

principle of UDL is that lessons are designed to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners

(Mitchell, 2018). In Europe, the concept is referred to as Design for All. Much research has

focused on incorporating technology into instruction (Coyne, Pisha, Dalton, Zeph, & Smith,

2010). Six criteria of UDL include: equitable use, flexible use, simple and intuitive use,

perceptible information, tolerance for error, and low physical and cognitive effort (Mitchell,

2018).

Mitchell (2018) referred to the Cast project website as a clearinghouse for research

related to UDL and a source for teacher training. This project explains the three phases of UDL:

engagement, representation, and action and engagement. Engagement includes recruiting

interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation. Representation includes

perception, language and symbols, and comprehension. Action and expression include physical

action, expression and communication, and executive functions. Although each section includes

ample references to peer reviewed research, most of the research was conducted in the 1990s or

before, and no research is less than 10 years old.

Besham and Marino (2013) explored UDL in the context of science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics education (STEM), because few students with disabilities

successfully access career opportunities in this area. They argue that UDL is uniquely suited to

STEM because it encourages students to actively engage in problem solving, forces teachers to

set clear objectives, incorporates technology to enhance instruction, focuses on learner

variability, and uses varied data points from multiple means of assessment. Their review,

however, did not report any evidence of the efficacy of these methods. Izzo (2012) explored

how technology can be leveraged for university students with disabilities majoring in STEM.

For example, apps on iPads, iPods, and iTouches can be used to increase print size and contrast for visually impaired students, increase reading fluency by pairing visual and spoken text, improve communication, and assist in organization and daily living skills. Digital pens can convert handwriting or speech into digital notes. Electronic voting machines can increase student engagement and technology can provide multiple means of assessment on exams.

Coyne et al. (2010) examined the effects of UDL on students with severe disabilities in reading. They used multimedia ebooks to engage learners in literacy and compared the reading results with a matched control group. Teachers were trained in the fall to implement UDL principles through a literacy by design program, and in the spring students who had received treatment demonstrated significantly higher reading comprehension and word attack, though the authors admit they could not control for different aspects of the UDL design.

Hattie (2018) did not survey universal design for learning.

Response to instruction. This strategy is also referred to as response to intervention (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010) or multi-tier systems of support (Sailor et al., 2018). The strategy was designed as a diagnostic strategy after the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education in 2002. The benefits of the system include non-categorical diagnosis and support, usage of current performance data, multi-tiered levels of support, incorporation of UDL, engagement of parents and the community, inclusion of all potentially vulnerable or marginalized students, and being team driven (Sailor et al., 2018). These researchers report on a large, urban district that used the multi-tiered systems of support together with a monitoring system to raise achievement, decrease disciplinary suspensions, and increase time in inclusion for special learners.

Finland uses three tiers to support students (Bjorn et al., 2018; Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). Students are identified as needing help when they fall behind their peers. Tier I focuses on providing high quality instruction to all students. For students needing additional help, Tier II gives focused, intense support. Tier III is similar to special education, where students are placed in a smaller group that moves at a slower pace. The need for support is reassessed at the end of each six-week cycle.

Hattie (2018) found the effect size of response to intervention to be 1.29.

Modeling and Comparing Systems

Different researchers have proposed different paradigms to compare countries. For example, Anastasiou and Keller (2011) recommended three axes for comparing countries. The first scale rates how well the country provides educational opportunities to all learners, the second scale rates the extent of special education service, and the third scale rates the emphasis on inclusion. The second and third scales are combined, so that two axes form a grid to map the extent of education for all and inclusion in quadrants to compare different systems.

Mitchell (2015) proposed a multi-faceted model to describe the ten characteristics of a school that has adopted inclusion as a means to serve the learning needs of all children. Vision describes the degree that stakeholders at all levels, including teachers, administrators, and policymakers, are committed to the philosophy underlying inclusion and the respect of differences among pupils. Placement refers to the degree to which students are placed in age-appropriate, mainstream classes with their peers. Adapted curriculum specifies that schools should use a multi-leveled curriculum to make learning available to all students. To further support learners needing modifications, schools can use five strategies: differentiation, adaptation, enhancement, enrichment, and elaboration. Adapted assessment reflects the extent to

which assessments reflect the adapted curriculum and takes into account the abilities of all learners, including using individualized education plans for learners with special needs. Adapted teaching states that schools should use best practice, research-based instructional methods. Acceptance articulates the degree to which resources are allocated equitably and also the degree to which teachers and peers accept students with learning differences socially and emotionally. Access deals with the physical aspects of the classroom, including ramps and lifts, lighting, furniture, acoustics, temperature, and ventilation. Support expresses the needs for teachers to work together and collaborate to serve learners with special needs, especially the need of classroom teachers to be supported by a team of professionals. Resources calls on schools to provide adequate funding and staffing to support special education. Leadership describes how leaders show a commitment to the values of inclusion by providing and selling a vision, providing recognition and encouragement, obtaining resources, adapting standard operating procedures, monitoring improvement, and handling disturbances. A visual diagram of these indicators can be found in Appendix E.

Gidley et al. (2010a; 2010b) articulated a model to describe the levels of social inclusion and the underlying ideologies. The model consists of three circles, one inside another. The smallest, most limited circle encompasses systems where included students are provided access only. This level stems from the neoliberal economic motivation of equipping and training more workers for the workforce. The next larger circle refers to participation, where students are able to actively participate and engage in the mainstream educational experience. This level is motivated by social justice. The largest circle is human empowerment, motivated by theories such as Educational Futures, Critical Pedagogies of Hope, and Postcolonial Theory. Schools in this circle seek to educate all learners to their full potential, celebrate diversity, create lifelong

learners, and engage in social transformation. A visual diagram of this model is included in Appendix F.

Barriers to Inclusion

Attitudes and perceptions. Amid the *Zeitgeist*, the modern spirit of inclusive reforms, schools face many barriers in implementing inclusive programs. The attitudes and beliefs of teachers and administrators can be the major factor in the success or failure of a program (Ainscow, 2010; Curcic, 2009; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Kavale, 2007). The negative attitudes and beliefs can lead to stigmatization (Liasidou, 2013; Liasidou, 2015; Norwich, 2008; Powell, 2016) and pose a significant barrier to successful inclusion (World Health Organization, 2011). Tarr et al. (2012) found that teacher beliefs, motivation, and collaboration were critical elements in the success of Finnish schools. The development of a positive *ethos* and a community that is committed to inclusion nurtures the success of inclusive programs (Lindsay, 2007).

Although there is a general shift towards more inclusive practices, Lindsay (2007) reported that he found no evidence of full acceptance of inclusion. Negative perceptions affect not only students. Kusuma-Powell and Powell (2015) described how the subtle bias against learning support teachers from students and other teachers can be detrimental. Successful inclusion is dependent on teachers "'knowing', 'doing', and 'believing'" (Rouse, 2008, p.12). For well-intentioned teachers, practical considerations may outweigh ideological acceptance of inclusion (Lindsay, 2007). In a society that values individualism and individual achievement, Gorannson and Nilholm (2014) argued that shifting towards a community model of collective good is a challenge that impairs the acceptance of inclusion.

One cause of unconscious biases can be language. Labeling can lead people to associate a person with one characteristic only, and people tend to think everyone in a certain group is the

same and defined by a particular characteristic. The normate bias, the tendency of people to associate what is normal with what is good, can lead to discrimination against people who fall outside the norm (Anderson, 2015). Ableism can evolve as a result of community and cultural narratives (Naraian, 2014), which can further lead to normal being superior (Annamma et al., 2013) and disability being equated with tragedy (Liasidou, 2015). These linguistic mechanisms further the marginalization of minority groups, including those with learning differences. In order to be inclusive, schools must fundamentally reconsider how they conceptualize otherness (Curcic, 2009) and actively combat unconscious biases.

Barton (1993) pointed to the shift in educational discussion toward economic or "market-speak" (Barton, 1993, p. 35). Market terms include indicators, targets, cost effectiveness, appraisal, accountability, unwieldy bureaucracy, falling standards, competition, and lack of choices. Policy implications include open enrollment, opting out, and publicizing test results. The marketization of educational dialogue points to an underlying belief in the superiority of the market over local education authorities and can explain why schools are blamed for a lack of success (Barton, 1993).

Powell (2016) offered a different explanation for unconscious biases in favor of segregation among special education teachers in Germany. He argued that in Germany when the profession of *Sonderpädagogin* (special education teachers) codified at the same time as mainstream teachers, special education services were offered in separate facilities with separate, specific training for the teachers. Special education teachers have since been reluctant to embrace inclusion in order to protect their professional status, specialized training, and skills.

On a larger scale, institutional persistence can work counter to inclusive reform efforts (Bierman & Powell, 2016). Mariga et al. (2014) found a similar phenomenon in their work

setting up inclusive education programs in Africa, and Liasidou (2013) made the same criticism of schools in Cyprus. Topping (2012) traced the historical development of professional protectionism in the United Kingdom. The testing industry, psychologists, and multiple other professionals stand to benefit from the continuance of a segregated special education system with complicated, mandatory testing, especially in light of increased pressure for academic achievement (Sailor et al., 2018; Tomlinson, 2012). Today, the special education industry has created the need for new professionals including neuroscientists, therapists, and technical experts. Today's litigation between parents and schools further benefits specialized professionals (Tomlinson, 2012).

A collective school-wide and community-wide effort is needed to build a whole school culture of acceptance and collaboration and to successfully change perceptions and attitudes (Bettini et al., 2017; Berting & Pelletier, 2017; Chan & Yuen, 2015; EASPD, 2012; Liasidou, 2013). Inclusive schools should challenge the current ideology by building the idea of variability and diversity as normal (Annamma et al., 2013; Liasidou, 2013). Sailor et al. (2018) called for schools to adapt a human capability model to effectively implement inclusion. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) echoed Tarr et al.'s (2012) findings by comparing Finnish and South African schools and found school wide collaboration to be a key component for successful inclusion. Ainscow and Sandhill (2010) called for a community of practice to share the pursuit of a common goal to bring sustainable, fundamental change in a school (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010). Anderson (2015) put it succinctly, "Rather than being something we 'do', inclusion must reflect who we 'are'" (Anderson, 2015, p. 183). More broadly, a school's culture can define reality (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010), and successful inclusion pivots on the reality that students with special needs are not considered abnormal, but rather an accepted part of the student body. Real acceptance

depends on disrupting the dichotomy between normal and abnormal to celebrate the diversity of humanity (Annamma et al., 2013).

Leadership. The support of leadership is critical for an inclusive school (Kusuma-Powell & Powell, 2015; Mariga et al., 2014). In their case study of a highly inclusive, highly effective school, McLeskey et al. (2014) found a key component of their success was the support of the principal through a distributed leadership model. Leadership is particularly needed to set a vision, implement plans democratically, organize service delivery, create and support collaborative teams, provide ongoing training, and deliberately foster a climate of acceptance (Theoharis & Causton, 2014). Failures in inclusive programming can be traced to failures in leadership. Bettini et al. (2017) described the critical role administrators play in shaping the local school culture and cultivating effective teachers, but they found administrators felt they lack training, knowledge, and skills. Yan and Sin (2015) used the Theory of Planned Behavior framework to investigate attitude, intention, and practice in high school principals, and also concluded that there is a need for more training and more research.

Lack of training. Although teachers and administrators are generally positive towards diverse students (Idol, 2006), many feel they lack necessary training and skills, which led to a reluctance towards inclusive education. Numerous researchers have identified insufficient training as the key reason why teachers are reluctant to include students with disabilities (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Chan & Yuen, 2015; Curcic, 2009; EASPD, 2012; Hornby, 2015; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Lindsay, 2007; Yan & Sin, 2015). Training teachers is critical because inclusion is dependent on teachers (Liasidou, 2015). In Engelbrecht et al.'s (2017) study of Finnish and South Africa schools, they found a critical issue to be the level of knowledge and skills needed by teachers to deliver an effective program to diverse learners. Chan and Yuen

(2015) found the same result in their case study of a Hong Kong international school. Rouse (2008) declared teacher training to be the greatest barrier to inclusion.

The literature lacks sufficient research on effective teacher training for special education teachers (Bettini et al., 2010), and current models of teacher training may be inadequate to meet rapidly shifting models of inclusion (Flem et al., 2004). New models of teacher training will need to be developed for both special education teachers and general education teachers (Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Flem et al., 2004). Warnock (2010) argued for the need to train elementary teachers to recognize early signs of disability to reduce the number of students later diagnosed with special needs. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2014) pointed out that this training must be both initial and in-service. Continuous training has the further benefit of encouraging a growth mindset among teachers (Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

Barriers to teacher training. Worldwide, many barriers exist to adequate teacher training to implement inclusion. In the United Kingdom, teaching training is subject specific, not adaptable to diversity, and linked to traditional perceptions of teachers' roles: "The teacher's role is still often seen as that of intergenerational transmitter of received wisdom and cultural heritage -- the 'sage on stage'" (Topping, 2012, p. 16).

One challenge in training is the wide variety of settings and contexts where inclusion is implemented. For example, Florian and Spratt (2013) designed the Inclusive Practice Project and a related analytical framework. Post-graduate students spent 18 weeks in university courses and the remainder of a year as student teachers. The framework for the training is based on transformative change and non-hierarchical concepts of development. The three main tenets of the framework are that there are fundamental differences in how people learn, teachers can teach all students, and new and creative ways of teaching diverse learners must continually be

developed. Their follow-up study found that while their framework provided a lens to conceptualize inclusion, implementation by teachers remained context specific.

Resources. Lack of resources is another barrier to education for students with learning needs (World Health Organization, 2011). Researchers have found that schools generally lack adequate time, money, and human resources (Chan & Yuen, 2015; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Liasidou, 2015; Takala, Pirttimaa, & Törmänen, 2009; Tarr et al., 2012). Topping (2012) pointed out that the problem may be worsened because the demand for more resources is vague, so schools are allocating the wrong resources. Resources that are lacking include teacher and therapist time, physical space, appropriate learning materials, instructional materials, and appropriate training (Topping, 2012).

Even in well-funded schools, time is at a premium. Liasidou (2015) explained the lack of time teachers feel could be due to Neoliberal Reform efforts, which require teachers to teach more knowledge and skills to more students in a never-ending cyclical spiral. For example, the lack of planning time is a detrimental factor to co-teaching and other inclusive practices (Chan & Yuen, 2015; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Takala et al., 2009; Tarr et al., 2012). How teacher time is allocated is important. In one case study, special education teacher time dedicated to planning was more effectively used when the teacher was only responsible for inclusion, so that priority is not given to solo-taught, pull-out classes (Fisher & Frey, 2001). Time is also critical for leaders, as Ainscow (2010) found that when administrators found the time to meet, they were more likely to allocate the resources needed for supporting special education. Ainscow (2010) summarized the discussion, "This reminds us that, as far as schools are concerned, time is the currency used to indicate that something is of importance" (Ainscow, 2010, p. 86).

Naraian (2014) pointed out a particular paradox when *time* intertwines with special

education to make *certainty* not possible. That is, if students and teachers were given unlimited

time, they could certainly attain learning objectives, but time is an ever more constrained

commodity in today's schools. Furthermore, lack of teacher contact time for students with

disabilities in mainstream classes is another area of concern (Kavale & Forness, 2000).

Institutional momentum. A further barrier to the implementation of inclusion is the

momentum of institutional logic, which has traditionally supported inclusive policy and

exclusive practice (Powell, 2016).   Schools exist to pass on cultural norms to the next

generation, including culturally imbedded ideas of what is normal and abnormal (Annamma et

al., 2013). Institutional momentum is hard to change because institutions cling to their

organizational memory (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). In the face of inclusive reforms,

numerous researchers have pointed to the lingering gap between policy and practice (Annamma

et al., 2013; Bierman & Powell, 2016; Hocutt & Alberg, 1994; Kozleski et al., 2011; Liasidou,

2012; Nguyen, 2010; Takala et al., 2009). In one example, Bierman and Powell's (2016)

research highlighted how slowly evolving school systems cling to "legacies as education"

(Bierman & Powell, 2016, p. 255). In many countries, inclusion has evolved in gradual stages.

Gidley et al. (2010a; 2010b) presented one model of how degrees of inclusion have evolved

gradually (see Appendix F). At first, students with disabilities were granted access to education

for the purpose of mobilizing the workforce. The next wave of reforms focused on encouraging

more participation for students with special needs out of a sense of social justice (Engelbrecht et

al., 2017; Gidley et al., 2010a; 2010b). Today the human potential movement has brought

inclusion to the forefront of the debate by arguing that education systems should work to

maximize the human potential of all students. Fundamental shifts in thinking are needed in

schools in order to make inclusion successful, yet many institutions are still operating under previous paradigms.

Labelling dilemma. Paradoxically, an emphasis on inclusion can lead to more exclusion (Liasidou, 2015; Richardson & Powell, 2011), by focusing attention on individual differences and deficits (Clark et al., 1999; Curcic, 2009; Florian & Spratt, 2013). Liasidou (2015) warned of the danger that when schools put too much emphasis on categories and labels of disability, they run the risk of creating identities of disablement, which are contrary to the education of all learners. Barton (1993) termed this the "essentializing" function of labels (Barton, 1993, p. 38). Schools must find a delicate balance at the "intersection of identity and difference" (Capper & Young, 2014, p. 158). Many students with special learning needs face the resource labelling dilemma (Ho, 2004; Hornby, 2015; Powell, 2016). Because resources are limited, in order to obtain access to programs and staff to support their education, families and students must obtain a label to diagnose a learning difference (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011). However, that label might have negative impacts including stigmatization (Meynert, 2014) and bullying (World Health Organization, 2011). Students, families, and educators must decide whether to accept a label to access support or ignore the difference (Hosking, 2008). Liasidou (2012) further claimed that the process of diagnosing and labeling students can be used to deflect attention away from the real problems in schools. Labeling can force a choice between an appropriate education, which might need to be delivered in a different setting, and an education in the same setting with peers (Hornby, 2015; Powell, 2016; Richardson & Powell, 2011).

Norwich (2014) proposed the capability approach as a resolution to dilemmas of difference. By focusing on relational terms and viewing disability in terms of the interaction of individual and social factors, the capability approach removes the negative stigma associated

with labels. Furthermore, by calling for social justice and equality, the capability approach offers a justification for differential allocation of resources without judgement (Norwich, 2014).

On the school level, a second paradox can evolve when schools seek to expand their inclusive special education programs by hiring more teachers with special education expertise, resulting in an increase in separate, special education programming (Bierman & Powell, 2016). Warnock (2010) pointed out a third paradox on a policy level. Schools need to employ categorical terminology in order to obtain funding for their programs, but those categorical labels focus attention on students' deficits.

Special Paradoxes for International Schools

Differing definitions and categorizations. International schools face unique barriers and paradoxes in implementing inclusive programs. These schools have students and families from many different countries with widely different categorizations of disabilities (Hornby, 2015; Powell, 2016; Powell, 2018; Richardson & Powell, 2011) and no universally accepted definition of disability (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011; Goransson & Nilholm, 2014), because categorizations of special education developed from cultural and historical concepts (Powell, 2016). For example, Powell (2016) claimed that in Germany, conceptions of learning disability are rooted in material disadvantage or under achievement, as opposed to the psychological processing deficit model of the United States. Finland uses a Response to Intervention definition as an administrative structure for tiered support (Björn, Aro, Koponen, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2016), emphasizing the mismatch between learner and environment, and does not use labels (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010). Although the United States also uses a Response to Intervention model, in the United States the model is used to diagnose and prevent learning disabilities (Björn et al., 2016).

In a report for the World Bank, Peters (2003) compared the vast differences in categorizations among European and American countries. Of the 21 countries surveyed, each country used a distinct combination of up to 16 different categorizations to classify students with special needs. Some countries used as few as three categories, while others used up to 16. Farrell (2010) noted that while the United States uses 14 categories, England only has nine. Even basic terminology in similar systems can be different. In the United States, what would be labelled as mental retardation is similar to what is labelled a severe learning disability in the United Kingdom. Tarr et al. (2012) studied how Finnish schools use the term *special education* and concluded that because the system is inherently inclusive, words such as *inclusion*, *integration*, and *normalization* are unnecessary. Labels are only used for visual, auditory, and physical impairments. The educational needs of students is the basis for support and service delivery (Itokonen & Jahnukainen, 2010).

Some researchers criticize the process of categorization. Farrell (2010) raised questions about taking a spectrum of human ability and chunking it into district categories, which could prevent educators from seeing a child holistically and could create a negative source of identity for that child. He further cast doubt on categorization by pointing to variances in prevalence. For example, rates of Oppositional Defiant Disorder can range from 2% to 16% and Conduct Disorder can range from 1% to 10%. The high rate of comorbidity among diagnoses and disorders is another cause of doubt. A fourth concern is the reliance in certain countries on Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing as a basis for diagnosis, even though IQ tests have been heavily criticized (Farrell, 2010).

Farrell (2010) summarized the debate by concluding that definitions should be clear in order to be helpful in guiding service delivery. Lack of clarity in definitions and categorizations

is a barrier to research and international comparisons of data (Goransson & Nilhom, 2014; Lindsay, 2007) and hinders effective programming in international schools.

Isolation. In order to be effective, learning support programs must be interconnected with their surrounding communities (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Berting & Pelletier, 2017; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Dunn, 1968). On a policy level, Liasidou (2015) noted that educational policies are not created in a vacuum, as they are a critical conduit for society to pass its values to the next generation, including conceptions of normalcy and privilege. On a practical level, special education programs are especially dependent on ties with the community because these programs must prepare students for life in the community, work to reduce the stigma of disability, and partner with health care and related service providers (Mariga et al., 2014). These wrap-around services, which extend beyond the school walls to support students both inside and outside the classroom, boost achievement (Mitchell, 2018). Furthermore, one program to implement inclusion successfully used teacher and administrator exchanges between schools to give participants a chance to share ideas, improve practice, and build networks with outside agencies. These exchanges were particularly helpful for headmasters, who can sometimes be lonely (Ainscow, 2010).

Gupta, Laborde, and Landry (2011) reported a worldwide shortage of professionals associated with human rehabilitation, with the greatest need in low income countries. Learning support programs in international schools often struggle to locate resources such as speech pathologists and orthopedic therapists. Thus, isolation is a further barrier to learning support programs in international schools.

Cultural stigmas. International schools must further deal with the reluctance of students to accept a diagnosis of disability because local cultures sometimes stigmatize disability

(Hornby, 2015; Mariga et al., 2014; Meynert, 2014). Stigmas can result not so much from having a disability as from simply being different (Hornby, 2015; Mariga et al., 2014), and prejudice can affect relationships between students with different learning needs and their peers (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011). Norwich (2008) referred to this as the dilemma of difference. Although stigmatization is a problem in many schools, international schools have a particular problem, as local cultures may have their own conceptions and superstitions related to disability (Hornby, 2015).

No legal mandate. A further problem for international schools is that there is no binding legal mandate for inclusion (Bunnell et al., 2016). The World Bank (2013) concluded that the state is the most effective driver of change for efforts to include marginalized groups. Peters (2003) detailed numerous treaties and international conventions that relate to the rights of people with disabilities, but international schools are not bound by such conventions. Inclusive education efforts must begin with a clear and cogent national imperative (Hornby, 2015) to empower an outside, marginalized group (Powell, 2016). However, legal imperatives of the host country are not always applicable or binding for international schools (Bunnell et al., 2016).

Schools may have other motivations for inclusion. One motivation is economic. The Education for All movement on an international scale activates the workforce by giving more people a chance to participate meaningfully in the labor market (Nguyen, 2010). Another motivation is the sense of social and participative justice (Gidley et al., 2010a; Liasidou, 2015; Nguyen, 2010). Social justice is a foundation of democratic learning communities (Liasidou, 2015), which means that all students should have equal access to learning opportunities. From this sense of justice, schools have become concerned with "increasing equitable distribution of rights and access to education, and creating greater access, participation and outcomes for all

students" (Engelbrecht et al., 2017, p. 685).

Pressure for high achievement. The moral, ethical, and financial motivations to educate all students created a further paradox for international schools because schools are under pressure to maintain high academic standards and a good academic reputation to remain competitive in a capitalist market (Gidley et al., 2010a; Tomlinson, 2012). Numerous researchers have noted the increasing emphasis in schools worldwide toward measurable academic achievement (Berryman et al., 2015; Hornby, 2015; Liasidou, 2015; Powell, 2016; Richardson & Powell, 2011). For example, funding in the United States after Barack Obama's Race to the Top campaign is based on raising academic achievement (Tomlinson, 2012). Students today need an excellent education to "chase credentials" (Jackson & Bisset, 2005, p. 196) to gain security in future education or workplaces (Lakes & Carter, 2011). These relatively small groups of elite students are the clientele of international schools, and Warnock (2010) argued that these elite groups play a critical role in the advancement of society.

The quality of many schools is assessed by the sole measure of standardized test scores (Liasidou, 2013; Powell, 2016). Thus, schools recruit "value adding" students and shy away from students "who add negative value" (Liasidou, 2012, p. 175). This leads to an ethical dilemma for teachers and schools, as they must decide whether to include students with disabilities on accountability measures, at risk of lowering the school's average scores (Mintrop & Zane, 2017). Inclusion may become secondary to the main purpose of garnering high test scores for the college bound elite (Powell, 2016).   For example, Topping (2012) reported that pressure for test scores in the United Kingdom led to principals being unwilling to admit students who might lower test averages. The *standards agenda* is linked to the *marketization* of education and has been shown to "discourage the participation and learning of some groups of

learners" (Ainscow, 2010, p. 75). Warnock (2010) called for schools to radically reform by completely abandoning A-level exams and beginning to issue new forms of school leaving certificates. Globalization, international competitiveness, and shifting economies pit an elite idea of quality education against social justice (Gidley et al., 2010a).

Competitive pressure has further increased as having a degree or higher education certificate has become increasingly necessary to gain access to employment (Powell, 2016). Although researchers have shown that including students with disabilities does not affect test scores (Idol, 2006), the perception remains. For example, Berting and Pelletier (2017) described the intricate systems that the admissions office uses to balance the need for high academic achievement with the need to admit all learners. To effectively implement inclusion, leaders must balance the competing needs of academic achievement, individualization, and social justice (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Capper & Young, 2014). Furthermore, as the economy shifts from a goods- and services- based economy to a knowledge economy, knowledge itself may become "an economic product and dominant means of production" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1998, p. 675).

Parent conflicts. Schools in a decentralized system face a heightened potential for conflict with parents (Richardson & Powell, 2011). Parent and family involvement is critical for the success of an educational program (Chan & Yuen, 2015; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Naraian, 2014). For example, Tomlinson (2012) described the conflict between parents in England needing a special education diagnosis from a team of many professionals, while schools want to save money. Because the school has leeway in a decentralized system, parents must advocate for their children to receive optimal services, while schools may not be able to meet all of their demands.

Historically, many parents of students with special needs have felt blamed for their students' deficits. For example, in England parents of black students vociferously object to special educational labeling, even though they are still overrepresented in the system (Tomlinson, 2012). Many of these parents in the 1980s sued the schools. Tomlinson (2012) linked the increased lawsuits from parents to the increased need for academic credentials to enter the workforce.

International school demographics. The demographics of the international school population pose further intervening variables for inclusion. Globalization has led to increased mobility for many populations (Gidley et al., 2010a). International students are highly mobile, changing schools every three to four years. Highly mobile and marginalized groups such as immigrants, refugees, and racial minorities are already at a disadvantage. On the other hand, international school populations are seldom under financial pressure because most of the students come from wealthy families of high academic achievement (Bunnell et al., 2016). This hampers inclusion efforts because economic necessity can further drive the need for inclusive reforms (Robo, 2014). The elite class, which is heavily represented in international schools, has a vested interest in protecting the hegemony, not in propagating educational reforms that might upset the current power balance (Brantlinger, 2006). On the other hand, Capper and Young (2014) argued that the multiple, intersecting identities of student difference can be expanded and applied to create opportunities for more effective practice for all students.

Lack of clear outcome measures and accountability. International schools are further faced with the lack of a clear definition of success, appropriate outcome measures for students with different learning needs, and a system for monitoring accountability. Research is inconclusive on the effectiveness of inclusive programs because the notion of effectiveness is

tied to outcome measures (Lindsay, 2007). In a review of 1,300 studies of inclusion, Lindsay (2007) found that only 1% evaluated the effectiveness of inclusion. Even gathering standardized data is difficult (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011). Success can either be measured *absolutely,* that is comparing an individual's current performance with previous performance, or *relatively*, which is measuring an individual's performance with other individuals.

Armstrong et al. (2010) argued that the lack of clear outcome standards for inclusion stems from the lack of an agreed upon definition of inclusion. The more encompassing the definition of inclusion, the more difficult it is to measure. For example, schools that have adopted a full definition of social inclusion should measure social outcomes, but such an assessment would be rife with methodological difficulties, because the full spectrum of social skills needed to live happily in a community is difficult to define and impossible to fully measure. Schools that adopt an instructional definition should use academic measures, but many indicators of student performance are also not easy to measure (Armstrong et al., 2010).

The debate remains if it is appropriate to use standardized achievement measures for students needing individualized education. For example, Itokonen and Jahnukainen (2010) pointed to a philosophical difference underpinning differences in assessment between the United States and Finland. The United States relies on absolute measures that are competitive, whereas Finland employs relative scales that acknowledge the value of the group versus the individual. While some would argue that publicizing the results of standardized tests encourages schools to improve their performance, Smith and Douglas (2014) found that focusing on raising test scores did improve test performance, but only for academically gifted students who had the potential to raise the school's results as a whole.

Smith and Douglas (2014) traced the development of the assessment model in the United

States to marketized No Child Left Behind reforms and argued that the rise in the testing industry was due to increasing competitiveness in the global economy, pressure to address inequality in education, and the need for objective measures of school quality. Measuring all students by the same standards is against the idea of special education (Kauffman & Badar, 2014), but success for inclusion remains hard to define for teachers and students. In one case study, Fisher and Frey (2001) found that success for students meant just accessing the general education curriculum, while teachers defined success as maintaining the normal classroom routine and expectations. The problem remains that while schools should encourage students to actualize their potential, an objective standard is an arbitrary matter of judgement, and the potential of students with disabilities may be different. Arguments against reliance on standardized testing include high frequency of assessment, curriculum that narrowly emphasizes material on the test, teaching to the test, a disincentive for disability specific instruction, and an incentive for schools to exclude students who may lower the school's average. This is particularly problematic for students with special needs, whose talents, skills, and passions may lie outside areas assessed by these tests. Furthermore, high-stakes testing incentivizes schools to classify some students as having disabilities in order to assign them to a particular sub-group for score reporting (Smith & Douglas, 2014).

Teachers must often construct their own meaning of special education and the goals of inclusion (Clark et al., 1999). Although different students and future citizens may have different goals and contributions to make to society, society values some skills more and finds some achievements more significant (Armstrong et al., 2010). Researchers such as Uusialo-Malmivaara et al. (2012) have suggested entirely different outcome standards and posited that success for learners with exceptional needs might not take the form of academic attainment, and

they studied the levels of happiness for students in inclusive and non-inclusive programs.

Kavale (2007) summarized the quagmire of unclear accountability measures, concluding that

most beg the question, "Is special education special?" (Kavale, 2007, p. 207). If not carefully

examined, accountability measures can be insidious, being used by the majority to shape a

particular definition of success, which might not be appropriate to marginalized groups

(Chapman, 2007).

Powell (2018) pointed to the continuing difficulty in making meaningful international

comparisons, which Smith and Douglas (2014) argued was the point of developing standardized

testing.

Accountability. Consequently, special education systems lack monitoring systems, even

though accountability has become an educational buzzword (Smith & Douglas, 2014). The

European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (2012) noted a complete

lack of monitoring for special education programs in Europe. The European Agency for Special

Needs and Inclusive Education (2014) suggested that even methods to collect data for

accountability are unclear. For example, Liasidou (2013) described the situation in schools in

Cyprus, where head teachers are unable to monitor special education teachers for accountability

because of a lack of professional standards and measures. For schools to become inclusive, new

systems of accountability and effectiveness indicators must be developed (Liasidou, 2013).

Armstrong et al. (2010) even suggested that schools would benefit from analyzing the costs and

benefits of various programs in terms of individual and collective good. Researchers call for

better accountability systems for teachers (EASNIE, 2014; Hornby, 2015; Mariga et al., 2014;

Mintrop & Zane, 2017; Peters, 2003). Lewis and Young (2013) dubbed the need to hold

teachers accountable to a quality standard a "perfect storm" (Lewis & Young, 2013, p. 199)

because there are so many different streams, people, and events associated with outcomes for special education. Hornby (2015) pointed to the need to clarify the broader goals of education to allow for individualized standards, while Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) suggested educators should develop collective norms to guide policies and practices. Mintrop and Zane (2017) suggested a better accountability system should create a dialogue among stakeholders. This is a particular problem for international schools because they fall outside the accountability mandates of a national school system.

      Continuum of services. Because of their size and limited resources, some international schools are limited in the services they can offer. A continuum of services is necessary for a robust learning support program (Hornby, 2015; Zaretsky, 2005). Schools need to find a balance with what they offer, how they offer services, and what additional supports they can provide to balance support and outcomes (Armstrong et al., 2010). Powell (2016) pointed out a further problem in which large organizations that value efficiency and effectiveness need standard inputs. Because course offerings, available staff, and partnerships with outside agencies may be limited, students must cope with a one-size-fits-all system.

      Education systems today aim for a wide concept of inclusion but have only narrow measures available for implementation (Topping, 2012). The quest for success in special education can be summarized: "For some onlookers, whether inclusion 'works' is like asking if God exists -- it is a question of faith, not evidence" (Topping, 2012, p. 9).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Philosophy and Justification

This study expanded the limited research on inclusion to international school contexts. Comparing large and small schools in Western and non-Western settings gave educators models of successful, highly inclusive schools upon which to base their programming, presented outside perspectives, and suggested new solutions. Both the school and the classroom were units of analysis to inform the discussion of efficacy in education for students with special learning needs.

This study adopted a constructivist paradigm, focusing on how humans construct meaning, how they engage in education and understand it, and how value is created through social relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Norms and meaning in schools are socially constructed (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010), as is the concept of disability (Anderson, 2015). The focus was on understanding the barriers and supports as experienced by teachers and administrators and how the broader social, cultural, economic, and political contexts affected those supports and barriers. The overall goal of this research was to explore the implementation of inclusive programs in international schools.

Research Design Strategy

A qualitative methodology was appropriate because this was an exploratory study in an area not well researched that focused on people's experiences (Merriam, 2009). The goal was to understand how educators experience contradictory pressures in inclusive education, how they construct value in the Education for All and Inclusive Reform movements, and how they define efficacy and success in their programs. The study focused on inclusive programs where they are

being implemented, justifying a case study design (Hocutt & Alberg, 1994). The findings are not meant to be generalized because each school is unique.

Case study design is ideal for studies of special education because case studies allow a richer, more complex exploration of people's stories, and the researcher has a chance to give a voice to those who might not be heard (Pugach, 2001). Case studies allow for flexibility to collect data in different ways including observations, interviews, and document analysis (Pearson, Albon, & Hubball, 2015). In-depth holistic research is particularly important in special education to promote critical and creative thinking (Rouse, 2016). The celebration of unique perspectives and the possibility of telling the stories of the oppressed makes the case study design particularly well suited for special education (Pugach, 2001).

This comparative case study sought to explore and describe international schools (Pearson, Albon, & Hubball, 2015). McLeskey et al. (2014) specifically called for comparison studies of highly inclusive, highly effective schools to broaden the width and breadth of current understandings of special education and inclusive education. Two comparative axes were used in order to explore different factors in the implementation and success of inclusive programs. Comparing small and large international schools could reveal how access to resources, staff training possibilities, course offerings, and leadership models affects programming. Comparing schools in Western and non-Western contexts could shed light on how cultural context, leadership structures, and social expectations impact implementation.

Methodological framework. In order to establish a more concrete basis for comparison, this study adapted Mitchell's (2015) model of inclusive education (see Appendix E). Mitchell argued that ten components are necessary for a successful inclusive program: vision, placement, adapted curriculum, adapted assessment, adapted teaching, acceptance, access, support,

resources, and leadership. These areas were used to shape observations, interview protocols, and content analysis of relevant documents.

This framework suited this study because it articulated ten clear factors that combine to transform schools to become places for all students to learn. This research study examined how these factors are being realized in international schools, the barriers and supports in each area, and the actualization in classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

This study used critical disability theory to guide and inform data collection and analysis. Critical theory in general seeks to examine how power structures marginalize and constrain groups based on race, class, gender, or disability status (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Critical disability theory evolved to focus on how disability impacts people's access to and participation in society (Hosking, 2008) and demonstrates how schools and other social contexts can perpetuate justice or injustice (Liasidou, 2012). Disability is socially constructed rather than the necessary result of impairment, and it is seen as a complex interrelationship between impairment, society's response to impairment, and the individual's response to impairment (Hosking, 2008). The negative effects of having a disability result from society's failure to meet the needs of those who are categorized as "abnormal" (Hosking, 2008, p. 6). Critical theory prioritizes giving voice to minorities (Chapman, 2007; Hosking, 2008), seeks to disrupt the majoritarian dichotomy of success and failure (Chapman, 2007), and investigates how power structures determine who gets valued for what traits and skills (Hosking, 2008).

This theoretical framework did not claim objectivity because the researcher and the research cannot be separated (Hosking, 2008). Thus, it was important in this study for the researcher to bracket her previous experiences, knowledge, and expectations (Orcher, 2014). The

researcher kept a research journal and left an audit trail to enable readers to evaluate the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the findings.

Research Questions

Research question #1. What factors, if any, influence inclusive programming in high school programs in international schools?

Subquestion #1. How do size and social, political, economic, and cultural contexts influence programming?

Research question #2. What are characteristics of a successful, inclusive classroom?

Subquestion #2. What are the supports and barriers to implementing inclusion in high school learning support programs in international schools?

Instrumentation

This study utilized three instruments to explore and understand each school. First, a content analysis was used to compare the schools' mission statements, school improvement plans, learning support handbooks, and other documents provided by the school. MaxQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to code the information according to Mitchell's (2015) framework. The full content analysis protocol is included in Appendix B. During each site visit, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and other key stakeholders, as well as classroom and school observations. Interviews and observations were scheduled on the advice of a key informant at each site. The detailed interview protocol is included in Appendix A and a detailed observation protocol is included in Appendix C.

Nine suggestions adapted from Merriam (2009) were used to enhance reliability and validity. Maximum variation was a guiding principle in selecting schools, which are both

representative and unique in their programs and contexts. Classroom observations and interviews sought maximum variety of knowledge, perspectives, and experiences. The study triangulated three streams of data to create a thick, rich description of each site. Time in the field was important to enhance credibility, so the researcher spent one to two weeks in each site, as allowed by the school, for trustworthiness, authenticity, and saturation. The researcher engaged with key stakeholders, special education teachers at three sites and an administrator at the fourth site, to develop rapport and complete content analysis of documents prior to site visits to maximize this time. Continual reassessment of coding ensured alignment and consistency, so the researcher continuously checked and revised the coding system. Furthermore, all data was coded in stages as close as possible to the time it was collected. Results are reported using thick, rich descriptions to allow readers to judge reliability and validity. Member checking was beneficial both to the study and to the participants. The results of each within case analysis were sent to teachers and administrators for validation. Discrepancies were resolved or reported. At the conclusion of the study, the cross-case analysis was sent to teachers and administrators, and their comments were reported. To make an audit trail available to the committee, the researcher kept a careful record of all data and faithfully reported the process of analysis, her own reactions, and her growth of understanding. Reflexivity in the research process was key. The researcher kept a research journal on her impressions each day. This journal was also be used to reflect upon her own biases, personal reactions, and the role her background experience brought to her analysis of the data. Finally, the study made clear the limited transferability of the findings. This study was not meant as a template for the implementation of other programs, but rather to inspire ideas, broaden perspectives, and inform discussion.

Sampling Design

This study used a purposive, convenience sample of high performing schools with robust learning support programs. All schools in the sample used an American style teaching philosophy, had a range of nationalities represented, offered a challenging college preparatory curriculum (Advanced Placement [AP] or International Baccalaureate [IB]), and emphasized a high college acceptance rate. Schools in the sample employed several full time learning support/special education teachers, had strong inclusive programs, and served students with mild to moderate disabilities.

The initial list of candidate schools was taken from a list of recommended schools by the Office of Overseas Schools for children of American embassy personnel. The researcher sought a contrasting sample with variation in size and setting. Small schools were under 800 students, and large schools were over 1,500 students. Europe and Asia were selected as contrasting Western and non-Western contexts because the researcher had experience teaching on both continents and had a general understanding of the cultures.

The final selection of schools was based on a good reputation for inclusion and personal relationships the researcher had established in the school. Personal relationships are important to gain more authentic access to the school and to lend credibility to the findings (Ortiz, 2003). The convenience sample was necessary for this study because of the limited time and monetary resources available to the researcher.

This sample allowed for comparison of schools along two axes: size and setting.

Table 1

Schools and Axes of Comparison

	Western	**Non-Western**
Small **<800 students**	Alabaster School	Devilline School
Large **>1500 students**	Brookite School	Coesite School

Data Collection Procedures

The case study focused on the bounded system of the international school. The two units of focus were the school and the classroom. The school was important as a unit of analysis because this was where policy is set, resources are allocated, and a vision is articulated. The classroom was important as a unit of analysis because this is where instruction is imparted to students and where the experiences of stakeholders are created.

Triangulation of data ensured a thick, rich portrait of each school by using three sources of data to investigate international schools. First, a content analysis of the school's mission statement, vision statement, school improvement plan, admissions criteria, and other relevant documents provided by the school was conducted to establish background information, according to the protocol in Appendix B. The researcher first attempted to locate these documents through the internet and then asked key informants at each site to provide relevant documents. The range of documents gathered was limited by the willingness of the school to share information, so the researcher also requested documents after trust had been built during the site visit. During the site visits, semi-structured interviews with learning support teacher(s), general education teacher(s), administrators, admissions officers, and other key stakeholders

provided further information. These interviews were initially scheduled upon recommendation

of the key informant, and then further participants were identified through a snowball method,

where current participants identified other experts and relevant stakeholders. Classroom

observations were initially scheduled upon recommendation of the key informant and

subsequently by using a snowball method.

The data collection matrix demonstrates how data in each area of Mitchell's (2015)

framework was gathered from these sources. In the table, the columns M1 - M10 each represent

an area of Mitchell's (2015) framework: vision, placement, curriculum, assessment, teaching,

acceptance, access, support, resources, and leadership. The abbreviations made coding more

efficient.

Table 2

Data Collection Matrix

	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
Document Content Analysis	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	
Principal Interview	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Interview		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Admissions Officer Interview	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Observation		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Questions for the interview protocols were developed by categorizing barriers identified from the literature review into Mitchell's (2015) framework (see Appendix A). Interview protocols were field tested on two teachers. Their feedback on specific questions is included in Appendix H.

Classroom observations were conducted according to a protocol that allowed flexibility for open exploration, a broad perspective, and the potential for new insights to develop (see Appendix C). During observations, the researcher noted information in the six areas suggested by Merriam (2009): setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and the researcher's behavior.

The researcher wrote a journal each evening with a summary of the day to document evolving understanding. Sufficient time was taken between observation sites to allow for data coding and reporting one site at a time.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using both within case analysis and cross case analysis frames (Merriam, 2009). The researcher followed the three steps for grounded coding (Orcher, 2014). First, the open coding was used to match data to the appropriate category from Mitchell (2015) and to determine key categories for the data that did not fit. Then, axial coding was used to determine relationships between the categories, and finally, selective coding was used to determine larger categories and crystalize comparisons.

For the content analysis, documents that were available prior to the site visit were coded by the researcher prior to the site visit. Documents obtained during the site visit were coded by the researcher after the site visit. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher at the earliest available opportunity, preferably in the evening of the same day, and then the transcript was sent

to participants for verification. This allowed the researcher to create a written record while the interview was still fresh in her memory, and it allowed time to investigate any questions that arose during the interview. Classroom observations were coded in the researcher's notebook as soon as possible, so that the researcher could tabulate codes and make sure sufficient information was gathered in each area. Coding for both interviews and classroom observations took place on the weekends and the week following the observations and interviews, so that the researcher could focus on each individual site. Coding was performed with the data analysis software MaxQDA. This program was especially helpful for querying and categorization.

Field Test

All interview protocols were field tested on currently practicing teachers who hold a master's degree in education. Feedback on individual questions was solicited (see Appendix H), and the protocol was revised to ensure that all questions could be covered in no more than one hour.

The field test on the teacher interview protocol lasted fifty minutes after the researcher took out two questions, which were clearly going to elicit redundant information. Several questions were confusing to the interviewee, so these questions were reworded and additional probes were added. Several questions were reworded to make them more neutral. The feedback form helped to further reword and clarify questions. The field test on the administrator protocol lasted forty minutes. Questions were similarly reworded, and one question was added.

Limitations of Methodology

Although this study attempted to triangulate data from a number of sources to present a complete picture, the methodology has limitations.

Semi-structured interviews allow informants to give their own perspectives, but they are limited by the informants' knowledge and memory (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Information can be incorrect if the informants are incorrect. Moreover, informants can be drawn into the courtesy bias, giving the information he or she thinks the interviewer wants to hear (Crawford, 1997). Furthermore, interviews require time and the development of personal trust (Rouse, 2016), both of which are limited in a short-term case study. Because interviews are labor intensive (Ortiz, 2003), the researcher could not interview all members of the target population and had to subjectively choose which informants can give the most interesting information. Given the wide variety of teacher perspectives and the finite nature of time, the researcher could not continue interviewing until full saturation was reached (Orcher, 2014). The researcher had to work until sufficiency rather than saturation was met (Ortiz, 2003). Moreover, interview data can be difficult to code (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007).

Classroom observation can be biased by the experiences and perspectives of the observer (Merriam, 2009; Rouse, 2016). Additionally, participants may change behavior when they are being observed (Rouse, 2016), and they may not feel comfortable disclosing sensitive information (Merriam, 2009). Because of the intense amount of labor required for observations (Rouse, 2016) and the burden imposed on host schools, the number of observation hours was limited and the researcher was not able to continue until saturation was reached.

Document content analysis can be inaccurate when the documents themselves are not accurate (Rouse, 2016) or do not reflect the reality of educational practice. The researcher must make the assumption that the documents reflect the beliefs of the person who wrote them (Orcher, 2014).

Delimitations. This project did not attempt to interview students or parents, even though their perspectives could be quite enriching, because the scope of this study was already quite broad. A vertical case study including special education teachers, general education teachers, students, teachers, parents, and community members would be a worthwhile future project.

Only four international schools were included in this study, and because each international school was unique, generalizability of findings is limited. A limited sample size is a disadvantage to qualitative research (Orcher, 2014). Although the researcher made an effort to use a sample that represents a maximum variety of different programs within the comparative framework, convenience also played a role in the selection of schools, as the researcher sought schools where trust and rapport could easily be established. The non-random sample further limited generalizability. However, this study was intended to be exploratory research to generate discussion, new ideas, broader perspectives, and encouragement for schools wishing to implement inclusion.

No attempt was made to compare international schools to local schools, though such a comparative study would be a worthwhile future project.

The non-validated interview protocol created by the researcher in order to answer specific research questions limited reliability. Although the researcher used field testing and pilot testing to enhance the efficacy of the protocol, reliability and validity are limited (Orcher, 2014). In addition, although some form of a stratified sample for interviewees would have been quite informative (Orcher, 2014), due to difficulties in obtaining access and voluntary participation, this research was limited to a purposive, convenience sample.

A quantitative assessment of program efficacy and outcomes was beyond the scope of this study. The effectiveness of programming was reported based solely on qualitative

observations and information provided by informants. A worthwhile future study would be to validate the perceptions of teachers and administrators with concrete measurements of student outcomes.

Because the researcher was working alone, validity and reliability of classroom observations were influenced by her previous experience and biases. The researcher kept a research diary, left an audit trail, sought peer debriefing, and engaged in member checking (Orcher, 2014), but the potential for bias to contaminate the findings remained.

Ethical Considerations

This researcher adhered to the highest possible ethical standards. Following the results of the Belmont report, approval from Bethel's Internal Review Board was obtained before the collection of any data and the ethical standards laid out by the Belmont report and the Internal Review Board were strictly followed.

All participants were informed of the nature of the study and the intended uses of the data and findings (Creswell, 2009). Participation was strictly voluntary, and informants were asked for written consent (Roberts, 2010). Disclosure of informed consent included an explanation of the purpose of the research, the duration of the research, any foreseen risks, description of benefits, description of measures to safeguard anonymity, contact information for follow up questions or concerns, and assurance that participation was voluntary (Roberts, 2010). Students were not directly observed or reported on, therefore parent consent was not necessary.

The researcher coded all results to ensure participants' and schools' anonymity. No real names of people, schools, or locations were used (Roberts, 2010). In coding and reporting, the research used pseudonyms, and school information was reported as a large/small school in Europe/Asia. Descriptions are thick and rich, but do not contain sufficient information to locate

any particular person or school. Concerns and questions about confidentiality were fully discussed with participants prior to the start of research.

Audio recordings were taken with the personal recording device of the researcher and immediately transferred to her laptop, which was kept in the personal possession of the researcher. Audio recordings were deleted from her personal recording device after transcription. The laptop is password protected, and no one else has access to the laptop. The coding program, MaxQDA, stores data in MXUSR format, which is encrypted. Raw data will be stored for seven years. Transcripts were coded with pseudonyms (Roberts, 2010). All work was backed up on an external hard drive that will be kept in the personal possession of the researcher only. Original data and real school names would only be shared with the researcher's committee upon request.

As the gatekeepers for their schools, principals and heads of schools were fully informed about the nature of the research prior to the start of the research (Creswell, 2009; Roberts, 2010). Their written consent is included in the appendices of this proposal. Their conditions and boundaries were respected by the researcher at all times.

Having an observer in the classroom can affect the educational experience of students (Creswell, 2009). Every effort to be unobtrusive and not interrupt or interfere with the educational process was made.

To ensure accuracy of data, the researcher used member checking, sought peer debriefing, and left an audit trail (Orcher, 2014; Roberts, 2010). Any discrepancies were reported and discussed in the final dissertation. The final written document fully discloses the details of the research and the study design so that readers are able to make their own judgements of reliability and validity (Creswell, 2009).

All results were shared with schools and participants as appropriate to create reciprocity (Creswell, 2009). In all cases, the researcher was just to the participants and schools by writing the findings in a dignified, humane manner that would not cause embarrassment (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007).

Creswell (2009) pointed out that the statement of the problem in itself can lead to the further marginalization of a population. In this case, the act of focusing on students with special needs or their teachers could draw critical attention to negative differences and create marginalization. The researcher made every effort to focus on differentiation and inclusion in their broadest senses, embracing the full spectrum of learners, to avoid stigmatizing any particular population or the teachers of any particular population.

Chapter Four: Findings of Case Studies

The first section of this chapter will describe each of the four individual schools with general impressions followed by information from each of the areas of Mitchell's (2015) framework. The second section will compare small schools, large schools, European schools, and Asian schools.

Small European School

Alabaster School is a school of under 500 students located in an urban center in Europe. The school is located in a neat neighborhood of low-rise, elegant residential buildings, surrounded by parks and water. Visitors entering the school are greeted in a reception area with overarching windows and flags from the more than forty countries the school hosts. An image of a snowflake emblazoned on the wall reminds students and teachers to celebrate the uniqueness of each individual.

Alabaster School is currently the only private school in the country. Due to the booming economy, the school experienced a sudden increase in enrollment this year and is now nearly at capacity. Sixteen percent of the students are host country natives, 28% have dual citizenship, and the other students represent over 40 countries. The local schools also enjoy a good reputation and produce high test scores, but students who are non-native English speakers must pass an entrance test to enter the English language International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Nelly, a community coordinator who works two days a week at the school, explained that one reason schools are so successful in this area is the value that families put on education.

> I think teachers here are appreciated and learning has historically been valued. I think
>
> that probably has a lot to do with it. If you have a child that grows into a family that
>
> education is important ... The teachers are highly trained and there is a national

curriculum, and therefore goals and what to do and how to do. (personal communication, October 30, 2018)

To maintain a balance, the Alabaster School Board states that no more than 50% in one class can be locals. Every year between 125 and 150 of the students move to other schools. Erik, a board member who has a daughter at the school, explained that students are drawn to the school to improve their English skills and gain a more international mindset. Other students want a smaller school experience (personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Nadine, the head of school, described the region where the school is located as highly progressive in terms of inclusion. Individualizing education, not only for students with learning differences, is a trademark of the school. Because the school emphasizes that each individual is unique, individuality and learning differences carry no stigma. The school is non-selective and admits all students whose needs can be met. Nadine articulated the school's perspective on celebrating differences. "We are an international school; we have multiple identities; we have rights, and even if you disagree, we allow others to have other perspectives … we want to make sure that children feel protected at our school" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

The school prides itself on the closeness of relationships that can be built in a small school. Matt, the high school principal, explained, "I think it's a really nice size in the sense of large enough to have some resources but still small enough to have relationships" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Vision

The desire to be unique and to celebrate individuality is at the heart of Alabaster School. When a teacher asked her home group to describe the school, they said it was interesting, not like other schools, because the teachers are "chill" (personal communication, October 20, 2018).

Even the interior architecture of the school is a clarion call for uniqueness with innovative, model classrooms, alternative seating, flexible arrangement of space, and bold new lighting technology.

Alabaster School leverages the advantages of its small size to craft a holistic education. Teachers and administrators know each child personally, and they build strong collegial relationships. The school's mission statement calls for a caring and diverse education. Teachers strive toward child-centered learning that should be at the core of student empowerment. The vision statement, consisting of only twelve words, resonates through the school, especially the three verbs: empower, inspire, thoughtful action. Nadine explained the idea of "knowing yourself and following your own way" was not difficult to sell to the board, and she looks for the actualization of this ideal in five areas: intent, structure, training, vision, and outcomes (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Helen, the individualized learning coordinator, whose drive is responsible for jump starting the inclusion program, began describing her vision by asking "How are we unique? What do we do?" From the foundation of the program, they realized they were surrounded by excellent local schools. School leaders began to realize that individualization was something they did well and could do even better. Parents recognized a need for this sort of education. Erik explained that his daughter will need a more international mindset and a good foundation in English (personal communication, October 26, 2018).

History of the inclusive program. Helen, an integral part of the learning support program since 2001, explained how the program evolved. At that time, there was no referral process and teacher turnover was high. She was the only student support person from

kindergarten to twelfth grade with seven students on her caseload, but she saw many other kids needing help without access to support and sought to expand support services.

The program developed slowly over time, both to foster its acceptance by the staff and to navigate the treacherous waters of stigma in the lower school and upper school. The school realized they needed a counselor, because referrals to outside professionals necessitated "big hoops" (personal communication, October 25, 2018) of paperwork and lost time. The school started working with an outside psychologist who was good at diagnosing needs, but unable to do anything about them. The school gradually expanded its support department and hired the psychologist four days a week. Helen described how the department started to take wing. "Now we are actually able to think creatively and have the resources to support the kids" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Three years ago, Helen was appointed to a senior leadership position in the school to better coordinate school-wide efforts.

Teachers, parents, and administrators pointed to Helen as a key driver of the change process, but she says she nurtured the change process from within, rather than forcing from without. When asked how she instigated the cultural shift, Helen reported that although she was unsure if the school was ready for such a big change, she decided to just seize the opportunity. She shared that she was not sure how the change was going to look or if it was going to work, but she was able to find other teachers who were willing to take action and initiative:

> So, there was this shift from sitting around and talking about students we don't work with and try to think what to do, or we talk with the people who actually work with and know the kids and try to figure out together what to do. So, it was a big change. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Helen is hopeful about the future growth of the department. "I think the teachers are starting to see that ... I now have someone who's there to support that or think about strategies" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). In expanding the program, she is careful to maintain consistency across the divisions. To bridge the differences in learning support between lower and upper schools, she has staff work across divisions. She also ensures all teachers are informed about curricular initiatives such as Kid Skills that are used in only one division, and she streamlines consistent terminology.

Language is a key factor in building the ethos of inclusivity, and the school has coined creative terms to describe support systems without stigmatizing. Sally, the school counselor, explained that the school's shift from a medical model of deficit to a social model to understand learning differences has facilitated the new terminology. She pointed out that even choosing to ask about the word stigma introduces the idea of how to create an atmosphere in a community (personal communication, October 25, 2018). For example, teachers engage in spill out lessons in the learning lab, and students can attend Individualized Learning Opportunities (ILO) after school. Sally seeks to change the stigma around counselling by changing the language and explains that her counselling program is similar to coaching in the business world:

> The business world does very well because coaching is a great luxury, and if you've got a coach it's really cool and you can afford it. If you get a coach it means you are in senior management. That's a benefit. Could we not turn that around, so this is just a default benefit because you are valued? (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

In classrooms, conversations, and interviews, three strong themes defined the vision of the school: relationships, flexibility, and individualized preparation of each student for his or her unique future.

Relationships. "This school prioritizes personal relationships," Helen emphasized (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Teachers and administrators accompany students on their learning journeys. Nadine articulated the attitude of a good teacher, "We're in it together" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). The word "we" is used so often it seems to be the unofficial motto of the school.

Matt, the school principal, explained why relationships are important. "Things we know about education in general are that building relationships and connections with kids, especially over time, is important" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Relationships are built into the support structure, as every child gets a personal advocate, and personal connections are the foundations of the Student Support Team (SST) process. Helen explained, "We don't just sit there and think about what the kids need. We have someone who follows up with that" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Nadine leads change and nurtures buy-in by building relationships with people. "So, to me there's ownership of us in this. Because if I am going to empower someone, that means they have to feel that from me in a very special way" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Flexibility. Flexibility characterized every aspect of the school from teaching to scheduling to curriculum to meal choices at lunch. Flexibility in the school is influenced in part by the local schools, which are also adaptable in terms of educational delivery, but the added resources of being an international private school gives additional means to be flexible. Matt explained why flexibility is important for education:

People learn and live in different stages in different intervals, that people need different amounts of time to come to things, different amounts of practice to connect skills and

understandings, but all of that comes up against a very traditional school schedule that makes it hard. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Matt linked the flexibility of the staff in terms of working with different age groups to their ability to form relationships. "Flexible is having professionals and teachers who are getting to know actually where the students are over longer periods of time than a school year" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Because Alabaster School is a small school, he is able to adjust schedules, classes, and staffing in ways that would be more difficult for other schools.

Individualization/real world after school. "In a perfect world we would have space and time to accompany every student on their journey as they move through what life is offering," Sally explained (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Individualizing education to prepare students for the real-world drives education at Alabaster School. Although the school's mission statement calls on educators to prepare students to succeed in a challenging world, administrators and teachers emphasized that success would be a different path for each child. Matt explained, "An individualized program is just representing where students are" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

The school is clear that they do not strive for high test scores or elite college placement. They are not trying to be an elite school. Nadine summed up the school's emphasis on individualization, "To me this is our bread and butter. We're not some big Asian school where everything is dependent on test scores" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Matt explained that individualizing outcomes to prepare students for the real world is also good for the teachers:

Some of those things that educators can be really frustrated about aren't really about education but can be societal. Societal expectations of how the world really works. I

think that's where schools do have a responsibility to not be such a bubble that's so different from the world that you're not exposing kids to some of that reality. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Part of preparing students for the future is equipping them with social and emotional skills. The school has a rich and diverse social and emotional learning program. The curriculum emphasizes compassion. For example, Nadine is enthusiastic about an interdisciplinary unit featuring the novel *Exit West* to teach students about compassion and to examine why people sometimes turn away. "If you believe in this question, cause this question is essential to the problems we have. That sometimes people don't care. You have to understand why, and why we shouldn't turn away at times. So, this what we are exploring" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

The passion for individualization is clear in students, teachers, and administrators and creates an authentic atmosphere of acceptance. Nadine said, "This is who I am, this is my core values as well" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

New strategic plan. The school is currently in the process of drafting a new strategic plan for the next five years. Nadine started by asking the students in their home groups for their ideas. In her home group*,* Helen asked students if they knew what the mission and vision plan was. Immediately one boy piped up, "Each one is unique!" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Helen proceeded to list student ideas of what would make an ideal school: field trips, mental wellbeing, less homework, more relevant homework, less stress, homework spaced more evenly, a foam room for bouncing, a slide instead of stairs, a shorter school day, inside basketball courts, inside recess, the snack kiosk open longer, private lockers, no crickets for lunch. They

were happy with the technology, and not happy with the number of course options, because they wanted a film course. The researcher noted what she thought was typical kid requests, but Nadine took the kids requests seriously and already had a plan to buy new cushions for benches.

Erik, who also has a daughter in the program, shared the ambivalence of the board about expanding in the future. He noted the demand for this kind of "high-level" school to expand is strong, but the current location is limited. Disadvantages to expanding into a second building would include hiring another administrator and other financial burdens. They would need to put more effort into keeping the feeling of small school individualism (personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Helen is excited about the future of her program. She feels her changes are catching on in the school. She described a recent reflection in an upper school department meeting about what was going well and what challenges still faced the school, "I was super, super excited to see that ... [some departments] felt that individualized learning initiative was starting to go really well. And they were talking about the SST [student support team] meetings are helpful" (personal communication, October 29, 2018).

Placement

Flexibility is the key theme of placements at Alabaster School as they aspire to place each student in the best classroom to maximize his or her learning journey, regardless of age. The school strongly favors mixed ability groups and avoids clustering any type of student.

Admission. Alabaster School has a unique position in the local community as the only private school. Some local schools offer an English-language education and/or the International Baccalaureate [IB] curriculum, but students must pass an entrance exam. The local schools are huge, often having over 2,000 students. Although the community offers a wealth of supports, the

supports can be difficult to access because of bureaucracy and waiting time. Both the board member and the community counselor felt that local schools were not as well-resourced as Alabaster School.

The admissions team uses Open Apply to manage their admissions process, and they are strongly committed to offering admission to anyone who can succeed. The official policy of the school states, "The school is able to meet the educational needs of the applicant within its programme of teaching and learning … Admission shall not be denied because of nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability or religious beliefs" (Alabaster School, 2018). The only caveat is that the school explicitly asks parents to share all relevant information about the child. Students with higher needs may be admitted provisionally or with the requirement that the parents pay for an assistant.

Students do not need a formal diagnosis to receive learning support, and formal testing is only sought when the information would improve instruction. Matt is confident in the school's ability to meet a wide variety of needs:

> For the vast majority of the kids, unless they have some specific challenges that are really hard to meet in this setting, we're saying that we can meet their needs, which I think is unique in a lot of international schools, who have a lot of different admissions processes for accepting people. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

When asked how the admissions standards might change since the school is full, and they could begin to be more selective, all administrators reported they would remain true to the school's mission of supporting diverse needs and keeping the classes small.

Once admitted, the type and number of service hours in both the lower school and the upper school is determined strictly by student need. Location of support is flexible and varies

greatly. Most teachers and assistants preferred push-in support or co-teaching, so that assistants could know what the teacher expects of other students and the students do not feel like they are missing something. In both the lower school and the upper school, students participated in spill out groups, groups that meet outside the normal classroom, when necessary for direct instruction or for students who were easily distracted. Some students had scheduled direct instruction time in the learning lab each week while their peers were in foreign language classes. In the upper school, students worked with assistants on beanbags in the hall, in the library, or in empty classrooms when necessary for direct instruction. Erik reported that the flexible placement of students reduces the chance of stigma for his daughter, because students are always going to different places for different groups (personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Some assistants work with smaller groups of students, but these groups were always varied, with a combination of learning support and non-learning support students. Teachers preferred heterogeneous, mixed-ability groups, and grouping arrangements were never static. Katie, a learning support teacher, explained the advantage of mixed ability groups, "Let's say I have a group of kids and it's mixed ability, so some kids can explain, and some kids need to watch the explainers, or they can kind of get on with their work while I help someone" (personal communication, October 29, 2018).

Math is an exception. In middle school, the math courses are mixed ability, but in the ninth and tenth grades the classes split into regular and extended. Katie explained that students can "feel out a little bit" (personal communication, October 29, 2018) if they are going into higher level or standard level math in the IB program. The foreign language courses have a wide range of ability levels. The teacher pointed out the advantage that lower students can learn from

higher students, and higher students can explain to lower students. For her, however, it was somewhat of a struggle to instruct the different levels simultaneously.

Because of the size of the high school, two sections of each course are typically available. The learning support team works with the assistant principal to evenly split students with the highest needs as much as possible. However, because of timetable constraints, students with learning needs occasionally cluster. Clustering creates the image of *that* class and is avoided whenever possible. Until this year, students were able to place themselves in upper level or standard level math, but math teachers reported problems with unwise student decisions.

In the upper school, 90% of students enrolled in the IB Diploma Program. Students also have the choice to complete an Alabaster School diploma or an Alabaster School certificate. Students in the Diploma Program can switch classes and levels flexibly with no cut-off date. To place students in the Diploma Program, the IB coordinator counsels each student in course selection and tries to offer a variety of courses to match student needs. Students needing extra support are advised to enroll in courses that are easier to push into. For example, students who may not need a high level of science can take environmental science. Many students take film, as a flexible, interesting option. Students are discouraged from switching classes mid-semester because it does not empower them.

In making placement decisions for incoming high school students, the learning support coordinator asks teachers what skills kids really need and places students with inclusion as the goal. When deciding on high school programs, Matt encourages students to think about what they "would need to do with this very narrow realm of skills" (personal communication, October 25, 2018) and to focus on their areas of expertise and strength.

Adapted Curriculum

The school uses a three-tier system of support. The first tier consists of school-wide, high quality instruction that provides as much individualization as possible to each and every learner in the school. Class sizes are kept small, so that even in the Diploma Program, as Matt explained, teachers can vary the pace "to work with kids who need different amounts of time with different things" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Several curricular initiatives are in place to support all learners.

Social/emotional learning. Social and emotional learning is integral to teaching students the skills they need for the real world. The school is training teachers to implement Cognitive Coaching in the upper school. As Nadine explained, "Cognitive Coaching is a model of working with others to help create agency in that individual" (personal communication, October 29, 2018).

Upper school students also use the *I See, You See* curriculum created by Cambridge University to enhance emotional intelligence. The lower grades use Ben Furman's *Kid Skills* program to teach social skills. Classroom teachers take class time for social and emotional learning in the lower school. Students in the upper school receive instruction every week during advisory. Counselors give teachers themes and provide support and resources. In addition, middle and upper school students have a core class for 45 minutes once a week, which is devoted to developing social and emotional skills.

Because the school emphasizes relationships, each student in the middle school and upper school has a home group in addition to an advisory group. Home groups are mixed ages, so that teachers can stay with one group of students longer. Even Nadine has a home group to foster her connection to the students.

The school seizes opportunities to enhance social and emotional learning in other ways. For example, the school has created an interdisciplinary unit around the novel *Exit West* to emphasize compassion. The unit involves ninth grade English classes, individuals and societies (social studies) classes, media, drama performances, and service-learning opportunities at local refugee shelters. Nadine explained how this unit encourages social and emotional development:

> This question is essential to the problems we have. That sometimes people don't care. You have to understand why, and why we shouldn't turn away at times. So, this what we are exploring, but we're exploring in a way we see the kids' have authentic viewpoints. It's not top down. You should do this. They have to discover it for themselves. (personal communication, October 25, 2019)

Mindfulness. Kristie, a learning support teacher, is formally trained in mindfulness. She gives lessons to the fourth and sixth graders once a week using the *Paws B* curriculum. During one lesson, she encouraged sixth grade students to identify when their minds go on autopilot and to reconnect the bodies and minds. Students are taught to take a "Paws B" if they find themselves getting upset, or they can connect with a buddy. During another lesson, she gave fourth grade students time to meditate, and then taught about the role of the amygdala in emotional regulation. She taught the students to breath and "drop down," their cue to breathe deeply, rather than fight, flight, or freeze.

In addition to scheduled Paws B lessons, Kristie invites older students and teachers once a week to the learning lab during morning break to explore mindfulness apps on iPads, read articles on mindfulness, or simply relax.

Course selection in the diploma program. The Diploma Program supports all learners by offering a variety of courses. For example, the school offers Environmental Systems and

Societies as a lighter science option. Kramer, the IB coordinator, explained, "Environmental

Systems and Societies, with the idea that it is more experimental, that students who don't feel

that pure joy of science, a little more to latch onto. And it's been somewhat successful" (personal

communication, October 29, 2018). He emphasized the variety of choices offered by IB as a

means to make it successful to all students, yet he still has some concerns about the abstract

nature of Theory of Knowledge and the demands of the extended essay for students with learning

needs.

Interdisciplinary units. Teachers at Alabaster School are encouraged to create

interdisciplinary units, affectionately referred to as IDU's by the staff. For example, the math

teacher and individuals and societies teacher worked together on a unit about maps. In math, the

students learned to measure and calculate scale, while in the individuals and societies class

students learned to read maps for other information. As a culminating activity, students in the

middle school spent a day in the forest, where they also did creative writing for English and a

team building activity with their home groups. The summative project will be a scaled map of a

student created amusement park.

Referral process. Teachers can refer students when they believe that school-wide

supports are not enough. Students can self-refer in the upper grades. Alabaster School has tried

to streamline and simplify the referral process with the goal of consistent articulation across the

school and continuation of services. Teachers can use a simple online form to describe the

strategies they have already tried in the classroom and the results of parent communication.

Next, Helen gathers information from Open Apply and other teachers who work with the student.

She invites parents and students to participate in the student support team. The goal of the

student support team is to create an action plan to help the student in the classroom.

Although the school does not have a formal gifted and talented program, the student support team works through the same process to extend the level of the curriculum for students who need extra challenge. For example, one student has already mastered the math requirements for her grade level. The math teacher works with the learning support team to give her higher level work, and she works once a week individually with a learning support teacher on individual math investigations. Although she sits in the classroom with her peers, her curriculum is personalized to her learning needs.

Individual learning plan. Students do not need a formal diagnosis to access support through an individual learning plan. The goal of the individual learning plan is to outline supports and strategies. From the fourth or fifth grade, students see their plan, and older students help draft their plan. Helen's goal is that older students will eventually lead their own meetings and that every student in the school would have an individual learning plan. At the student support meeting, each student gets an advocate. The advocate is a teacher in the learning support department who will work closely with the student and monitor follow up.

A table of all the students who have individual learning plans is available through Google drive to make it easy for all teachers to access the information. The table includes the reason for support services, a description of services, accommodations, and specific goals for students working in extended studies. Those who teach that student directly can click on the student's name to access that student's learning plan. Helen is careful to open the documents only to authorized persons to protect student privacy.

In the Diploma Program, teachers must follow the IB curriculum, but they work as a team with students to ensure success. As Kramer explained:

I always ask hires, what do you do with that kid who is taking a SL [standard level] course because he needs to take a course? What do you do? And if their approach is, I'm going to beat the love of psychology into them, that doesn't work. What we need is to say hey, you're here because you have to be, and we're going to get you through this. We'll make it work. (personal communication, October 29, 2018)

For students who are pursuing an Alabaster School diploma or an Alabaster School certificate, the school can adapt the curriculum to their specific needs and interests. For example, one teacher takes a group of boys to a local gym once a week to foster social skills, relationships, and build physical fitness. He mixes the group so that no one is singled out. One student is creating a website on outdoor fitness opportunities in the local area, including maps and informational videos. This website is part of an electronic portfolio that will be his summative assessment for his certificate.

Adapted Assessment

Teachers follow the words of the mission statement, "We believe that education is more than just success in tests and exams" (Alabaster School, 2018). A common theme in discussing expectations with students throughout the school was "Let's look at this together." The school may be influenced by the surrounding culture, which also does not emphasize standardized, high-stakes testing. Matt explained that assessments are a tool to provide a window into where students are to make good educational decisions. Teachers use the IB Primary Years Program and Middle Years Program rubrics flexibly in the lower and middle schools, focusing on different means of expression and providing formative feedback to students based on their potential and needs. Teachers may adjust strands based on student ability.

Teachers modify the content, format, and delivery of summative tests for students with individual learning plans. For example, an IB math teacher makes assessment accessible by consistently grading every unit on weighted homework, one formative quiz, and one summative assessment. Her co-teacher takes students with learning plans to another location during tests to give them extra time or a shorter test. Other accommodations include using different colored paper or different font for students with dyslexia. Charles, a personal assistant in the high school, reported that in English classes questions can be worded differently or shorter texts can be used. Math students at all levels with learning plans use calculators where it helps them to be successful.

The shift into the Diploma Program is what Matt described as, "the biggest funneling challenge we have at this school" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Through the tenth grade, the school can be flexible to allow students to use alternative ways to express understanding, but the IB prescribes Diploma Program exams. Katie pointed out that once students enter the Diploma Program, there are not so many formative exams. Kramer encourages IB teachers to focus on skill building and not impose rigorous exam conditions until near the end of the program. He tries to predict as early as possible what accommodations the student might get from IB and implement those from the start of the program. He encourages teachers to be flexible with formative assessments. One assistant reported that some students feel tension because they want to get into good schools and need good scores.

Outcome measures. Students leaving the high school have a choice between an IB diploma, an Alabaster School diploma, or an Alabaster School certificate. Students choosing the Alabaster School diploma have to fulfill certain credit requirements, whereas with the Alabaster School certificate, the school has full flexibility to tailor the program to each individual student.

Students are encouraged to think about what they want to do after high school, and they can switch away from the DP diploma.

The school uses ManageBac to monitor student progress. Upper school students get a numbered grade, whereas lower school students get a narrative report from their teachers. Three parent conferences each year and mandatory written feedback on assessments give students feedback on their performance. Students with limited English can be exempted from receiving grades. The school does administer Measure of Annual Progress (MAP) testing, but only to know where students are, not as an outcome measure. The results are not reported publicly. The English as an Additional Language department uses the World-Class Instructional Design Assessment (WIDA) to monitor progress.

Teachers often work together with students to agree on expectations. For example, in the technology class, the teacher sat with certificate students to look at the IB rubric for their internal assessment, and they decided together which expectations were appropriate and how the final product would look. He agreed to move some deadlines for students so their workload among classes would be more evenly spaced. His goal was that every kid would walk away understanding something. In another example, the eighth grade English teacher had a class discussion to agree on how they would be held accountable for their reading projects and what deadlines were appropriate.

Students are constantly reminded "you're aiming for your version of you" (Nadine, personal communication, October 25, 2018) in education. Educators and administrators aim to build students with grit who are reflective of their own learning styles. Several teachers reported that assessment should be accurate and reward hard work.

Definition of success. When asked about their definition of success, a common theme from teachers and administrators was they wanted students to have access to their next stage in life, whatever that might look like. No one was interested in test scores or competitive college admittance. Nadine talked about "getting kids through the next door" and "we're going to help them get to the next level, whatever that path might be … Let's go to a place where the kids feel good about themselves" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Matt further emphasized that test scores are not important.

> The goal isn't for kids to be scoring a certain score on the DP [diploma program] exam. For some kids it's an amazing achievement to get a 24 score to pass an exam and that's much more exciting that someone who got a 38 who maybe didn't work that hard. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Charles agreed with parents that a successful program makes kids feel safe. "For the parents, I sometimes feel that they … want to know that their children are in a safe positive environment, being treated like a normal kid and having the experiences of a normal kid" (personal communication, October 31, 2018**).**

Nadine pointed out that the future world of work is uncertain. High scores and admittance to college no longer guarantees a job, so she wants to prepare students with skills that are highly adaptable and to be lifelong learners. She explained:

> That whole myth of universities, or high scores, job, family, car, house, dream, that doesn't exist in the next 10 years. You got to be ready to change your skills. You got to be ready to learn how to learn, that's the most important thing we need to teach young people for constant lifelong learning. You can't grab onto something and say this is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

In the Diploma Program, the IB coordinator strove to redefine the question of what it means to be a diploma student:

Who creates that diploma and what is it good for? Get away from that idea that the diploma experience is for students who would be getting over 40 points, or even would get 24 points. IB diploma students can be successful even if they don't earn their diploma. (personal communication, October 29, 2018**)**

Charles added that the openness of the school was motivating to him as a teacher and inspires him to help students achieve their individual best.

Sally said she would view success as people being more open to the idea of therapy and counseling. She linked going to therapy with the business world's idea of coaching (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Adapted Teaching

Teaching at Alabaster School echoes the school's vision with an emphasis on flexibility/creativity, strong personal connections to kids, and a focus on real world skills.   The school day is structured to meet the needs of youngsters. School starts just before nine o'clock. In the upper school, students attend four 75-minute blocks, with a twenty-minute break in the morning and an hour for lunch. The school has a low student teacher ratio and a large student support team including a school psychologist, counselor, nurse, and many teachers and assistants enhance teaching.

The student support team emphasizes flexible and creative teaching methods. Nadine explained how the expectation for flexibility helps teachers create better connections with kids. "I think in an environment [with] the expectation of having a level of flexibility for how you

manage students is also reflective of what you are coming to [that] environment ... It's a different kind of dialogue you're always having with kids" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Teachers use empathy and compassion to strengthen their relationships with kids. For example, the math teacher expressed that not everyone needs to be a mathematician, and so she strives to make math work in different ways for students with different talents (personal communication, October 31, 2018**)**.   The IB coordinator coaches teachers to help kids who are not passionate about a subject to get them through it, rather than trying to foster a love for the subject that does not fit. Matt summarized the administration's support of flexible and creative measures: "That's where I do think that having to push against that in some ways does change the role of what a teacher looks like and what the expectations are" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Teachers use a variety of methods to make learning accessible to a wide range of learners. Extra teachers and assistants are available to provide group level support, and the school tailors teaching to meet individual needs. Departments often collaborate on interdisciplinary units, so frequently that *IDU* is a common term. At the classroom level, instruction at Alabaster School is characterized by student choice and a focus on making learning relevant and interesting for students. In a social studies class, students chose their own vocabulary words. In a math class, the teacher used google maps to engage students, and then students chose their own capital cities to calculate scale. The science teacher made pizzas with the students to demonstrate cell parts because the department wanted to make learning more fun and interesting.

By focusing on relevant life skills, teachers are able to de-emphasize requirements that are not important and meet students with compassion. Nadine explained the connection of compassion, pedagogy, and student engagement:

Compassion theory ... There's a part of teaching pedagogy that goes with this and there's a piece what I call intention. If you have a teacher who's truly present with their students and with their class, then they are creating a world where students are being seen as individuals and their needs are being met. And if you have a pedagogy that is meeting the needs of that age level, then to me all these three things come together. You see in classes where the students are highly successful. They know their students. The students love them. There's a feeling that we're in it together, and we're going to do great things. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Differentiation. Within classes, teachers adapt and differentiate for various learners. Matt explained, "Because everyone has different learning challenges and needs, so an individualized program is just representing where students are" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). For example, one language class is grade-level grouped and has many levels from advanced speakers to beginners. One lesson began with students watching a short, engaging video about teenagers traveling in the target language. Luz, the teacher, then grouped the students in similar ability groups. For advanced students, she posted an assignment on ManageBac incorporating several orders of thinking skills. She gave the intermediate students the same assignment, but they were only expected to do the first half. The beginners would find their own vocabulary from a transcript of the video. When they were finished, the teacher provided a short grammar instruction for the beginners, projected on the board so that intermediate and advanced students could follow if they wished. She had previously sent

individualized grammar lessons to the advanced and intermediate students, based on their questions, need, and ability.

After the lesson, Luz explained that students with different backgrounds learn language differently, "People learn language in different ways in different countries." For grading, she had given students the levelled criteria, but grading would be done according to "what they know" (personal communication, November 6, 2018**).**

Elizabeth's English class is another example of differentiated instruction. Students were reading the novel *Exit West* as part of a multi-disciplinary unit on compassion. Students had 25 minutes each day to discuss the reading in small, heterogenous literature circles. Groups were student-led with rotating roles of summarizer, questioner, connector, and illustrator. Elizabeth encourages multiple modalities of expression and engagement. At the close, students themselves chose how much they would read for the next night and assigned their own roles for the next day.

Elizabeth explained why giving groups autonomy and agency works. "The more you give them control and accountability, the better they do" (personal communication, November 6, 2018). She felt that "schools are unfairly creating an expectation of failure" with narrow expectations, and teachers should rather "leave doors open so kids will develop their potential" (personal communication, November 6, 2018). She recognizes risk taking and grades according to ability. Learning is tied to the real world in that the students will produce a dramatic production at the end, and they have skyped with an American theater professional to get feedback on their efforts.

Matt summarized the school's ethos of differentiation. "An excellent classroom teacher is an excellent LS [learning support] teacher, if you know different learning styles, you know

different kids with different skills. You learn that naturally over time" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Push-in versus co-teaching. To extend the capacity of classroom teachers to adapt teaching, student support teachers and assistants use co-teaching, push-in teaching, and individual support fluidly and flexibly.

For example, in an upper level math course, two teachers trade roles so naturally, it is difficult to identify who is the "real" teacher. When direct instruction is necessary, they share lecturing, but they both prefer to give students lessons they can explore on their own with support. Katie explained the benefit of co-teaching:

> I think a more of a co-teaching or parallel teaching model teaching at different levels, so we can focus on different students with the same skill or lesson or whatever, or where we're everyone is working, and I'm focusing my attention on one or two students, but when ... it's a teacher centered lesson, that's the worst. Someone's just the up-front teacher and I'm in the back standing there. I can't take kids because that would interrupt the lesson, but I also can't see how that kid's doing. That's not effective. (personal communication, October 29, 2018)

In one co-taught English class, Charles worked with an English teacher to support a class of 16 students. The English teacher explained he starts each year with an advertising unit pitched to individual interests. He uses a mix of audio and visual inputs acting and performative tasks, and group and individual work. He matches highly able students with lower performers. He grades by rubric, but for struggling learners he leaves off two strands. Other groups grade the presentations, with each group required to discuss and agree upon one grade. He and Charles introduced the R5 independent reading program, which would be assessed on reflection. The

English teacher emphasized that learning should be fun and should spill out of the classroom. He wanted kids to walk around. He always gives students a copy of class notes and asked them to vote on the timeline and project expectations.

Parity is an issue in co-teaching. One teaching assistant stated that at first, "I felt like I was walking into someone else's house, even though every teacher really sort of emphasized that it was nothing like that, it felt a little bit like this isn't my place" (personal communication, October 31, 2018). Longevity helps, and at Alabaster School teachers tend to stay a long time. The same assistant has been working with the same co-teacher for three years, and he reported, "We're like an old married couple. We can finish each other's sentences" (personal communication, October 31, 2019). Another learning support teacher explained that in a co-taught class, each person has their own role:

> I think, they see us both with teachers, but ... she's the one who brings the lessons to class. Sometimes I bring them … they need help they'll come ask us. Like the IAs [internal assessments] … I have to defer to her because she's taught it before ... In that way she's more like the coordinator because she knows that, but in actually teaching, we are both. And I feel my role is to really check with those kids who have learning plans or who I know are struggling. I feel like I need to know how every child did every day. She's responsible for the whole group, I'm responsible for those kids, but we equally check [on them]. (personal communication, October 29, 2018)

Planning time is an issue. Although the administration has scheduled planning time for many co-teachers, the time is never enough. Several assistants and teachers reported they wished for more time to sufficiently plan.

A third issue in co-teaching is expertise in the subject area. One teaching assistant stated, "When ... I'm the support teacher, the teacher has said something, and then I've had to go 'that's not right, you can't say that.' So, you, know there's always these little things that happen …" (personal communication, October 31, 2018). This is particularly an issue in the Diploma Program with specific IB requirements.

When more focused direct instruction is necessary, students can move to "spill out" groups with a teacher. For example, in a lower school math class, students are divided into four mixed ability groups. Katie has a group of five students, two of whom are on her formal caseload. "I need to know where they are," she said. The other three were pulled in "for fun" (personal communication, October 29, 2018). During the lesson, Katie used encouraging, positive language like "You're thinking right" (personal communication, October 29, 2018). To correct a student's mistake she said, "You have written the numbers in another way" (personal communication, October 29, 2018). One boy, who was struggling with the lesson, went to bathroom for a long time, and when he returned, he wrote, "This is hard" in his notebook. Katie did not comment but explained after the lesson that she would see him later during his foreign language time to give him extra, focused help (personal communication, October 29, 2018).

Individualized learning plans. Some students need support beyond what can be offered in small groups. In one math spill out group, Katie introduced the researcher by asking the students what individualized instruction means to them. One boy quickly chimed in, "It means everyone tries" (personal communication, October 29, 2018). His willingness to take risks is mirrored in the creativity with which teachers at Alabaster School individualize lessons.

Students who need more intensive support with skills attend booster lessons, according to their level of need. In the lower school, students attend booster lessons in the learning lab during

their foreign language class. For example, in one booster lesson, Helen worked with four students on reading skills. She had iPads and computers set up at stations that students could rotate through while she concentrated on individual students. She closed the class by saying, "Thank you for learning with me today" (personal communication, October 29, 2018).

In the upper school, Jim and Charles worked with students in a variety of spaces such as the beanbags in the lounges or in the library. They invited a variety of students with mixed needs so that no student felt singled out. Jim, a personal assistant in the high school who has worked at Alabaster School for more than 20 years, explained that he works together with students on real world skills. "We do it together. We sit in the library ... I guide him through it because he needs a bit of instruction, a bit of direction and we sit there ... That's just learning real world skills" (personal communication, November 2, 2018). Charles remarked that the flexibility of the program is rewarding to teachers, as they can meet student needs.

In another example, in Information Technology in a Global Society all students began the lesson together. Students worked on their own projects according to individual interest: designing a music logo, creating a map of public exercise facilities, translating city documents to an Asian language. The work of IB students would be graded after every two units according to the rubric proscribed by the Diploma Program, but the teacher can be flexible for Alabaster School diploma and certificate students. After the teacher got the group started, Jim took a small group to another classroom to give more detailed explanations and closely monitor their progress. He explained that several students were working on projects to complete the requirements of a Alabaster School certificate, which focused on skills in each subject to prepare students for the working world.

Halfway through the class, the information technology teacher joined the group to discuss expectations for how the project would be graded. These students will be graded with the rubric the others are using for their IB Internal Assessment, which some modifications. As the group discussed what each area should look like, the teacher typed the rubric, and then posted it on ManageBac. He feels that self-evaluation is more important, and he wants to encourage students to try and fail.

Alabaster School encourages differentiation even beyond the school walls. Jim wanted to help his boys develop social skills while getting exercise (the school does not offer Physical Education in the eleventh or twelfth grades), so he arranged to meet the students at a local gym several times a week. He takes a mixed, rotating group, and encourages the students to meet on their own after school.

Extension lessons. Although the school does not have a formal gifted and talented program, the same process of individualization is applied to high-performing students. For example, one eighth grade student showed high ability in math. After carefully mapping out the units for the year, the learning support teachers and math teacher either extended the work to higher levels, while not necessarily giving more work, or they planned a different unit of inquiry for her each week. The student works one on one with a learning support teacher specialized in higher level math once a week to map out the unit of inquiry, and then she sits in class with her peers, in case she has questions or needs support from the teacher.

To allow for flexibility, teachers and administrators accepted that a certain degree of chaos would be a part of teaching, and the word messy was used frequently. Teachers strive to build skills together with students, rather than instructing from above. Nadine explained what she looks for in teachers:

To me it's more about the teacher who really wants to serve their kids ... When I'm in an interview with them, I'm looking for the word we. Do they say we did this in our class today? It's this feeling that they're in it with them. Or do they say I taught this to them? It's a certain mindset. So, the teachers, to me, who are great practitioners, say we all the time. We were doing this, they're part of it. They see themselves as part of that learning process. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

She looks for teachers who are willing to have lunch with kids and reach out to them on a personal level. Teachers should create learning environments, "It's a place of warmth and support where people know you and care for you" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Erik likes that Matt and Nadine greet the students by name each morning to establish a positive tone, which he says is an advantage of being a small school (personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Acceptance

The compassion of the staff and administration creates an atmosphere of overwhelming acceptance at Alabaster School. The school reflects the local culture, where learning differences are also accepted. As the community coordinator explained, "It's very kind of open, and we're talking about it" (personal communication, October 30, 2018). Students at Alabaster School demonstrated they are not ashamed of their learning profiles. Erik, whose daughter is in the elementary school, described how his daughter is proud of her dyslexia:

Normally if you take a hundred students or humans, 99% is not telling the people at first when you meet them that I have a dyslexia. But our [daughter] is ... very proud. [In the] 5th grade when they make some kind of personal project ... she chose the presentation on the dyslexia. She … interviewed ... some people, some professionals, and she was

working with the library. She studied about Einstein ... and then she make art project.

She take one empty notebook … She opened it and in the middle, every other page was

totally blank, but in the middle she wrote some totally misunderstanding text. There

wasn't any kind of reasonable word. Letters there and there. And she was telling, this is

showing how she sees normal text. (personal communication, October 26, 2018)

Teachers emphasize acceptance in their classrooms. Elizabeth said her only rule in

literature circles is that no one gets "put down." Several teachers reported that students

participate so often in mixed ability, specialized groups, that no one notices when a student goes

for special help. Katie suggested that student choice minimizes stigmatization, "The kids will

volunteer themselves to come and get more help. And then you have a mixed group already, just

like that. And I can say, also I want you to come too, because I know this is hard for you"

(personal communication, October 29, 2018).

Administrators take the lead in building a culture of acceptance. Nadine emphasized the

importance of signaling from the top, and she consciously modeled acceptance of learning and

gender differences. For example, she invited a gender diversity advocate into school to

demonstrate acceptance to students:

Here's a guy who was Middle Eastern and Finnish and a person of color and all these

different identities. But again, the message the students got was the person at the top just

shook the hand of this individual and was saying be yourself and I'm going to support

you. All the kids knew that from that point forward … The parents came to me like, how

dare you, we don't believe in these sorts of things. And I said to them, one of the first

things you complain to me about was bullying. This is a popular topic in schools these

days. You told me you wanted me to do something about bullying, anti-bullying, these

are the kids most likely to be bullied in the school. Why wouldn't I do this? (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

The learning support team supports students even outside the school. For one student who was afraid to leave his house and come to school, a teacher met him at the local gym. This teacher tries to get as many kids involved in the local gym as possible and already has candidates for next year.

Alabaster School fosters acceptance of learning differences by celebrating so many differences, that no one is stigmatized. Matt described his daughter's experience of receiving learning support. "She's not the only kid that's going to the learning lab where she spent time … She's doesn't feel different in the sense of she does things that other kids don't … She's a very happy person to come to school and she feels very accepted in this environment" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Leadership is critical to building school culture. When asked how the leadership has fostered the atmosphere of acceptance, Matt said:

> There's a lot of things we do, from how we talk about learning, to the role of the teachers in the classroom in terms of learning alongside others, to what we model and how we approach students, to how we accept each individual regardless of where they're coming from. We make mistakes all the time, and that's why we're in school to make mistakes. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Sally works on acknowledging in and out groups and helping individuals to embrace who they are. "Why not embrace those things now and learn to walk around a bit differently. Change your swagger a bit because throughout your life you're going to be different wherever you go" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Administrators and teachers consistently emphasized that each student is on a different journey and work together to help students find their own happiness after school in the real world. Nadine explained her goal, "I said over and over to the students, you do you. I'm here to support you in whatever you do, whatever kind of person you feel you are, whatever identity it is" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

The school strives to keep conversation open and transparent. Students feel free to discuss their learning strategies in home groups and advisories. Teachers strive to build strong, open relationships with students. As Charles stated:

I interact with them on a level that they're all comfortable with, and with my student I am the same as well, and I think it smooths out this equal field where we are all equal. Hopefully they all look at me, and they think oh, there's that guy, he helps him, but he also helps me sometimes and we chat. We have a nice rapport. (personal communication, October 31, 2018)

The school encourages risk taking from teachers and students. As Sally said, "Life will make you fall and it pulls you down so that you actually have to grapple with what's important" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). In the first week of school, Nadine dismantled the dress code to optimize student teacher relationships and allow for individuality. She explained, "My last school we were all a bunch of oddballs, and that's OK. We are all this bunch of strange, odd people, funky, and we just love each other. That's how a school should feel" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Sally pointed out protecting privacy is important in reducing stigma in counselling. "That's why I think a self-referral environment is needed so that no one needs to know you're here … You may not do that because anyone is judging you if you come to a counselor"

(personal communication, October 25, 2018). She is working on converting her space into more of a lounge where students want to come to chill out. Her dream would be to turn counselling into a privilege:

> So, the counselor has a space where you can come for lunch, and it's a whole group, and she's got a whole list of people to get through. How do you get to the top of that list? You can turn that around. It can become the cafe. It can become a real privilege. How do you get onto that list? How do you get invited for tea in that cafe?" Her idea may already be taking hold. One teacher reported, "Sometimes I've heard it like what, you get to go there?! Can I go there too? More like that than, oh … It's not really a negative thing. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Access

Alabaster School has put considerable effort into creating physical and emotional spaces that are inviting to all students. Nadine emphasized why spaces are critical in education:

> I have a theory I put together I call compassionate dot space, and it comes from a view of that space is a geographic term. So, we look at how geography looks at space. They talk space about as a place of doing. And so, to me, when we are doing school, what does that mean? And I want to create an atmosphere if we think of compassion as an active word. It's not just sympathy when we see someone having some kind of problems. We recognize it. To me compassion requires that you take action on that. So, this idea that I call compassionate space is that the space of schools is an active compassion of working with young people, and I put this dot in the middle requires a place for it to happen. Again, in geography, a dot on a map is a place, and a space is what you do. So, this is what school should be. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Visitors are greeted in the hall of flags, signaling the school's commitment to celebrating diversity. The school day starts just before nine to accommodate late sleeping teenagers. Students and staff have a twenty-minute break in the morning and almost an hour for lunch.

Physical environment. The physical environment is critical to learning. According to Nadine:

[The physical space should] represent something that feels good to the human body. So, if we look at the way that architecture is hooking up with neuroscience these days, we can see how the space around us does affect how we feel. So, this is when we are in a great café. We feel a certain way. So, to me furniture feels comfortable, a feeling of warmth, through color, through texture. So, there's this idea of texture. Much of schools have been detexturized, everything is very flat and clean surfaces, but this haptic sense is very important to humans … We instinctively know this helps children, but somehow, we continue on buying this standard furniture from around the world instead of realizing that fuzzy blankets and carpets and pillows and tablecloths and all these things add to our environment feel. Neurologically we can see that when we are a space that feels good, that's been designed that way, you are in a more relaxed state. It means you're more in a state to learn. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

The school has invested in diverse seating for students including wiggle stools, bolsters, yoga balls, bar stools, and booths. Tables are of various shapes and sizes, and students have access to study stops, which are supports for writing materials that can be propped between the legs. The halls of the high school are lined with soft, wooden student lockers with blue velvet niches for students to sit. Student lounges at the ends of the hallways have large bean bags and attractive lighting. The high school library has comfortable couches, and the bookshelves are

arranged to create a semi-private, semi-casual feeling. The lower school library features cushy carpets and attractive decorations. Interior spaces are filled with plants and natural light.

The school has two model classrooms with innovative architectural ideas. One classroom has three high tables with white boards on each end. There is no teacher desk or obvious front of the room. Low stools line a bar-like counter below the windows. The other classroom has cafe-style booths carved into the walls with hanging lamps. The benches are just a little too small for two students to sit, so they scrunch into the intimate space.   In the middle of the room, students can sit on yoga balls, bolsters, or wiggle stools at round tables. Students and teachers rotate through these classrooms each week. At the end of the year, planners will seek feedback to assess which innovations to incorporate schoolwide.

The school has invested in an innovative lighting system that can be programmed to change color spectrums according to biorhythms at different times of the year. In the morning, these lights will radiate a cold, bright light to help people wake up and will shift to a warmer light later in the day to relax. Soft, graceful lamps illuminate many spaces in the school.

The school follows the model of local schools in providing a free, healthy lunch for students each day with vegetarian and gluten-free options. Teachers eat in the lunchroom with students. Although teachers gravitate towards the tables on a slightly raised dais in one corner, students are also not afraid to sit at these tables. Most toilets are shared by students and staff. Teachers do not have their own classrooms, but rather rotate through spaces.

The learning support team in the lower school works with students in a comfortable learning lab. The lab has a calm corner with soft carpet, cushions, and flowing mosquito netting. In the upper school, teachers work with students in a variety of spaces where older students like to hang out.

Emotional environment. The principal and head of school started each day by personally greeting students, sometimes with hugs. Erik emphasized, "It's a very personal level at this school" (personal communication, October 26, 2018). Everyone at the school emphasized that it was important for all students to feel safe at school. The emphasis on empathy and relationships helps create a warm environment of comfort and caring.

The environment is key to learning and support services. Sally explained that creating the right atmosphere is key to success in counseling:

It needs to be really Zen kind of place where you come and chill out. So, students do sometimes do that. But the space outside the room could also be a gathering area. It could also be an area where students choose to spend their recess rather than the library. So how do we create spaces that are welcoming and cool to be, and how do members of the team create an aura around them that is more than approachable but the place to go. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Still Kramer voiced concerns about stress for Diploma Program students, "And that's that barrier, and again the IB just did that survey with diploma students about workload and stress, and the results are alarming, that students are suffering high levels of anxiety, and so they are trying to reduce workload" (personal communication, October 29, 2018).

Support

Support structures are flexible at Alabaster School and strong relationships are primary. Classes are kept small. Even in the high school, the largest class is 18 students. The student services team in the lower school consists of an individual learning coordinator, two learning support teachers, two assistants, two English as an Additional Language teachers, a reading specialist, a school psychologist four days a week, a school counsellor, a speech therapist, a

community liaison, and a school nurse. In the upper school the team consists of two and a half teachers, one assistant, one part time English as an Additional Language teacher, one part time English as an Additional Language assistant, and a counselor. English as an Additional Language support overlaps with learning support. The school occasionally contracts with an outside Applied Behavior Analysis therapist and an occupational therapist, but these services are paid for privately by the parents. Helen is the school's individualized learning coordinator. As a member of the senior leadership team, she has time to coordinate the efforts of her department across divisions, gather information for student support meetings, and triangulate instructional approaches. Helen is the key person to link teachers across divisions, parents, administrators, students, and other support staff.

Matt pointed out that staffing should mirror the school's commitment to individualization, "Unless you've going to put staffing with that of how you've going to do it well, you're going to have good ideas, but it's hard to put it into practice" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). He strives to have flexible professionals who know their students for more than one year. Helen explained that it was helpful to have teachers teach in more than one division because they know where kids are coming from and where they are going. The school interchanges learning support and classroom teachers to maximize complementary skills. Matt explained, "An excellent classroom teacher is an excellent learning support teacher. If you know different learning styles, you know different kids with different skills. You learn that naturally over time" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Flexible staffing allows teachers to see kids in more than one environment. Matt explained the benefit:

They see the child in this bigger picture, a better ability to set goals and problem solve

and support the individual because they see a variety of strengths and challenges as

opposed to a more departmentalized program in the middle/high school where they just

see a child three or four times a week, as a math teacher or a computer sciences teacher,

or at this time of day, so my view of you as a student is very much more specific.

(personal communication, October 25, 2018)

School-wide support structures help all students succeed. All middle and upper school

students have a home group, as well as an advisory group. The school engages all students in a

comprehensive social and emotional learning program. An Individualized Learning Opportunity,

shortened to an acronym which means happy in the local language, is available after school to

help students with homework.

Students who need more support than is possible in a regular classroom or need to work

on additional skills can enroll in integrated studies. Charles explained that they drop one class,

maybe science or a foreign language, and he works with them on homework or whatever they

need to catch up on. He communicates directly with the teachers to find out what needs to be

done and what the expectations are. Individualized support is also possible to extend highly

able students. All students in the learning support program have a student support advocate.

A student support meeting is held for the lower school from 2:30-3:30 one day a week.

The upper school teachers also meet during lunch. Although attendance is voluntary, food is

provided to maximize the time. The purpose of the meeting is to review student needs, update

progress, and brainstorm next steps. Helen strives to lure teachers to the meeting with the

promise of resources and use the meeting time to encourage teachers to take ownership of the

individualization process for each student:

I think we are swinging now to the you've got this or that resource, so they come to the

meetings, and now we are getting to the idea that OK, are you, the learning support

teacher going to come in, and this is your kid. You're going to solve this. We're having

to leverage that part of it … even after we say here's the different supports, how do we

keep that collaboration, that it's the responsibility of the teacher and the support and the

parents. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Erik is impressed with the school's commitment to long term planning for his daughter.

Alignment is critical in developing effective supports. Sally explained, "I think we have a large

team with very diverse talents and skills, all singing from the same hymn page, so we are aligned

in terms of positive solution, client focused approach, and we have access to outside support"

(personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Push-in versus pull-out. Teachers are free to find a flexible balance between push-in

and pull-out support. All teachers and assistants reported that models and groupings are never

static. Even the personal assistants are never attached to just one student. Charles described how

he supports students in the classroom:

 I speak with all of the teachers, so I have information of the class .... It's like a city

within a city, or a classroom within a classroom ... When the teacher gives instruction,

it's like an extra pair of ears to recap on things. My role is also to prompt and assist and

to lead and guide in certain areas as well. (personal communication, October 31, 2018)

When students do not understand in the classroom, he is available to help later. Many

students attend the learning lab for small group direct instruction when their peers are in foreign

language instruction, but students who are citizens of the host country are required by law to

attend mother tongue classes. Older students can drop a class and sign up for integrated studies.

Emotional support. Sally is also available for individual counselling for students who are feeling stressed or pushed beyond their limits. Some of the stress is cultural, due to societal expectations in the home country of what a successful academic career should be. Some of these students must also attend language classes in their mother tongue. Other stress comes from the workload of the IB program. Sally helps these students notice what is important to them:

It's more a question of knowing how you learn, and people don't learn under pressure. And then it's more about teaching techniques of relaxation, focusing more on how you learn than on what you know. Because what you learn here, the content on the exam is not actually the goal of learning. The goal of learning is how you acquire knowledge and ... you will be doing that throughout your life. So, knowing that formula is important in all of that. But how you did that is actually what the learning is about. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Strong empathy and relationships supported students at Alabaster School. It was obvious that teachers were personally invested in the success of their students. As Charles put it, "I invest myself in these students. I work with them every day. I care for them. I'm very close to them. I want them to succeed. I know them, so I know how to work and share and so forth" (personal communication, October 31, 2018).

Training. Training of staff is an issue due to time constraints and conflicting priorities. Several classroom teachers wished for more training in specific methods of instructing learners with specific special needs. One teacher suggested that a shadow program would be helpful. Others pointed to the difficulties faced by specialized learning support staff in delivering upper level instruction in the Diploma Program.

Matt emphasized that the best training is personal experience with students with special needs that breaks down traditional notions of pedagogy:

But those kinds of experiences are the kind where people have the strongest understanding of things. But that leads to what type of professional development you can do with teachers to provide that kind of understanding of how different people learn. Most of the research is working on how the brain functions and what we know about the brain supports what we know about different learning styles and kind of breaks down maybe more traditional frameworks of what learning should look like and what succession. should look like. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

He stated that the best professional development is personalized and stems from the teacher's own curiosity:

The most successful learning is when I want this. I want to learn this and/or I need to learn this. So, I think that certainly less experts coming and talking at people … I've done a lot of PD [professional development] opportunities that are just internal opportunities for teachers to be released to spend time working with other teachers and kind of shadow ... Teachers are a range of people. Teachers in this building just kind of ask them one question and that will take them in a direction, and others you work with. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Charles observed that training teachers is "more about qualities than skills" (personal communication, October 31, 2018). He also remarked that training in academic subjects would be helpful for teachers and assistants at upper levels.

Future dreams. Nadine dreamed of expanding the support the school offers to include more real-world skills:

One of the things I'm looking to expand at this moment, for example, is we have an afterschool program, and we have an evening program for adults, but I'd like to take that evening program and add some things that are highly desired skills at the moment. Some programming and data science. There are the programs you can do online called nanodegrees, and where you might get this small data science authorization. It's put together by companies like BMW and Google. There's a nanodegree on how to program a self-driving car. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Resources

The school is in a country that strongly values education and respects teachers, which enhances learning at Alabaster School. Furthermore, most students are coming from home environments with highly educated, supportive parents. One person described the school's location as "the most amazing place in the world for education" (personal communication, October 26, 2018). Most people felt that even in this country, Alabaster School was relatively better resourced. The economy of the country is booming, and the school is almost full. Erik said, "We are in a very good economical position. We earn every year. We have not problems to put some money, because we are always renovating, and put this condition in very high level" (personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Technology: Computers and calculators. Alabaster School is a one to one technology school, meaning that each child has his or her own device each day. The school provides laptops to each student. Although it does require an initial monetary investment from the school, the advantage is that computers are standardized for all kids, and maintenance is not an issue. Erik was grateful that the school introduced his daughter to the dyslexia font, even though the font does not work perfectly with the local script.

Students are allowed to use calculators in their math classes when it helps them. Katie

explained her perspective as a math teacher on using calculators with one student in particular:

So, he's allowed to use it for math facts, but when we're going through the process, he

still needs to do the steps with us, so he gets it. I think there's a point, a lot of times it's

kids with dyslexia, a lot of times with working memory or short-term memory issues, that

need to use a calculator or a multiplication square or a pungent square or whatever it is …

it just increases their speed. (personal communication, October 29, 2018)

Community. The school has strong partnerships with the community. Nelly works at

the school two days a week as a community liaison. The city pays for her to connect families

with community resources and help families through the paperwork process. Students at the

school are able to access a robust network of national health services. Nelly is also able to

connect students and families with social support and youth groups. Compared to other

countries, Sally reported that they are able to more easily find English speaking, outside services

such as speech pathologists and occupational therapists. Nelly explained that is because the level

of English in the population is relatively high, and many professionals have done an exchange

program in an English-speaking country. There are not enough specialists available to serve

students in languages other than English or the local language.

Matt reported that connections with the community are fostered by the fact that they have

many staff members who have been living in the city for a long time because residents of this

country have a high quality of life.   The school is influenced by the education initiatives that are

sweeping the country, and they can sometimes take advantage of trainings offered by the city.

Nevertheless, the school is limited in the partnerships they can build with other schools

because they are the only international school in the area. According to Matt, "Often I feel like

schools may have access to some of those resources but sharing them with different schools or just having a much more limited ability and flexibility about how to use those resources" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Kramer wished they could share resources with other IB schools, "There are two other [IB schools] in [our city]. They are just across the bay. [That kind of swap] works really well between them, but because we are a fee-paying school, we're quite different. And there are some other key differences. It wouldn't work" (personal communication, October 29, 2018). IB Diploma students are able to work through Pamoja, the IB's online course platform, to access online courses when the school's offering is limited.

Legal requirements. Because the school receives some funding from the government, they are required to comply with local statues for schools. The benefit to the school is that the robust child protection laws in the country also provide resources to schools to promote healthy children. Sally explained:

> [This country] is a place where you can't hit a child. In other countries that's kind of standard fare, you see that on the streets, and no one does anything, whereas here it's against the law. So vast differences across countries. I'm sure you'll notice it. So, it's a good place in terms of safety for children. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Relationships. Alabaster School values relationships as a primary asset and source of support for students. For example, Nadine recently sharply reduced enforcement of the dress code, because it was unfairly prejudicial to girls and hampered positive interactions between staff and students. She encouraged staff to take time to have lunch with kids and connect with them on a personal level about shared interests.

Parents. The school makes an active effort to build productive relationships with parents. The Social and Emotional Learning team runs a robust parent training program, so that

parents have the skills and knowledge to work together with the school. For example, school staff recently presented a workshop on "Parenting in the Digital Age." Parents collaborated with lower school teachers to build a unit plan for preschool children.

Some parents are reluctant to access services. Both the school psychologist and the community liaison reported that they work with these parents over a long time with much empathy. Nelly described her approach:

> And the only way forward with that is to keep at it. To continue talking with them and keep the communication open, and then highlight the bits that the child is really good at, because every child has their strengths, but then the older child you are talking about, the more evident it becomes. (personal communication, October 30, 2018)

Helen felt that the consistent articulation of services across the school helped parents better understand and access support. Sally is available to counsel students whose parents have different cultural expectations than the school.

Time. Time is the only resource that is still scarce. Nadine explained:

> To me at this point resources shouldn't matter anymore … Yes, what resources do we need? … Nobody needs as much stuff as they used to. To me, when I'm looking in the rooms, I'm looking at the design rather than resource elements. How can we now perfect all the rest? We have all the stuff we need ... What do you need now? You need time and space. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Teachers have scheduled time built into each week to plan for co-teaching. Most teachers reported that they also catch each other in the halls or email, as this time is not enough. Part of the weekly staff meeting is devoted to collaborative planning and student support meetings for the lower school, though this time sometimes gets hijacked. Student support

meetings for the upper school must take place during lunch to avoid coverage issues, and the student support department provides food. The school provides substitutes to cover teachers when they want to plan larger units and collaborate with other staff. Nadine explained why the school covers teachers to plan, "Let's make the time. If we believe in this, let's prioritize it. Let's make the time" (personal communication, October 25, 2019).

Many people felt the planning time was not enough, so many teachers and assistants at Alabaster School have found creative ways to add more planning time to their days. Teachers sit together at lunch, and much of the discussion centers around students. The assistant principal reported that the best field trip ideas come from the lunch room.

Because they are a small school, they are able to be flexible in scheduling student time. Matt explained the balance the school strives to find, "It takes schools being able to make the best decisions they can for the students ... That means being able to adjust schedules and do some different things that are sometimes harder for other schools to do" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). However, there is a still a large amount of curriculum to cover in a fixed amount of time, which poses a problem for students who need extra time. Even though students in the IB Diploma Program at Alabaster School attend for an extra fifth period, Kramer explained there is still too much to cover:

> I wish there were a way to do timetabling so we could be a lot more flexible … there's just a little too much content in some of the classes ... I think the way kids enjoy and can really get through that program is where every teacher can say this is why this course is interesting and exciting, and you're going to come into this class, and you're just going to get carried away by the enthusiasm. And the exam will take care of itself, because it's so interesting. But the argument coming from the maths and the sciences and some of the

group threes, economics especially, it seems difficult to do that. So, to strip away some

of the content and really emphasize concepts more. (personal communication, October

29, 2018)

Leadership

The administrative structure at Alabaster School is minimal, and several leaders serve

multiple roles. A Head of School oversees Alabaster School, and the high school principal is

also the deputy head of school. The high school assistant principal is also the Middle Years

Program and Primary Years Program coordinator, and she works with a full-time elementary

school principal. The high school has an IB Diploma Program coordinator who also teaches

film. A full-time individual learning coordinator works across at all grade levels.

Many of the school leaders themselves have children who need support. Six of the

school board members and several administrators have children needing support. Erik noted that

it was easy to sell the vision of inclusion to the school board because the country prides itself on

excellence in education, which he suggested for the school is knowing itself and then following

its strengths.

Leadership style. The leadership style at Alabaster School is overwhelmingly

participatory. The leadership team meets weekly to get an overview of issues, then delegates

action and responsibility. The individual learning coordinator is a part of the senior leadership

team. Leaders strive to recognize the strengths of staff, empower them to take leadership, and

encourage strengths-based problem solving. For example, in the Student Support Team meetings

that Helen coordinates, she recognized that teachers came because they want to get something,

but then worked to take responsibility to be leaders of inclusion in their own classrooms. Her

meetings are characterized by frequent questioning and encouraging teachers to come up with

their own solutions. Leadership of the weekly staff meeting was also shared among administrators and teachers.

Leaders strive to engage and maintain connections with staff and students. Both the assistant principal and the individualized learning coordinator frequently cover classes for teachers. The head of school has her own home group.

Nadine is conscious that teachers are watching the signals she gives, and she strives to signal her support of inclusion and acceptance in various ways. She explained, "I'm also doing my best to model this to others and my expectations, so they see how I interact with the students" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Nadine has arranged her office to mirror her leadership style with comfortable couches and plants. She does not have a big desk but works from a small standing platform facing the door. She explained:

So, when I came in here this summer, I painted the walls. That was the first thing I did. I painted the walls myself, because I know that the message that will send and how I treat people in my office sends a message to everyone as to what my leadership will be like and to me it's a huge part of how schools form this. (personal communication, October 25, 2018)

Leaders and teachers frequently used the word we. Administrators and teachers saw themselves as accompanying students on a learning journey. Nadine said, "I'm going to join in with you, and I'm going to challenge myself, what does it really truly mean to inspire thoughtful action to students" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). They were ready to admit mistakes and show vulnerability to the staff. As Matt said, "We make mistakes all the time, and that's why we're in school, to make mistakes" (personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Individualized learning coordinator. Most informants pointed to the strengths of the individualized learning coordinator as the reason for the success of individualized education reforms. Nadine said, "One of the reasons why this school has this incredible program is [the individualized learning coordinator] ... I'm trying to empower her to do all these great things" (personal communication, October 25, 2018). Helen has been with the program from 2001 and had a strong vision for the type of education that would best serve students. Senior leadership empowered her to take action, and she empowers her staff. Because she is designated full-time coordinator, she has fewer scheduled classes to teach, which gives her the flexibility and time to focus on coordinating the department. She has taught across grade levels in all divisions, which gives her a sense of where children have come from and where they are going.

Monitoring improvement. The school does not have a system for monitoring improvement. The broader the definitions of inclusion and success, the more difficult it becomes to measure and monitor.

Large European School

Brookite School is located in a cozy suburb of a European capital city. The multicultural city of over one million people is home to multiple international governing organizations and corporations. The suburb boasts numerous parks and gardens. The school is perched on a hill overlooking a nature reserve of old trees and a pond with swans, geese, and ducks. Behind the school stretches a large forest where outdoor enthusiasts can jog and bike.

After winding up a tree-covered driveway, visitors to the school are greeted by the stunning white mansion, which houses the school's administration and welcome center. The high ceilings and marble flooring suggest an air of regal authority. The school, which was founded

almost 70 years ago, prides itself not only on its spacious campus, but also on the diversity of its 1500 students and 300 staff from 70 countries.

Pride in inclusion is the theme that permeates the school. Alan, the director of admissions, explained why identifying as an inclusive school is rewarding, "You go into education because you want to have an impact, and having an impact on the people who need it is more ... satisfying than [teaching at a selective school]" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Because the school has an international reputation for excellence in learning support, about 20% of the families inquiring about enrollment have a student with learning needs. Chloe, a former learning support teacher who is now a consultant, reported, "An inclusive spirit permeates hiring of faculty and staff, budgeting for resources, appraisal, professional development, curriculum design, technology integration, communications, sports and co-curricular programming" (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

The student support services department consists of the Intensive Learning Support Program, the Learning Support Program, the English Language Development program, and specialists including counselors, school nurses, two full time occupational therapists, three full time speech therapists, and an educational psychologist.

Vision

The school derives its identity from being inclusive and strives to push the meaning of inclusion to broader levels. Michael, the high school principal, reported that inclusion is at the core of the school. "It's very much a driver of who we are and has been for a long time" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). The initial drive to establish inclusive programming came more than 30 years ago from a partnership between a learning support teacher and the high school principal, who wanted to broaden the school's ability to support

students. The learning support teacher is now doing international consulting and has established an organization to support inclusion globally (personal communication, November 22, 2018).

Today's inclusive atmosphere is a product of this long history. Michael explained that it took many years for leaders to build an inclusive program that permeated the school. "This school didn't open up with all that sorted. It took a long time to get to that point …" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Ken, the head of school, furthered his point that patience is necessary for change to take root in schools:

> I think schools need to allow things to evolve and mature … Change in schools and initiatives and the legislature in the States is notoriously bad at this. They give it a year or two before they say, is a program working or not? What's a year or two? So, if we've evolved over a decade and a half or almost two decades, I think that's one of the reasons why we have been successful in our inclusion program. I think there were some hearts, passions involved early on from a select group of people that really thought that these international schools [are] completely unfair that so many of them don't have opportunities for all kids. So, they set out to remedy, to right that wrong ... every international school should be striving to become more ambitious and expanding the range of learning profiles that they serve. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Meg, the Director of Student Services, pointed out that cultural changes around the world have led to family and societal demands for inclusion, which have bolstered the inclusive vision of Brookite School:

> It's just this continuous work about what is authentic inclusion and how do we expand the experiences and I think also culturally around the world parents, particularly from the US, perhaps from the UK ... want this for their kids. They don't want just an isolated

program on a campus … it's the shift in society, or at least North American society to be more inclusive. They worked through a lot of systems and thinking of ways to make it happen. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

Because inclusion is the focus of the school, the school attracts a particular kind of family. Alan reported that the school makes it known to families when they enter that inclusion is what the school is all about:

The attempt to have a wide range of kids representing a full spectrum, not only showing off our IB scores, but caring about all the kids, not just the top ones that can show off they got into [elite universities] … [The former director] was almost provocative in trying to shoot down that selective [schools are better]. We're trying to be the best in terms of results, and more. It's about every kid, and every kid deserves the best no matter where their starting point is. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Their enthusiasm draws other parents and community members to buy into this vision. Michael explained, "It's developed for us. Inclusion has developed into the idea that once you are in it, once you are part, even though we have open admissions, once you are part, do you feel safe? Do you feel valued? Do you feel like your opinion matters?" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). A commitment to inclusion is also important in the hiring of new teachers, so that the entire community is aligned behind this core belief.

The school's vision strives to embrace diversity so fully that it becomes the new normal. The school has pushed the envelope about who can be successful in international schools. Not only does the school offer a Learning Support Program to ensure equitable access for students with mild learning needs, they also have a robust life skills program to include students for whom an academic program is not appropriate. The success of the program has attracted

international attention and draws families with neurodiverse students. As Gina, the mother of a child in the life skills program and assistant in the elementary school, explained:

> Everyone included, that stands. You can see from the enrollment numbers, diverse children, it's not reducing. Our programs are getting actually bigger. Like the ILS [Intensive Learning Support] program. This is the highest number we've had in years ... It has a reputation worldwide so a lot of diplomats … so naturally we have a ... higher volume of people coming to this post with neurodiverse children ... But I think the trend is slowly going towards getting a more neurodiverse population, more representative of the general population, I think. (personal communication, November 22, 2018)

The school's mission statement is just six words and is ubiquitous in the school. Alan pointed out, "[It is a] powerful mission that any kid in grade eight could memorize in a minute … this mission is really unique. It's so short, like less is more, and beautiful and powerful, and we really live it" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). The mission statement calls on the school community not just to grant access and participation, but to help students master new challenges to obtain their highest potential. Gina explained, "We have proved over and over again the biggest challenge is not underestimating these kids. They are capable, but I think once everyone starts seeing little successes, they are more inclined" (personal communication, November 22, 2018). Nevertheless, the school also seeks excellence. As Chloe stated, "We believe that inclusion is the careful and thoughtful marriage of educational excellence and equity" (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

As the program continues to push forward, it has grown. Michael explained the changes he has seen in the last ten years:

One of the changes is growth. Our program has grown, which has brought with it challenges as well. To be a really inclusive school … there is a challenge with growth, because in order to meet the needs of those students and every other student, you have to … you have to manage your numbers and your percentage of kids with special learning needs. Otherwise the differentiation piece becomes really challenging and that doesn't help any of the students you have. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

The high school has further pushed the meaning of inclusion by supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) students with gender-neutral toilets and an advocacy group. The school continues to seek new frontiers of inclusion and acceptance to build a more tolerant future world. As Michael explained:

I think inclusion and diversity goes far beyond just LGBTQ, far beyond [learning support], far beyond. It goes into these other things, political views, human rights, all these other things. We can be sort of petri dish for growing something that's a little bit better. Every generation is a little bit more, a little bit more. I believe the IB is a change agent for good in the world, and international schools that adopt the IB, or don't, just have the right ethos as global citizens in the world. Then they can be the change agents. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Michael pointed out, however, that including everyone often creates a contradiction, when the rights of people with various opinions must be protected. He stated that while it was important to him that everyone's right to an opinion be respected, students must understand that they should not act on their opinions in any way that negatively impacts another person. He explained:

You've got to step back, look at where they are at, but at the same time teaching them

that what they believe in is OK, as long as it's not impacting negatively on other people,

and I think that over generations that other societies shift. We are not going to change the

world here. We are going to shape some minds so that they can change. (personal

communication, November 27, 2018).

At the heart of the drive for inclusion is the desire to nurture global citizens who are more

tolerant to everyone. Michael describes what he sees in students who are products of the IB

program, "I can probably spot a kid who … [was] an IB student, because of the values. They

generally don't embrace racism. They generally don't embrace sexism. They generally don't

embrace homophobia. It's not … what they are" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Building strong interpersonal skills was a fundamental aspect of this dream, especially

given that the school is aware they are in a wealthy bubble. As Kate, the school's full-time

community service coordinator, explained:

Our kids are from very wealthy backgrounds, so this is essential. We always talk to the

kids about, you might be a CEO, or you might be a this or a this, but you are going to

have to work with people on all levels, so you are going to have to have an understanding

of not just the class you grew up with, but all those layers [of people]." (personal

communication, November 26, 2018)

Strong relationships are at the heart of teaching as well, which eases the process of inclusion and

differentiation. As Meg, the director of student services, explained:

You don't teach a subject, you teach students, and I think that eliminates a lot of

problems … It's a lot of building student independence. So, they are having to work in

groups ... it's not like everyone together in the same room for the whole day. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

Placement

Inclusion at Brookite School begins with the admissions process, and they have taken care that the first impression of potential students and families is impressive and accessible. The admissions office is in the august, historical mansion, where the school has recently created an experience room, a "room within a room" to host an interactive admissions journey that accommodates the different thinking and decision making styles of different families by using touchscreens to highlight life at Brookite School with an interactive game. Entrance tests and personal student interviews are not required.

A hallmark of Brookite School is the close collaboration between the learning support department and the admissions office. The director of student services meets weekly with the admissions office and is involved with new families from the moment an inquiry is made. The strong collaboration enhances early intervention, promotes a common voice, and prevents problems later (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Meg further explained that although about 20% of inquiries are from families with students with special needs, the school aims for a quota of 15% of the student body with learning needs, to ensure that all students can be supported. This percentage includes students who have diagnosed learning needs (about 12.5%) and students who are being monitored for potential learning difficulties (personal communication, November 23, 2018). The admissions office uses current data about projected numbers to balance incoming students and maintain the desired quota of 15% (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Students are only turned away if the school feels they cannot meet their needs. Alan reported that although the school could be considered selective

because there is a waiting list, they have not become selective in terms of the range of learning profiles admitted. Students may also be offered enrollment for only part of the day if that is most suitable to their needs. Eddie, a parent of a student in the Intensive Learning Support Program and athletic director, explained, "We are not everything to all people … I think the most powerful thing here is it's embedded in what we do" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

When asked why the quota is 15%, Michael reported that this number ensures the school can meet everyone's needs. "That allows us to maximize support we can give those students as well as making sure that everybody is included in the conversation, that everyone is included in differentiated practices, that everyone benefits the most from the school" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Alan gave three reasons for the 15% quota:

> It's kind of an estimate of what the real world is like. In terms of if you look at society, like 15 percent of people, I think those numbers have gone up because they have new ways of diagnosing and there are more people ... the other thing is, I think it is a good number, because it is a tipping point. There's a balance between providing services for as many kids as need them and being perceived as a school whose main purpose is that and scaring away the people who don't need that. So if I told the family that didn't have kids who needed learning support that 30 percent of our kids did, they wouldn't want to come here … [also] it drains the resources from the mainstream teachers because they are also having to take care of the kids who have the needs. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

Although the school does sometimes have families who fail to disclose learning needs in the admissions process, Alan attributes the oversight more to cultural misunderstandings from

families who come from cultures who have different conceptions of learning support. He suggested that the reputation of the school encourages full disclosure from families.

Tracking. The school offers several distinct options for students needing support. Students with significant needs for whom an academic program would not be appropriate go into the Intensive Learning Support Program, which offers a functional academic curriculum. Students in this program must pay a substantial extra fee, which covers the cost of the additional support provided by this program. The school offers scholarships to help families who are not able to pay this fee. Students who need support to access the academic curriculum go into the Learning Support Program. The school also offers support for English language learners. The three tracks are separate with some conversation between the teachers.

To determine placement of students, the school is developing a protocol based on the Critical Data for ELL Students of Concern matrix developed by Steve Gill (personal communication, November 27, 2018). They are working to modify the matrix, which provides a list of factors to delineate a learning concern in an English language learner with a chart to succinctly summarize data from numerous stakeholders, to suit the unique nature of an international school. The student support team meetings will use the data to determine the best programming for students.

Students may move to a less restrictive placement if their needs change. For example, Gina's son entered the Intensive Learning Support Program, but then he transitioned to the mainstream. She stated, "Now he's performing above grade level in literacy and math. As a parent I'm super happy" (personal communication, November 22, 2018).

Meg noted that many more students are placed in learning support in middle school and high school, which is contrary to her experience in United States public schools, where many

students were placed around the fourth grade. She attributed the increased number in the middle school and high school to greater demands for executive functioning skills, and also to students being eligible for the program in an international school who would not be eligible for support in a United States public school.

Mainstream. Thoughtful inclusion was a predominant theme of placement decisions at Brookite School. Students are not placed in the mainstream unless that placement is best suited to maximize their educational experience. They shy away from the "romanticized the notion of everyone doing everything in school……instead of everyone having access to what they need most for a successful and fulfilling life" **(**personal communication, November 28, 2018). Other students go to classes in separate resources rooms to focus on individualized goals including life skills, functional academics, social and communication skills, transition planning, and community awareness (personal communication, November 28, 2018). Eddie is grateful that the school has provided a separate program that focuses on the needs of his son, as opposed to the mainstream focus of the United States.

Students who are in the mainstream are selectively clustered to maximize the benefit of the co-teaching model. In the elementary school, mainstreaming is easier because the gap in skills is not yet so wide and peer role models are helpful to develop social skills (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Students in the Intensive Learning Support Program are spaced evenly among the classes. Students in the English Language Development program are grouped into several targeted sections, and students in the Learning Support Department are placed in the other sections (personal communication, November 27, 2018). This year, students in the Intensive Learning Support class are starting the day and eating lunch with their peers, though they still eat snack in their own classroom.

The middle school is careful with clustering. Fiona, the middle school learning support teacher who works closely with the English department, reported that this year she moved students out of her co-taught class, after she looked at the class lists and realized that her section was unbalanced. She explained, "It completely warps the feeling of it. We end up with that class. You need to have a really good balance of ability levels, because then it's just a giant support class, which is not what it's meant to be" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Other students, however, were specifically placed in her co-taught English class.

The math department uses a different placement model. Of the six sections, two sections are targeted to students who are two or more years behind their peers. Two classes are co-taught with a learning support teacher, and the other two sections are co-taught with two math teachers. This model allows students with learning needs to be spread evenly through the department. The two co-taught classes are at the same time in adjoining classrooms so one teacher can support both. Students choose their own math placement in the seventh grade, based on recommendations of teachers and the results of a math placement test.

High school has grades ten to twelve. In grade ten, students needing support are clustered into selected sections of English, and that is where co-teaching happens. Grade ten math is ability grouped to match the different math pathways available in IB, but other courses are not streamed. Everyone takes the same science and social studies courses. Grades eleven and twelve are IB courses where students can choose standard level or higher level. Michael explained that all students have a choice in their course selection, "They choose those. We recommend what they can and can't do, but that's not learning support, because that's every kid" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Although Michael agreed that while mixed

ability groups are harder for the teacher, he felt strongly that inclusion means that all students get to choose their courses.

IB. The IB Diploma program presents a challenge to students with learning needs, although Meg feels that students in learning support are generally successful in completing the Diploma Program. The school supports these students by offering them 54 options of courses to complete their program. Co-teaching is limited because the school wants students to be able to freely choose their courses. As Michael stated, "It's not inclusivity if you have to take IB psychology … Inclusion isn't inclusion if you say you have a co-taught IB chemistry class, so you have to take chemistry" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Currently about 80% of students complete the IB Diploma Program, even though the school does offer a United States high school diploma. According to the high school profile, entrance to the Diploma Program is open to all students, with only minimal English and math requirements. Michael thinks too many students go into the IB who do not need it, at great physical and emotional cost. Consequently, the school has recently completed the paperwork necessary to implement the IB Career-related Program. This would allow students greater freedom in choosing a choosing a diploma path that would suit their learning styles and future career goals.

Adapted Curriculum

Brookite School has a multi-faceted adapted curriculum for students in the Intensive Learning Support Program, as well as many curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities for all students.

Referral process. Students are generally identified as needing Intensive Learning Support when they enter the school. For students already in the school, the referral process to

learning support can be initiated by teachers, students, or parents. Before a formal student

support team process begins, the department has a lengthy pre-referral process to ensure that

teachers have done everything they can in the classroom to avoid unnecessary referrals. The

checklist includes background and transition information about the student, attempted academic

interventions, behavioral interventions, and social and emotional functioning. The teacher may

collect informal data with the student. The process is managed by the assistant head in early

childhood, a counselor in the elementary and middle schools, and the assistant head in the high

school. If a formal student support team is needed, temporary interventions may be tried to

match teaching strategies to the child before a child is placed. A formal diagnosis from an

educational psychologist is needed before the student can be formally placed in the program.

Placement decision are made in consultation with parents, specialists, and teachers.

Students receiving learning support have an individualized learning plan with usually

three goals, accommodations, and a plan for service delivery. Students who are being monitored

have a plan with classroom strategies (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Middle

school and high school students run their own annual meetings, which happen every fall for 15

minutes before school or during lunch. Case managers help them practice presentations that

include the student's own summary of why they are in learning support, what they would like to

improve this year, what their accommodations are, and questions they have for their teachers.

The high school learning support teacher reported that she urged her students to think about how

they can explain to their teachers how best to help them and what their learning profile means to

them. Fiona is pleased with the new process because it gets classroom teachers actively

involved, "It's great because now teachers are really having to look at these in advance and

prepare a little bit, and they can save them because we share it with all the teachers they have"

(personal communication, November 23, 2018).

The learning plans are kept on PowerSchool so that classroom teachers can easily access

present levels of performance, strengths, challenges, services offered, medical history, and

accommodations. Learning support teachers check in with classroom teachers to identify what

strategies are working. As a teacher, Eddie reported that the most helpful support he received

from the department is constant reminders about what supports individual students need.

Intensive learning support curriculum. Students in the Intensive Learning Support

Program study their core academic subjects in the learning support classroom. Their curriculum

is developed individually by the intensive learning support teacher, though the school hopes to

have a consultant help with alignment later this year. Students have special learning

opportunities such as horse-riding therapy and swimming lessons. Meg reported, "It's so

individualized. So, it's fun for me because we don't have that many students, so we can make

this happen" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Inclusion is managed thoughtfully

and is almost always with an assistant. Eddie explained why he is grateful his son is offered

meaningful inclusion:

> [My son] has different needs than other kids ... [My son] doesn't need to go to calculus
>
> class. [My son] needs to learn how to do laundry. [My son] needs to learn how to
>
> button his shirt ... The same way that the kid who wants to become an artist doesn't need
>
> to go to calculus class, right? (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

In addition to life skills, the Intensive Learning Support Program offers students life skill

training such as cooking, laundry, shopping, money management, and job skills. For example,

the high school students bake cookies once a week to sell to their peers. They use the money to

fund the Special Olympics program. The high school program frequently partners with other professionals in the school. For example, the electrician offered to help students learn to put together IKEA furniture and the nurse allows them to wash laundry in the health clinic. Students have an adapted physical education class in addition to their regular physical education class to focus on building physical skills. The elementary school Intensive Learning Support teacher has used reverse inclusion to bring teachers and students into her classroom during passion learning time. Her goal is to expose her students to different areas of strength, while including other students and staff in her classroom. The middle school and high school teachers use social stories to help students get ready to be students.

The school maintains a robust service-learning program for students to engage in real life learning opportunities because the school believes in creating authentic opportunities for students to engage with real world problems. Kate, who has been the service-learning coordinator for nine years, has developed the program out of a sense of passion for helping others. In the high school, projects are assigned to each of the 34 advisories starting in tenth grade. Approximately 15 students are assigned to each project, based on student interest and future career ambitions. Students must complete a super project before graduating, a project which requires initiative and independent planning on the part of students. Kate has developed a cyclical system whereby older students mentor and pass ownership to younger students. The school typically arranges one international experience, which students can apply for after they serve in the local community. The school has moved away from requiring a certain number of hours to requiring 15 experiences, but Kate said that most students do more than the minimum. Because of the longevity of the program, many advisors have a personal investment in their programs.

Service-learning welds skill development to natural social inclusion. For example, the school recently sent 18 students to Paris to serve as guides for blind adults from England. This was an ideal learning opportunity, because the two students in the Intensive Learning Support Program had to consider the daily needs of the visually impaired people. Inclusion came naturally because all students, both neurodiverse and neurotypical, were in an unfamiliar situation. Rich, the high school assistant who accompanied the trip, described his role as "a fly on the wall" (personal communication, November 26, 2018). Kate pointed out that the visually impaired people did not notice which students were in the Intensive Learning Support Program. Students are currently planning follow up activities in other cities in the coming months. Students in the Intensive Learning Support Program are also highly involved in caring for some chickens that the school rescues from local chicken farms. Students sell eggs from the chickens to fund future rescues. Other examples include a monthly hiking group, a mentorship program for advanced students to support others in classes, knitting scarves, assembling hygiene kits, hosting refugee children for a sports day, and distributing clothes to homeless people. This year students have raised a large amount of money to purchase a van, proudly marked with the school logo, to facilitate their work distributing clothing.

Students also have the chance to participate in the largest athletics program in Europe, though Eddie, the athletics director, feels strongly they must earn their place on the team. Two students with intensive learning needs recently participated on the cross country and varsity girls' basketball teams.

Expectations shift for students needing support in the high school because of the academic demands of the curriculum. Meg explained:

The work really shifts in the high school. It's more about student agency, managing your time, being organized, staying on top of assignments … Some of them have weak skills, and they are getting direct instruction for skills, but it is not as straightforward. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Special Olympics. The school takes great pride in sending a team of students every year to the Special Olympics. Training for the Special Olympics starts in the fall with volunteer coaches. This year the school also recruited neurotypical students to act as coaches, and they had more applications than they could take. In the spring, the school arranges a huge, visible send-off for the athletes. The program fosters community-wide pride in the athletes and enables the athletes to learn social and athletic skills. Ken explained how the Special Olympics is at the heart of what inclusion means to Brookite School:

We ask for volunteers to help coach, starting now. We have so many volunteers. We have parents volunteer. We have teachers volunteer. It's a sincere embrace for our agenda of inclusion, and that is the piece coming full circle that I think takes a while to build. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Supportive curriculum. The school does not have a formal social and emotional curriculum in any of the divisions. The high school social and emotional counselor is able to devote some time to social skills in the high school health classes, which she co-teaches.

Brookite School is willing to tailor its curriculum to meet unique circumstances. For example, for a student who was blind, the school worked with the IB to adapt five IB courses. They created tactile maps for geography and string graphs for mathematics, and they collaborated with the IB to make appropriate modifications to her assessments.

IB program. Another example of an individualized curriculum was created for a student

from an embassy who was a gifted musician. The high school created a program that

accommodated an international tour schedule. Michael is excited about implementing the

certificate program through the IB for future students who wish to focus on career objectives

because the certificate program allows more choice and flexibility. The certificate program is

relatively new to the world of international schools, only having been launched in 2012. Michael

predicts that it will catch on soon, as more schools look for alternative curricular pathways. As

Michael explained:

> It allows challenge to be looked at through a different lens. It allows it to be ... a more
>
> flexible program, but it is a more focused program with the career study … The problem
>
> is, when you look at the DP [diploma program] … it doesn't cater to certain students, and
>
> if you're not broad based, if you really spike in certain areas, you can be dragged down in
>
> other areas. And that's where its rigidity becomes a bit of an issue. (personal
>
> communication, November 27, 2018)

Brookite School has been actively involved in developing curriculum in conjunction with

the IB, with which it has built a relationship of trust to facilitate acceptance of accommodation

requests and to develop innovative accommodation techniques such as were used for the student

with visual impairments for the IB Diploma Program exams.

Wendy reported that the few initiatives the school has developed to help students cope

with stress on the IB exams have met with limited success:

> There was a teacher who did an optional mindfulness in the morning for the seniors to
>
> learn tools … Sometimes they would come … It worked to some extent. We've also
>
> done these drop-in sessions [during] flex time where there is this 30 minutes Tuesday to

Friday if they don't have an extended block. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

The school runs a senior mini-boot camp for seniors in August before school starts to teach mindfulness along with study skills and college admissions information. Wendy, a high school counselor, helped some students set up their own anxiety reduction workshop:

They did it themselves … They had this whole thing on mental health. I think they were a little defeated. They advertised it in the whole community meeting. Seven kids came … That's the other challenge, because the culture [thinks] that's a waste of my time. I need to be studying. I need to just sit down and focus …. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

Other voices. Several members of staff spoke about the need to include students with various identities in the curriculum. Mason, a middle school English teacher, reported, "Inclusion means seeing your life represented in the curriculum" (personal communication, November 26, 2018). They dreamed of developing a curriculum where LGBTQ, females, and various races would be equally represented. Wendy reported on how important this is to her:

That's one of my focuses this year. It's really big. I don't know why I'm taking this on, but it's really important. If you have a student who's sitting there, of color, who is reading all these stories about white kids, that's an issue, and if you have this Lesbian who's sitting there in class thinking I will never read a story that reflects my identity. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

Adapted Assessment

Although Brookite School monitors academic progress to ensure academic progress, administrators and teachers readily acknowledge that different students are on different

educational journeys, and the school tries to balance demands for academic excellence with individualization. The former learning support teacher wrote:

> We educators have a tendency to define student success by comparing the achievement of one child to that of another or alternatively comparing the achievement of a child to prescribed grade level standards and Benchmarks ... There is nothing wrong with such comparisons as long as the resulting analysis enlightens us – as long as it helps us to come to know our students at deeper and deeper levels as learners, and as long as it encourages and supports future learning. (personal communication, November 28, 2018)

The student services department has been particularly innovative in finding ways to use data to monitor student progress and to use that data to guide instructional decisions. The director of student support services reported she would define success in the program when students have met their targeted, appropriate goals. She is looking for ways to incorporate more numerical data, such as results from MAP testing, to further measure student progress. She is also working on adapting a data-driven matrix to guide the decision to take students off grade level trajectory and place them in learning support.

Teachers focus on instructing and assessing those skills that students actually need, which has the effect of focusing expectations to make them more manageable for students needing support. Learning support teachers work closely with classroom teachers. For example, Fiona was excited about her work creating a science curriculum that better fits all students' needs. "It's been great. I feel as though we have more power in the departments now to go in and … question why everyone is doing something sometimes. Sciences has been great, we trimmed a lot of [unnecessary material]" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Student reflection. Self-reflection and goal setting are critical skills Brookite School seeks to impart to students. Students and teachers take many opportunities to set goals through individual learning plans, extended learning plans, classroom goals, and inclusion goals (personal communication, February 10, 2019). For example, in the middle school students are given time in their resource class each month to reflect on their progress towards their goals. These reflections form the basis of feedback that goes to their parents on their report cards. Fiona is excited about the impact of this system, "All the teachers [have access to the presentation] so throughout the year we are going to mark progress using this presentation on how they are doing" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Fiona hopes that in the coming year she will be able to engage teachers even more by having them periodically update student progress. These updates will be saved to guide future educational decision making. She also hopes this will be a reminder to teachers that individual student goals should be driving their education and assessment.

Grading. In the elementary school, students receive narrative report cards. Intensive Learning Support students receive narrative updates on their progress toward their goals.

The English department in the middle school relies heavily on projects and rubrics, which makes it easier to grade appropriately for all students. Their grades are currently reported as one to seven in alignment with the IB program, even though they do not use the IB Middle Years Program because it would curtail flexibility. Fiona reported that the middle school will soon be using a four-level grading system with qualitative labels to give students better feedback.

A math teacher reported that she tries to build self-awareness in students. She still gives regular feedback on homework and quizzes, but the department is moving away from a reliance on both traditional homework and grading, hoping to foster in students a self-awareness of when

they need more review or when they are ready to move forward. However, some students are still supported with a daily contract with the learning support teacher, where they are held accountable for their homework and daily progress. The tests in this class are all the same, but there is always an extension option for students who like challenge. Teachers give feedback on the extension, but it is not punitively graded. Results are posted in narrative form on the electronic grading platform. When exams or grades are modified in the high school, the modifications are clearly noted on the transcript to be transparent to colleges and universities. The school does implement MAP testing, but Intensive Learning Support students are exempt.

Exam accommodations. The middle school allows qualified students in the Learning Support Program extra time on exams, but they are cautious about other accommodations, worrying that too many accommodations might lead to false expectations. The strong tendency towards projects and rubric-based grading makes extensive accommodations unnecessary.

The high school implements the accommodations for high school students that will be granted by the IB in the beginning of tenth grade, so that they are prepared to use the accommodations on the real exam. According to Michael, they work ambitiously with the IB to ensure a wide variety of accommodations. "We got visited by the IB two examination sessions ago, and they were just blown away. They couldn't believe what was actually happening here in terms of accommodations …" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). The high school learning support department has a suite of rooms in the basement to administer test accommodations. Students know they can come to these rooms for extra time or to work with a scribe. Meg reports that high school teachers spend a lot of time supporting exams.

Pathways to success. The high school at Brookite School offers students the choice of the full IB diploma or a US diploma, and they hope to soon be able to offer the IB Career-related Program. Michael points out that many students are ill advised to take the full IB:

> So, what's really happened is the IB DP [diploma program] has grown this mythical status as being the only way to get to college around here … if we are truly being an international school, then how many pathways do we have for these kids? … hopefully [the Certificate Program will] take some of the students out of the DP [Diploma Program], because we are very, very good at getting students here who are in learning support through an IB DP, but it is at a lot of cost to them, emotionally, physically, and mentally to get through the program. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

An individualized diploma is available to students in Intensive Learning Support. Several administrators and learning support teachers emphasized the importance of teachers understanding that students are going different places and that success will look different for each one.

Definition of success. Brookite School seeks to broaden the concept of what success looks like. Many reported that success at Brookite School is preparing students for the next part of their journey and preparing them to be global citizens. Ken explained how that journey will look different for different students. "Maybe you are working, maybe you are doing an internship, regardless of that, in what ways did [Brookite] prepare you for what you're doing, because this is what you want to do?" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Gina stated, "The ultimate goal here is independent living and to be active members of society. We are trying to achieve that they have independent skills and life skills, that they can work in a

bakery. They can work in small businesses" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Eddie reported that success for his son would be as simple as being independent in the store.

Kate pointed out that social skills and empathy are critical to success, "International citizens, people with empathy … have to be able to go out there and integrate with everybody. And they have to have knowledge of who they are working with and what their world is, not [just] their little world" (personal communication, November 26, 2018). The long tradition of inclusion and an international reputation ensure that families and other stakeholders are aware that success at Brookite School is not measured strictly in academic terms.

In the Intensive Learning Support Program, success is tied to independence, happiness, and life skills. Gina reported, "As a parent I want them to have the best shot of being independent in life and being happy along the way. There's no point of them being successful if they are miserable along the way" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Alan echoed her point, "If I think about it, I would probably say that my kid is happy, and that my kid is headed in a direction that they can find satisfaction in life, independently at some point, that would be, the bottom line for success" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Brookite School is, however, aware of the need to demonstrate competitive academics in the high school. The high school principal used data from 60 or 70 similar schools, including schools that rated themselves as academically selective, to compare outcomes for the top 30% of the tenth-grade class. They found that their test scores are comparable. Michael further reported that generally scores from self-reported inclusive schools are comparable to self-reported selective schools. This data was not published and made available to the school board only with school names removed. Brookite School does publish its average IB score in its high school

profile on its website. Michael explained why the high school strives to meet the needs of students on both ends of the learning spectrum:

> We are getting better at saying to kids success is for you individually ... We are very mindful that when we talk about inclusion that also includes making sure that our kids that are the most academically gifted and can go to Oxbridge [Oxford and Cambridge] et cetera have the best chance of getting there too. Because if you don't tend to that side, then you will get criticism from that side, and rightly so. It's not this or this; it's this and this. And that's what inclusion is to us. It's these kids and these kids and these kids and these kids. And they are all different, and they all need to be successful. And that's where we look at our challenge. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Ken reported that the sort of external competitiveness that may drive other schools to focus solely on academic outcomes is not part of the ethos at Brookite School. He acknowledged that the quest for academic excellence could lead some to question the legitimacy of learning support:

> There is a tension, as you have alluded to, between does our commitment to inclusion, does the resources we put to that, the time, the dialogue, the energy, does that potentially take away from a yearning for excellence at the highest level. A legitimate question for parents to ask is, is it taking away from my kids getting a 44 on the IB diploma? It's a legitimate question, I just think it needs to be reframed as, if a school is truly committed to personalized education and determining indicators of success on a more individual basis, then one is not mutually exclusive from the other. If you say a school is successful based on its SAT scores or IB scores or college acceptance, solely, solely, then yeah, one is influencing the other. But we are not going to say that. We are going to say that is one

potential set of indicators for certain portions of our kids, but we have a wide range. We are not a selective admissions school … We need to broaden our indicators of success … So, we have that dialogue, openly, transparently, strongly with parents and community members all the time. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Michael's definition of success "is to make sure that every kid gets into their number one realistic choice … To us success is a kid getting where a kid needs to go and wishes to go, which is within their ability to do so at that point in their life" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Meg highlighted the difficulty of defining success in a learning support department where every child has a different profile and different path in life:

It's going to be different by the student ... For one student, it's her homeroom friends decorated her locker on her birthday ... For another, it's incremental. He's learning how to text ... Mom wants him to know how to text so he can get ahold of her if he needs to, and also so he can facilitate some peer interaction. But also, success for him is reading. It's appropriately greeting people ... Some of it is social and some of it is academic. For others it's non-academic. It's not reasonable at this point; it's going to be reasonable later. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Adapted Teaching

Because inclusion is at the heart of Brookite School, many teaching structures are designed to be accessible to learners with a wide variety of profiles. Ken reported that five principles guide instruction at Brookite School. "Whether you are a teacher of three-year olds or a teacher of 18-year olds … We have put some teeth into that because teachers are expected to identify how they are doing on implementing those learning principles" (personal

communication, November 27, 2018**).** These principles emphasize connection, communication, and collaboration. All teachers are thoughtful about how students learn and regularly differentiate lessons, allow wide student choice, and partner with learning support colleagues. Teachers strive to create authentic contexts and solve real world problems, which benefits neurotypical and neurodiverse students.

Meaningfulness and thoughtfulness guide inclusion at Brookite School, and students are not dumped into the mainstream without justification. Teachers strive to provide an appropriate level of challenge for all students in three areas: conceptual learning, competency learning, and character learning.

Especially in the elementary school, general education teachers were frequently observed creating opportunities for Intensive Learning Support students to participate. The rich variety of extra-curricular and out of school experiences offers further instructional opportunities. For example, Intensive Learning Support students were recently included on a week-long trip to another country. Although Gina accompanied them, she reported that almost no modifications to the program were needed. Inclusion was natural in this context. She also reported that the elementary school has a lot of visitors, such as authors, who provide authentic opportunities for inclusion.

Differentiated instruction benefits all students. The belief that inclusion and differentiated instruction benefit all learners is at the core of Brookite School. Michael explained, "Being an inclusive school means you are more aware of it, and you teach more explicitly to diverse needs and everyone benefits … Every learner has a profile, so inclusion is good for everybody" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). He explained that the school is

careful to manage numbers and stay under the 15% quota, so that teachers can provide quality differentiation without being overwhelmed.

The physical education class in the elementary school demonstrates how including Intensive Learning Support students benefits all learners by providing them the opportunity to develop social skills. Teachers have developed a buddy system, where students help each other. This system requires students to become more aware and sensitive to the needs of others.

Extra staffing can be leveraged to provide additional support to all learners. In the elementary school, the English Language Development teacher works with all three second grade classes for about an hour and a half each day. She often takes a "boost group" into the hall to focus on skill building, such as reading fluency. These small groups are not just for students on her official roster, but for any student needing an extra boost.

A sixth-grade math class showed how differentiated instruction can benefit all. Because there are two teachers, one teacher can take a small group to reteach when necessary. Of the three sections of math offered, one moves slower and one "digs deeper" to cover extension levels. These math classes are ability grouped based on MAP scores. The math teacher reported that he enjoys working with the learning support teacher because she provides visible models, which help kids understand concepts on a deeper level. He likes this model because it is not necessary to label kids. He explained how he looks at the students in his class, "It's easy to put labels on the kids, but we try not to. I tell the kids, I'm not going to read your file for the first few months of school, everyone should have a clean start" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Patricia, the learning support teacher assigned to the sixth grade, explains how they plan to meet the needs of all students, "Because we are part of team, we are constantly talking on a day to day basis about how is what we are planning on going to work out for everyone in the

population" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). She emphasized that instruction should be delivered as much as possible inside the regular classroom. "Kids become very aware. Like why am I not with my peers? So, we try as much as possible to design our lessons so kids can get as much in the classroom as possible" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Teaching parity and embedded differentiation were clearly demonstrated in a middle school math lesson. At the start of the class, both teachers worked to take the attendance for the 15 students. While one teacher read the announcements and introduced the warm-up, the other teacher floated to check in on students. Although the math teacher took the lead in introducing the lesson for the day, the learning support teacher interjected tips and advice for students. During independent work time, both teachers floated evenly to give students feedback. During the next stage of the lesson, students had a choice of four possible paths. Students who had not yet taken notes from the previous lecture or who were not feeling confident in the lesson could take the green path and stay and listen to the lecture. Students who felt confident could move along either the yellow or orange paths, depending on how confident they felt. Students wanting an extra challenge could work on the extension activity on the red path. After about 20 minutes of work time, the math teacher from next door came to invite students who were "feeling good" to work with him in the hall on an extra extension lesson.

Real life contexts were connected to the math lessons. Seventh grade students had extended their geometry lessons into architecture, and eighth grade students had used self-tessellations to create laser cut stickers. The math teacher reported that the entire department works together to create the boards for scaffolding. The learning support teacher shares a common planning time with the math department and participates in planning differentiated units.

In the high school, instruction and differentiation look different. The high school also has four blocks each day with 20-minute breaks. Lunch and personal learning are 40 minutes each day. The high school learning support teacher reports that she works with teachers on how to work with students. Classes are co-taught only when there are enough students, but the department emphasizes differentiation by helping students make appropriate course selections. For example, until recently she encouraged students to take IB world religions, because she found her students to be more successful in this course. Because the level of academic instruction is more specialized, she has attended IB trainings in the subject areas she has co-taught.

The middle school English class was another excellent example of embedded differentiation. Fiona has been working with her partner for many years, and their synergy was apparent. Fiona is attached to the English department and shares a common planning time, so units are developed together. She explained, "We usually go into the units thinking about a few key students, and once we have met the needs of those, everyone else is usually sorted" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). They rely heavily on projects and student choice for inherent differentiation. For example, on the essay project they are currently working on, students had a choice to write two or three paragraphs, with a minimum of one quote, but most students included more quotes. Fiona and her partner reported that they use graphic organizers to support all students. Projects tailored to student interest make modifications largely unnecessary, as Fiona explained:

> The project approach really helps because you have a lot of parameters you can use, like what book. We can all still be doing the same project of writing an essay, but we can flip out what book they read, what level of support they get, like organizers, or even just

modify the essay itself, like make it less complex. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

Teachers collaborate and share materials frequently, and they often offer extensions for strong students.

The IB program offers fewer chances for differentiation, and it requires an upskilling for teachers to cover the content, which is why Michael reported that most co-teaching occurs in grade ten. However, the school has developed a good relationship with the IB over a long history, and they have been able to build accommodations together with IB. Michael gave this example, "Three years ago we were the first school in the history of the DP [diploma program] to have a blind student to take music, and then we had to produce the exams along with the IB in scripted Braille … we've become that school where the precedent is set" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). The school also worked with the IB to produce tactile maps to support geography and string graphs to support math.

Brookite School uses a mixture of homogeneous ability grouping and heterogeneous grouping. Michael acknowledges that while ability grouping is easier for the teacher, his division only ability groups in math in the tenth grade because of the different pathways to IB math.

Co-teaching. Brookite School makes wide use of the co-teaching model. Fiona loves the model: "I love that because they are talked at all day ... when the co-teaching really comes into play, we can be really creative about how we divide students and make sure that all the needs are being met" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). In the Learning Support Program in the elementary school, one teacher is assigned per grade level, and that teacher plans with that grade level and belongs to that professional community. Of the five sections at each grade level,

three classes have students with English learning needs, and two classes have learning support students. The learning support teacher then co-teaches with one or two teachers in her grade level. In the middle school, one learning support teacher works with the English department, and one with the science department. In the high school, co-teaching becomes more difficult because of the complex subject material and scheduling demands but learning support teachers do co-teach when there are enough students needing support in a block. Meg reported that co-teaching is also used with two general education teachers and with an English Language Development teacher and a learning support teacher.

Little co-teaching occurs in the Intensive Learning Support Program, but the school would like to expand possibilities. Ken stated, "I think we have made some huge progress and there's still room to grow" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

The school supports co-teaching with training and scheduled planning time. There is a co-teaching workshop at the beginning of each school year for new partners, and the school tries to keep partners together. When one teacher leaves, the remaining partner is placed with a new co-teacher. Michael believes that students benefit in a co-taught class:

It's a learning support teacher with a content specialist. They have common collaboration time. They have half days given to them during the year so they can do some long-term planning, and what that does is it makes thinking visible. It makes the learning visible for everybody in the classroom. So, I would argue ... that they are all benefiting because the learning strategies are being made so visible and explicit in that class. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Meg acknowledges that relationships and social capital are crucial to successful co-teaching. She gave an example of how the Intensive Learning Support teacher in the elementary school was able to build new bridges for her students:

> She worked through it and started building relationships with the general education
>
> staff ... a shift for her this year is that the kids don't start the day in her classroom. They
>
> start off in their homerooms. She accomplished that through the positive relationships
>
> that she's built with her fellow teachers. We are a people business, so it really is about
>
> the relationships, and then you build the structures to support the relationships. (personal
>
> communication, November 27, 2018)

Michael pointed out that while co-teaching is difficult, it is also the best professional development. Personalities must be strategically matched, and it takes time for co-teaching relationships to develop:

> You have to be very clear about who you are putting with whom, because there is no
>
> point in putting people together that you don't think will have the right dynamic ...We do
>
> try to work very much on the relationships piece. A lot of the training is about norms of
>
> collaboration and how to work as a collaborative pair, rather than pedagogy itself. They
>
> both have pedagogy. It's more a case of being willing to, as a learning support teacher,
>
> being willing to hear what the content specialist is saying. And the content specialist
>
> willing to hear from the learning support teacher how we can develop strategies to help
>
> kids learn … Sometimes it doesn't work, and when it doesn't work you have to deal with
>
> that. But it generally does work because we are strategic about who does the co-teaching.
>
> (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Ken stated that improving the co-teaching program was one of his wishes for the school. "Can we leverage more out of our co-teaching program to actually eliminate this little gray line that's there so that it is just one spectrum?" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Focus on skills. Focusing on the essential skills helps the process of differentiating. Not only does this help to focus the curriculum to make it more accessible for learning support students, it also provides an entry point for Intensive Learning Support students. Gina explained:

> One of the things we've tried in changing/shifting culture is getting the teachers to understand that our kids are not necessarily working on the same skill. Our kids might be working on skills like tolerating working in a group and focusing on working on their own work in a larger, busier area. They are not necessarily working on their literacy goals. (personal communication, November 22, 2018)

The speech therapist often works with students in their general education classes, and according to Ken, sometimes goes on field trips with them. Several teachers reported they valued the skills of asking for help and self-reflection from students. The community service program also enables students to focus on real world skills.

In the learning resource class, the teachers typically start with teaching the students a lesson on study skills, and then they transition to independent work time to support students with individual classwork. The resource class has two teachers, each one focused in a different area, which allows students a choice of where they can go to ask for help.

Intensive Learning Support students are included in electives and physical education, but they get their academics in the resource classroom. The teacher explained that some are autistic and nonverbal, but they have high intelligence, so they want to push academics in the elementary. In the elementary school, students this year are starting the day in their homerooms

to work on social and independence skills. The students eat snack in the resource room but have lunch and electives with their peers. Students are always accompanied by an assistant, who remains in close proximity to modify instruction.

Electives are often skills based. For example, in the gardening and sustainability class, students started by feeding the rescued chickens, working with compost, watering plants, or feeding the birds. For their individual project, the Intensive Learning Support students worked as a separate group with their assistants to name a variety of vegetables and report whether they were "yummy" or "yucky." Later they would be working with the school's head chef to create recipes for each vegetable.

The Intensive Learning Support teachers in the middle school introduced an adapted yoga class during personal learning time to attempt reverse inclusion. Several mainstream students signed up, but most participants were from the Intensive Learning Support class. The teacher reported that next time she will separate students into some of the other choices offered such as baking cookies, biking, or drumming.

The school is proud of the adapted physical education program, where two physical education teachers focus on skills that Intensive Learning Support students need. In the general physical education class, students are included to develop social skills. Eddie reported that the physical education teacher had added zombies to a tag game to make it more it more interesting for his son: "[It's] a little thing that's huge for him" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

The learning support department has worked a lot with homeroom teachers to understand that not all students need to reach all standards. According to Meg, "A lot of it is working with

that homeroom teacher to make her feel OK about it. It's OK if it's working well" (personal communication, November 22, 2018).

Technology. Gina reported that technology was helpful in facilitating differentiation "because everyone has a laptop open anyways" (personal communication, November 22, 2018). Laptops can read texts to students with dyslexia and assist non-verbal students in communication. In math, calculators give students and teachers more options. Because everyone is fluent in technology, students who are not fluent in numbers do not stand out.

Specialized support. The school uses a variety of specialists to enhance adapted teaching. The school has its own educational psychologist, two full time occupational therapists, and two full time speech pathologists. The occupational therapists work flexibly with students in groups or individually. In the elementary school they have two scheduled groups per week, one in the sensory room and one in the resource room. The speech therapists work with students in a variety of settings.

Once a year, a behavior specialist comes from the United States to work with teachers on behavior intervention plans, train teachers and parents, and give advice. This year the school is hoping to bring her twice.

The school hired a specialist to upskill teachers for the student who was blind who wanted to complete IB coursework, though Michael reported that her success was largely due to "the will of the teacher" and the long hours that the learning support teacher spent modifying her materials (personal communication, November, 27, 2018).

Wendy was hired by the school as a social and emotional counselor to set up the LGBTQ program and to focus on social and emotional skills.

When asked about his future dreams for the school, Ken reported that he would like to

expand the range of adapted teaching:

> In a perfect world, I think there's still room for us to push even further. We look at learning support. They are artificial labels, but we look at mild, moderate and intensive, for just the ability to communicate. Mild and moderate, you won't even notice who is mild and who is moderate. They are just in the mix … We are starting to have those [intensive] kids spend part of their day the mainstream classroom, and vice a versa. We actually have kids going into the intensive room sometimes. But I would love to push that even further. I would love to have the intensive be literally, literally, just an extension of the spectrum. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Acceptance

Inclusion is at the heart of Brookite School, and so students, staff, and the community embrace those with unique learning profiles. Gina describe how learning support students are a natural part of the fabric of the school: "These kids are not seen as separate from the other kids. They are really not. They are just part of the group" (personal communication, November 22, 2018). Patricia thought that the international flavor of the school lent itself well to acceptance:

> So, I think how, because we are such a diverse population, even with the brightest kids ... realize they have to begin again in terms of learning a new code and a new language, so kids are very aware of differences, and differences are not seen as a deficit … You speak, two, how many languages, and now you are learning English? And equally when kids struggle with math. Oh, you've been to how many different schools? Maybe it was a different math program. So, they are very inclusive in terms of how they talk about their struggles, and they help each other … It's fantastic to see the level of awareness. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

The situation is a little more complex for Intensive Learning Support students, since everyone knows who they are and where they belong, but there was no trace of stigma or shame attached to this program, and they are welcomed into all of the school activities. Kate took it for granted that Intensive Learning Support students would participate in community service activities. "It's not rocket science, it's going and being a nice person and helping out" (personal communication, November 26, 2018). Teachers in the elementary school intensive learning program reported that students had friends. Teachers in the upper divisions reported their students did not. One assistant blamed the parents, pointing out that they should take the initiative to plan playdates and parties. Several staff noted that in the high school there was a sense of shame associated with dropping down from the IB curriculum, though the school is trying to change that. Wendy explained:

> We are trying to say, you are changing tracks, or you are doing this program. It's really hard because the kids will use that lingo. They will say, oh you dropped down, you dropped out. We are trying to make it more even inclusive in our language. So, I have a kid where the program is not a good fit and that's how I wanted it to be framed, rather than you can't handle it. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

Gina said that the reason Intensive Learning Support students are so well accepted in the elementary is that Brookite School caters to such a wide variety of students. "All of a sudden everybody's different. Some kids can do things that others can't do and so they just felt accepted, and that's disappeared" (personal communication, November 22, 2018). Brookite School is making an effort to be inclusive to even more students through its new LGBTQ program. Wendy reported that progress has been made, but the school still has work to do. "I think with kids, we still have a lot of ways to go, because they move here from all over. So, you have kids

coming in every year with different cultures and values, so it can be tough" (personal communication, November 26, 2018).

Part of the reason for acceptance of learning support students is that teachers and administrators are recruited who fully embrace inclusion. Eddie summarized the ethos, "Everybody from the cleaners to the, like everybody has to believe in this, and if you don't, this isn't the place for you" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Many of the teachers are recruited from the United States, where training and experiences are more amenable to inclusion. Fiona reported on the enthusiasm of teachers. "One of the things we are fortunate with, we had an open feedback session for learning support, things they'd like, probably about half the teachers asked to be more involved, so that's really lovely" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Teachers actively work with the student body around norms of acceptance. One elementary school assistant reported that they explicitly train students to support, but not baby, those in the Intensive Learning Support Program. Teachers in the elementary and middle schools go into the general classrooms to prepare students at the beginning of the year and give them the chance to ask questions. An intern in the elementary created a four-week program for students in a second-grade class around the theme "I Wonder" to encourage kids to be curious about everything that makes them different. Meg explained that the school does not have a set disabilities awareness curriculum or protocol but rather allows initiatives to develop organically.

Gina noted that in other schools adults who have not been exposed to special needs often have a harder time with acceptance than students. She reported that it was a relief for her as a parent of a child with special needs to be accepted into the parent community:

They've set the culture like that. The setting is like that. There's understanding. There's training. Even the parents, they feel accepted. Even for me when I first came here it was a huge relief … I was nervous. I'm going to say, oh my kid has this, and they say, yeah, my kid has dyslexia! And mine has this. And I'm like oh, my god, I'm not alone in this world. I wouldn't say it's celebrated, but it's accepted, and you feel more open to talking about it because everybody has something, and it's actually rare in a way that somebody doesn't have something, and we've seen it in our program as well. (personal communication, November 22, 2018)

The Special Olympics program is an example of how fully the school embraces the neurodiverse student athletes. When the school asked for volunteer coaches, more students volunteered than they could accommodate. In May, the school arranges for a huge send-off for the athletes, which several people reported is one of the highlights of the school year.

Another example of how fully the school embraces all learners is that every year the senior class chooses a student to be the speaker at graduation. Last year they chose a student from the Intensive Learning Support program to be their speaker.

Thinkers at the school are pushing students to be accepting in innovative ways. The school challenges the idea of class and privilege, as Wendy explained, "... this idea of privilege and those who have it really needs to take a step back ... We have to make sure those who are marginalized are getting more focus and their voices are being heard" (personal communication, November 26, 2018). Several teachers wished for a curriculum that includes more diverse perspectives.

Access

The elementary resource room for Intensive Learning Support students is located on the ground floor. Beside the main classroom is a relaxing sensory room with padded walls and a swing for students to manage sensory needs. Soft curtains hang near the window overlooking the forest. Each learning support teacher in the elementary has her own small office. Each student has two lockers, one in the Intensive Learning Support room and one in their mainstream classroom.

The middle school has recently been renovated to include more student friendly seating in the hallways. High tables with padded bar stools are surrounded by half-sized bamboo plants and a neutral color scheme. Glass walls encase classrooms, which open into corridors designed for flexible learning spaces. The hallways are often filled with students working individually or in groups.

The learning support teachers contributed to the design of the learning support room. The large room is divided into four smaller rooms by a series of glass walls. The walls can be closed for quiet and privacy, or they can be opened to allow flexible use of space. The rooms have a combination of individual worktables and large module tables that can be put together for group work or separated for concentration. Because the walls are glass, natural light flows through the entire space, and teachers can watch students simultaneously in all areas. The room has beanbags, padded office chairs, and wiggle chairs. One student volunteered that he likes coming here because he can express ideas, make new friends, and ask questions. Middle school Intensive Learning Support students eat lunch at a separate table with their teachers.

In the high school, the Intensive Learning Support room is located in a corner of the basement, which they share with the foreign language department. They have their own kitchen

and laundry machine. Because their hallway leads to the lunchroom, students and staff frequently pass by. The learning support offices are located across the hallway. The learning support department has access to multiple rooms they can use for various test accommodations. In the entryway of the high school there are a series of high tables with padded benches and a series of soundproof individual study rooms.

The school charges a substantial additional fee for students in the intensive support program, though they try to offset the impact on families who pay themselves by offering scholarships.

The high school strives to be more inclusive to students with non-binary gender identities by having gender-neutral toilets. Michael explained, "We struggled an awful lot with the sign to put on that door. We had all sorts of prototypes. Then we just went with toilet, and called it gender neutral, and just leave it at that" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Wendy further strives to push the boundaries of inclusion by offering sex education classes to the Intensive Learning Support students.

Although the high school does make the IB program accessible to all students, there is a stigma associated with not doing the full diploma, as discussed above.

Brookite School works to create a safe and supported learning environment. For example, the learning support teacher created a math wall where visible reminders of previous lessons are posted for all students, which the sixth-grade math teacher described as "the best thing we have done all year" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Fiona pointed out that allowing flexible options makes the curriculum more accessible to students, "We give kids time to really think about things. And if you want to go deep into it, you can do a deep dive" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Case managers support students through their individual learning plan meetings. According to Patricia:

So as case managers we ... practice with them. We have little role-plays about mom and dad are going to be there, your teachers are going to be there, when you come to your meeting, it's safe. This is about you … The atmosphere is usually very positive. The teachers are very complimentary, start off with these are some things we notice and will share their perspective of what they think is important for them, (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

Support

The student support services department encompasses the Learning Support Program, Intensive Learning Support, English Language Development, and other specialists, such as the school nurse. This study focused mainly on the learning support and Intensive Learning Support sections. In the Intensive Learning Support section, each division has a teacher, an assistant, and an intern (this year the elementary school has two interns). In the elementary school's learning support section, each teacher is assigned to one grade. The middle school and high school each have four teachers. The school does not work with personal assistants. The school employs two full time occupational therapists, three full time speech therapists, and an educational psychologist. The school invites a Board Certified Behavior Analyst once or twice per year to consult.

The school strives to maintain no more than 15% of its student body on learning support. Ken reported how the school has tried to be ambitious in expanding the range of students who can be supported:

I think most international schools … have not, and maybe will not, push the inclusion

agenda as far as we have. I think many of them have a bar, if you will, we are going to

do our best to bring in mild and moderate kids ... the point of this [our agenda] is to make

people more ambitious. We really would love to see more schools really push it to more

intensive, because there are thousands upon thousands of kids, who are children of expats

or multinational executives that also merit a really appropriate education wherever they

go. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Gina reported that in the elementary school, the teacher to student ratio in the Intensive

Learning Support is approximately one to two or three for Intensive Learning Support (personal

communication, November 22, 2018). Patricia has approximately 18 kids on her caseload.

In the middle school, each teacher acts as a case manager for between 12 and 15 students.

Students can sign up for a resource class in place of an elective, where ten to twelve students are

co-taught by two learning support teachers. This gives students a choice of who to ask for help,

and it allows teachers to focus more specifically on a particular content area.

In the high school, of the 500 students, approximately 80 students are on learning

support, plus another thirteen being monitored. Students can enroll in a resource class in place of

an elective in grade ten or a study block in grades eleven and twelve. Grade ten English is co-

taught. Teachers also extend lessons to support many "high flying" students (personal

communication, November 27, 2018). The high school has several full-time college counselors

and a social and emotional counselor.

The Intensive Learning Support staff almost always accompany students to classes and

eat lunch with the students. The goal of inclusion is teaching students social skills such as

working in a group or focusing on their own work. Staff are prepared to be flexible in how they

support students. As Gina explained:

> We work with a lot of teachers … So, collaboration skills, and you have to be flexible
>
> because sometimes opportunities arise, or the teacher says, oh, I forgot, and I've
>
> modified, is it OK for you guys? And that's the key thing for us to be flexible. Thinking
>
> on the spot, accommodating on the spot, you can prepare, but with our kids not all will go
>
> according to plan most days, but it's important to have the skill to deal with it at the same
>
> time. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

Meg explained that perhaps the biggest support to students in Brookite School is the

expectation of success. "I think that's true pretty much throughout the school, all divisions, that

we are here to make you succeed as best you can, and we are going to do everything we can"

(personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Social and emotional. The school does not have a formal social and emotional

curriculum, but counselors try to follow standards from the International School Counselor

Association. In the middle school and elementary schools, academic and emotional counseling

are combined. Middle school students are also supported by the personal learning class. The

social and emotional counselor in the high school was hired to implement supports for LGBTQ

students. She explained:

> So that was amazing ... I'm still the faculty advisor for that in high school, which is great
>
> … it's for LGBTQ folks and allies and questioning. Really, it's for everybody. My first
>
> year I had a trans student who was assigned female at birth, but he transitioned and
>
> identified as a trans male. So, we realized really quickly that we didn't have enough

policies in place, and we didn't have enough supportive structures in place for him, so we

had to take a hard look for him. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

She now runs supports groups for students questioning their gender. She has time to

meet with students individually once a week. High school students are supported by a wellbeing

class, and the counselor co-teaches the health class on sex and relationships. It has been a

challenge for her to find appropriate community resources to refer students and she feels she

does not have time for everyone.

Several staff reported that students and teachers in the high school are stressed. Wendy

explained that burn out is so common that it is a formal diagnosis:

In [local country] you can have diagnosed burn out. It's a thing. For adults and students.

It's incredible, there was someone who had three years of [paid] burn-out leave … I think

it's for all professions ... it's like a psychological term ... I had so many kids who were

using it, I thought, it doesn't make sense ... They will say it to me hoping I will

understand how severe that is. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

Collaboration and differentiation. Brookite School has a strong ethos of collaboration.

Meg pointed out that the strong relationships her Intensive Learning Support teachers have built

are critical in implementing inclusion. Special education teachers strive to be part of the larger

community and act as regular members of their department.

At the referral stage, homeroom teachers are provided an extensive checklist to ensure

they have done everything they can to support the student. The checklist includes reminders to

talk with previous years' teachers, review test data, talk with the student and parents, and have

the student's vision and hearing checked. A sheet for classroom and behavior management

strategies includes 15 suggestions, 10 executive functioning strategies, nine reading strategies,

nine writing strategies, 10 math strategies, and six social and emotional strategies. This is similar to a response to intervention model, and it allows learning support teachers to focus on students with more significant needs.

Co-teaching is widely used, and department members often share lesson plans, which allows teachers more time to focus on individual differentiation. Patricia pointed out that when you pull kids out of class, you create another gap (personal communication, November 28, 2018).

Information. Many teachers and administrators pointed to accessing information on student learning styles as a critical support provided by the learning support department. Michael explained that after the yearly student-led individual learning plan meeting, the individual learning plans are accessible through the school software system, where individual needs are flagged. He explained the advantage, "It makes that connection. It builds the community around the kid" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Eddie summarized, "I find the reminders and the ideas of things you're using to help, that might trigger an idea for me to help him. I would love to sit here and tell you that x, y, and z and I can do all of this. The biggest thing for me is just helping me remember" (personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Patricia explained that the department asks for feedback on the strategies from classroom teachers, both to update the effective strategies and to make sure that teachers are reviewing the information:

Sometimes they read it multiple times, because we ask them for feedback about like, we've identified these two strategies, how are they working for you? Try as much as possible to update the strategies with the students, because you know like anything

sometimes you give a little menu of strategies, but some of them are going to work and some of them are not going to work for that particular student. (personal communication, November 26, 2018)

Recruiting. The school recruits only teachers with a strong belief in inclusion. One teacher reported, "You don't get in the door unless you're on the team inclusion" (personal communication, December 5, 2018). They have hired many teachers from the United States public schools, because those teachers have the training and the background to fully support inclusion. Ken explained, "We have pulled in a number of new people into international education. Partly because ... not all teacher training programs do that as well as some others" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Teachers in the Intensive Learning Support Program are hired by the director of student services, whereas learning support teachers are hired by the division heads. The school has an internship program where they recruit students and others for a one-year contract. This position ensures a fresh rotation of new ideas coming into the school.

Training. Michael reported that the school runs differentiation workshops for teachers to upskill themselves. The school offers a wide variety of professional development opportunities to all teachers, so teachers can choose what they feel they need. Institutes are free for teachers in the week before school starts. Patricia summarized, "It's a learning culture. It's not like we've got the recipe, therefore we need to keep working on it" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Teachers can apply for additional funds, if there are other opportunities, they would like to engage in. The learning support department does not conduct extensive extra training for teachers, although they do hold extra workshops for their teachers in particular areas such as Wilson Reading and WIDA testing.

The school runs a unique coaching program. Teachers can voluntarily ask to participate in a coaching cycle, which is not evaluative. Coaches only teach half time, so that they can come to observe a class, invite teachers to observe them, or cover the teacher's class while they observe elsewhere. Although this program is helpful to general education teachers, it is not accessible to the learning support department.

Accountability. Teachers are supported in their growth with a professional growth framework. Standards are mapped on a continuum and teachers have the opportunity for feedback and reflection. While Ken agreed that the broader the view of inclusion is, the harder it is to measure, he said therefore that the most powerful accountability is self-accountability:

> We view accountability as … 70-75 percent self-accountability, and 25 percent others. And what I mean is, we ask people to place themselves on a very well-defined continuum related to these learning principles, where do you see yourself? Can you identify an area or two where you are not as strong as you would like to be? So, it's them holding themselves accountable and us giving them the support and giving them the network they need to push themselves forward. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Resources

Staff and administration reported that Brookite School has ample resources to devote to the Learning Support Program. Michael explained why the school invests in learning support. "Inclusion means you have to invest money in it, and it's not cheap. It's expensive, but money is only a case of who are you here for … But if you make it your mission statement, then the resources follow" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Parents. Although the student services department does not run special programs for parents, the school does. Gina reported that it is a relief for her to feel accepted. The family

association runs workshops for parents once a month, and the administration hosts community forums on how to parent in a "certain type of landscape" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Wendy reported that in the high school it is harder to get parents involved in trainings for social and emotional skills, though parents are happy to come to university information sessions. She hopes to start doing mini-sessions before university nights.

Community. The school does not have extensive links with the local community support services. Staff pointed to the difficulties in finding English speakers or therapists with a particular type of training such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Therefore, the school has built its own community of support, which the two parents interviewed appreciated. Gina explained, "One of the godsends is everything is under one roof. OT [occupational therapy] is here; speech is here; they have an outside consultant, a physio that comes, but he works on grounds within the school day … The PE teacher is the nutritionist. We have a nurse. We have an educational psychologist" (personal communication, November 22, 2018).

Kate has worked hard to build partnerships with outside agencies for community service. When she started nine years ago, the school had no partnerships, and now they work with 34 organizations. One parent reported that he was able to reach out to the social services network in the local country and receive a sizeable stipend for his son.

Technology. Brookite School gives each student and staff a technological device. In the elementary school students get iPads. Older students and staff get ThinkPads. Staff reported that this makes differentiation easier and less stigmatizing, because all students are used to seeing technology. Students are encouraged to use the mobile phones and twitter accounts for learning when appropriate. Although Wendy reported that faculty can feel disconnected in the

modern high-tech world, she felt that it was the responsibility of teachers to get in touch with the platforms that young people are using.

Time. Time is a valuable resource, and the administration at Brookite School has made efforts to make sure that it is available. When asked what he would wish for in a perfect world, Eddie responded, "I guess you could call this a resource is just more time. Whether ILS or not, inclusion or not, we would like to have more time to spend with those kids" (personal communication, November 23, 2018). Learning support teachers are scheduled into common planning times with their departments. Meg reported, "There's a lot of non-contact time for a general classroom teacher. They have weekly [planning time], and it's a good chunk of time ... weekly individual prep time, and there's weekly grade level prep time, and then there's a third prep time with your co-teacher. It's a healthy dose" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Fiona reported that block scheduling has alleviated the need to rush between classes, and it helps that she only has to plan with one department.

Because the supervisory needs are greater in the Intensive Learning Support Program, finding release time is more difficult. Teachers have to try to find common planning time with general education teachers, and they meet once a week as a team (teacher, assistant, intern). Once every two weeks the team leader meets with the director of Student Support Services. The divisions do not co-plan together. The Intensive Learning Support Program and the Learning Support Program do not plan together.

Teachers are expected to make time for other obligations. Time for training is provided the week before school during institutes. Individual learning plan meetings are held before school or after school.

Leadership

The leadership structure at Brookite School is strongly hierarchical. The Director of Student Support Services handles upper level administrative matters such as meeting with the admissions team, so that teachers can concentrate on teaching. Meg stated, "You can't become inclusive without leadership who either paves the way or get out of the way, but more than a leader is needed" (personal communication, November 27, 2018). In each division and department, a leader is empowered to manage her team.   The team leaders empower their teams. For example, the interns reported feeling empowered to work with teachers to serve the best interests of their students.

The leadership has a strong vision of Brookite School as an inclusive school and where they might go in the future. Leaders in the school are united in their vision, and the mission is shared by all stakeholders. As Alan explained:

> So, it's from the top right to the bottom. It's directed by the top, but it's also responded to by the bottom. I think it's the simplicity of the mission. I've worked at a lot of schools where I didn't even know the mission. It was just a bunch of phrases, a bunch of clichés, but this mission is really unique. It's so short, like less is more, and beautiful and powerful, and we really live it. Like we don't show off our top students. They are just like other students in the sense that they are reaching their potential. (personal communication, November 23, 2018)

They dream to expand the horizons of their current program. Ken explained that change will take time:

> And I think schools can't beat themselves up too much if they try something for a year or two and they are not there yet. Or they try something for three or four years, and they are

not there yet. You have to continue to grease that wheel. Let it mature. I think time, it takes time ... You can dismantle a culture overnight. With one bad incident. One bad word or phrase, something can just crumble, but to build it up you can't build it overnight. And schools, and boards and parents, can't expect schools to build those overnight. Ours is the way it is partly because the time we have given it. Partly because of the formalization we've given it and the scaffolding and structures we have put in place. And partly because of the celebrations. We celebrate it a lot. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

Although Brookite School does not yet have a formal system for measuring success, Meg hopes to develop a system to monitor progress in terms of goals met and measurable progress on appropriate reading and math measures.

Several leaders reported their biggest dream would be to make other schools aware of the successes of Brookite School, so that students in every city would have access to quality inclusive programming. Michael stated:

What could we do as a school that would impact other schools to be as diverse as we are would be something I would be interested to do … I think my wish is that more schools could be like us because we are not the only ones doing great work in this area. More schools like us can impact other schools. (personal communication, November 27, 2018)

The leadership sets a strong expectation that all students can succeed, and teachers strive to meet that expectation. As Meg stated, "We have a leadership that believes kids can do it, so the expectations are set that you as a teacher will be monitoring how students are doing … you hold it to yourself [to] move forward" (personal communication, November 27, 2018).

Small Asian School

Devilline School sits on a busy highway in the middle of a mid-sized Asian city. The city, an amalgamation of a string of fishing towns running along the coast, has become a manufacturing center, as a number of automobile companies have set up their headquarters and factories near here, and it is the second biggest technology city in this part of the world (personal communication, February 11, 2019). The glittering office buildings form an odd backdrop to the low-rise school. The school itself twirls around a series of lush green courtyards studded with fountains and singing birds, a striking contrast to the dusty urbanity of the surrounding city.

Many students are at the school for only a short time. Scarlett, the elementary principal, reported that students in the elementary stay only an average of 23 months (personal communication, March 3, 2019). According to Emma, the high school principal, the average in the middle school is two to two and a half years, and just under four years in the high school (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Emily, the admissions director, added in more detail that in the elementary school 62% stay for less than two years, in the middle school 52% stay for three to four years, and in the high school 35% stay three to four years (personal communication, March 5, 2019). Many students want to stay in the high school until graduation, both because the program is rigorous (personal communication, February 15, 2019) and because it lends students from certain countries such as Korea an advantage in university admissions (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

According to Scarlett, unlike many international schools, 60% of students come straight from their home country and return to their home country (personal communication, March 3, 2019). According to Emily, 35% of students come from Korea, 11% from Japan, and 11% from France (personal communication, February 15, 2019**)**. Alice, the high school learning support

teacher, explained that the school has a Korean parent teacher organization, and it lends space to a Korean, Japanese, and French school so that students can stay caught up with the national curriculum of their home country (personal communication, March 4, 2019).

Because over 80% of the students in some grades speak English as a second language, many of whom need support until the 10th grade (personal communication, February 11, 2019), the school's inclusion efforts center around its linguistic diversity. Students with diverse learning needs constitute a smaller constituency in all divisions (Devilline School intentionally uses the word *sections* instead of *divisions*, but this chapter will use the word division to maintain consistency with how the other schools use this terminology), but they benefit from the extensive scaffolds and supports designed for the English as an Additional Language students.

Vision

Teachers and leaders at Devilline School have a strong sense of meeting the needs of their students where they are at, and they take pride in both the rigor and inclusivity of their program. International mindedness and proficiency in multiple languages is valued. According to the school's teaching and learning handbook, "Teachers and staff are encouraged to find opportunities to publicly value students' other languages" (Devilline School, 2018). The school encourages students to maintain a strong sense of their own cultural identity (Devilline School, 2018). Evelyn, the English as an Additional Language director, added that it is important to cultivate proficiency in their native language while developing academic language in English (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Evelyn described the department's philosophy as, "An inclusive trans-language philosophy of we instruct in English, [and] we assess in English. How they [the students] get from one point to the other is truly up to the student" (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

This pride in being an inclusive school spills into the learning support department. Although the department serves only a small number of students, they are well supported by many specialists including an educational psychologist, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and a team of learning support teachers and assistants. Many teachers and leaders hope the program will grow in number, without losing the quality, comprehensive support. Scarlett, the elementary school principal, said she hopes one day all students are on an individualized learning plan with a host of mentors to tailor their educational experience to their strengths and passions (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

The school also places a strong emphasis on wellbeing both for teachers and for students. The school has developed a student wellness framework which includes four domains: healthy habits, self-awareness, self-management, and positive relationships (Devilline School, 2018).

Placement

Devilline School serves students with mild to moderate disabilities, most of whom have learning disabilities, occupational therapy issues, or attention disorders. Because the school places high value on rigorous, quality support, they have chosen not to admit students with more severe disabilities. Oliver, the high school assistant principal, pointed out that the school is able to support students who are strongly moderate, because behavior issues are not an impediment to their learning in the international school setting (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Emily, the admissions director, reported that an increasing number of students with learning differences have been applying in recent years. These students are never turned down on the first conversation, and often the school invites them to spend a day at the school, so they can get to know the student before making a decision. Scarlett explained that getting to know the

student personally is important to her because she wants to make sure she can support every student who enrolls in her program. In her three years at the school, she has only turned down three applications. "Right from admissions, we are inclusive" (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

The most important attribute in a potential Devilline student, Emily felt, is motivation and a desire to learn. She noted the school's capacity to support students with learning differences does not always match its desire to be inclusive, and she predicts that learning support will be a growing program. To make sure that all students are able to access instruction and curriculum, non-native English speaking students must have a minimum WIDA score to enter the high school. The elementary and middle schools maintain a quota of 30 percent English beginners per grade level (personal communication, February 15, 2019). The school is firm in making sure that students who enter the high school can succeed there, otherwise they are counselled to find a different school (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Oliver pointed out that gatekeeping is critical in the high school because the courses are credit bearing, and students who cannot pass a certain number of core courses will not graduate (personal communication, February 13, 2019). On the other hand, Sophia, the speech pathologist who has been with the school for a number of years, reported that the program has expanded, due to both awareness of disability and the school's general approach to inclusion (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

In line with its philosophy of inclusion, the school tries not to ability group students. Math classes are currently ability grouped from the seventh grade, though Charlotte, the middle school principal, hopes to change that to eighth grade for next year. World language classes are the only other classes that are ability grouped (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

Charlotte explained that students with more intensive English needs are placed together in the middle school in certain classes to facilitate support by a co-teacher. Each core academic teacher teaches four blocks, two of which are with a dedicated English as an Additional Language co-teacher. Students needing more language support are scheduled so that all four of their core subjects are co-taught. Student placements are determined according to their WIDA scores and also take a special class, English for Academic Purposes, instead of a world language class to specifically target academic English language skills (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

Evelyn pointed out that placing students is more complex that just sorting them by WIDA scores. Students with beginning English proficiency in the fifth grade have a greater academic language gap than students with beginning English proficiency in the first grade, so they need a stronger English as an Additional Language teacher to ensure they have access to the content. "So, it is the idea of making sure you are placing the correct teacher who has the right amount of experience to build the right kind of scaffolds to get the kids to reach the content" (personal communication, February 14, 2019). She also emphasizes to teachers that it is dangerous to rely too heavily on scores from the WIDA that is only given once a year. "Someone could have had a bad day" (personal communication, February 14, 2019), which is why she emphasizes a more holistic approach in placing students.

Like many international schools, Devilline occasionally struggles to determine if the difficulties a student is facing are due to an English language problem or a learning problem. Emily noted that it is often hard to pick up on a student's need for learning support from the student's file. For example, if the student comes from an Asian country, the home country might have completely different conceptions of learning support. Evelyn observes students in class,

collects data, and reviews their work, but she admits, "Everybody learns language at different pace, so we can't begrudge the kid from that" (February 14, 2019). In the end, Evelyn goes back to their literacy, fluency, and competency in their home language as the strongest distinguisher (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The school is debating how much learning support teachers and English as an Additional Language teachers can and should collaborate to support students (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

Struggling students receive support in a variety of ways at Devilline, and placement in learning support does not require a formal label or psycho-educational evaluation, which may not be valid due to linguistic and cultural plurality. Liam, the elementary school assistant principal with extensive special education experience, described the process of identifying students with a learning disability as "a little bit gray ... compared to the process in the States" (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Many students are supported with short term interventions and teacher collaboration meetings, and the school utilizes an extensive system of multiple tiers of support, similar to response to intervention (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

The learning support teachers support many students in pull-out classes, but scheduling is difficult. Victoria, an elementary school learning support teacher, wished that they could have clustered the students in the elementary in certain classes to make it possible for the two teachers to provide more support in their classrooms, but the priority in scheduling is balancing the English as an Additional Language needs (personal communication, February 15, 2019). The high school is also committed to spreading students in different classes for balance rather than clustering (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Adapted Curriculum

Oliver explained that high school students can choose from wide range of courses from the IB program, Advanced Placement program, Devilline courses, or a mixture. Students can graduate with an IB diploma or a Devilline School diploma (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Emma noted that the disadvantage of having so many course offerings in a small school is that staff are stretched thin, many of them teaching four or five different preps (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Alice wished that the school would offer more curricular pathways to graduation for students (personal communication, February 5, 2019). Grace, the high school's personalized learning coordinator who oversees both the creativity, action, and service (CAS) projects for the IB and personalized learning projects, reported that the high school is using online learning to give students more choices of courses in their areas of passion (personal communication, February 5, 2019). Mia, a high school counselor, reported that these can also be extension projects for students who have gone beyond what Devilline has to offer (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Grace noted that the high school has made a huge shift toward project-based learning and inquiry-based learning, which would make learning more accessible to students with different profiles and interests. Students in the high school can also work with her on passion projects, where students identify a real-world problem and research solutions. Students must submit proposals including reasonable timelines and how their project aligns with the Devilline School vision of a learner (personal communication, February 5, 2019).

Referral to learning support. The school has made the referral process more rigorous in recent years and has asked teachers to show more evidence of classroom interventions. As inclusion moves forward, Liam stated that the school would like to increase the capacity of

teachers and the school for multi-tier interventions to support students with various learning profiles in the mainstream (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Amelia, the middle school counselor, reiterated that the purpose of the process is to figure out how teachers can work together to support students, not as a means of placing students in learning support (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

When a student is placed in learning support, the team works together to draft an individual learning plan. The purpose of the plan is to outline goals, support, and accommodations (Devilline School, 2018). Gabriel, the school psychologist, explained that students lead their own conferences in the high school (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The school does not require a formal psycho educational evaluation to receive services because many of the assessments are not valid for the particular population at this school. Gabriel pointed out that the disadvantage of more subjective criteria for learning support is that it creates gray areas in the system, and gray areas create tension (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

Oliver reported that although the school is willing to be creative and extensive in how students are supported, it is rare for expectations to be modified. If the school does not feel that students can be successful in earning the credits needed to graduate from high school, they will be counseled to find more appropriate options during the transition from middle school (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

Learning to Learn and English for Academic Purposes courses. In the elementary school, teachers support students with learning needs who are below grade level in core academic areas in separate classes while other students are in world language classes. Students with individualized learning plans can be exempt from the world language requirement. Isabella,

an elementary school learning support teacher, reported they use the Bridges math program for math interventions and the Fountas and Pinnell program for literacy interventions (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Teachers target specific skills that students are missing, rather than remediating missed class work. Isabella and Victoria both reported that scheduling is difficult in the elementary school, and so push-in support opportunities are limited, and teachers spend much time transitioning with their students (personal communication, February 15, 2019). An example of a middle school Learning to Learn class is taught by two teaching assistants and has two eighth grade math students, both of whom are working below grade level. One student is working through an online math program that his parents have paid for and the other student is working through the Bridges math curriculum. The teaching assistants work individually with each student to keep them motivated and engaged with work that is appropriate to their skill level.

Alice explained that in the high school, Learning to Learn courses have a formal curriculum of study skills so that students can get credit. The goal of the course is for students to be able to monitor their own learning and function independently in the eleventh and twelfth grades, as well as beyond high school (personal communication, February 5, 2019).

Charlotte explained that the English for Academic Purposes courses are designed to target specific language needs such as using question stems, verb tenses, and creating different types of sentences. The school hopes to align the curriculum of these courses with California English Development Standards next year (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Evelyn added that this course is an opportunity to address skills that are not instructed in other English classes, for example public speaking, presentation skills, or argumentative writing. Another purpose of these classes is to support the content courses by building skills (personal

communication, February 14, 2019). For example, in one high school English for Academic Purposes class, Heather, the high school English language development specialist, reviewed with the class how to use graphic organizers to plan their writing and how to use specific, rich language (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Specialists: Occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy. Specialists work with students on their individual goals in both pull out and push in settings. For example, Nicole, the occupational therapist who is contracted by the school half time, works with students in a separate setting to work on letter formation and other fine motor skills such as lacing, eating, buttoning, and tearing paper. Nicole reported that students like coming to her because they get to work on hands on activities (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Sophia works full time at the school. She works in a separate setting for the first few sessions with students with articulation goals, and then moves with them into the classroom. She works both with students with long term goals and also with students on short term intervention plans that are between six to twelve weeks.

Other voices. Teachers try to make a personal connection with students. In one middle school English class, students were able to choose the books they discussed for literature circles. On the day that this researcher observed, all of the books being read were written by female authors. To support her students' interest in reading women writers, the teacher had created a feminist book basket in her classroom library. She has high expectations for students' independent reading, no fewer than 24 independent reading books in a year, and has a scheme to allow them to choose books at their Lexile level and area of interest. As part of the instruction, the teacher introduced an historical memoir on President Hamilton by connecting the book to a hip-hop artist who had recently given a performance at the White House.

Adapted Assessment

Devilline School holds all learners to the same high standards and has only modified assessment in one case. The school offers ample accommodations to learners to make it possible for them to reach the high expectations including extra time, alternative venues, and scribing. Evelyn reported that portfolios are used in all divisions to allow students show their growth in multiple ways (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

The school uses data to inform instruction. The MAP test is administered twice each year, although students with limited English are exempt. Liam explained that the WIDA is used to place English language learners, to monitor their progress, and to determine levels of support. To monitor progress and achievement in writing the school administers the Writing Assessment Program (WrAP) test once a year (personal communication, February 12, 2019). The school's teaching and learning handbook calls on teachers to frequently give students feedback in the form of formative and summative assessments, to align all assessments to the school's standards, to ensure consistency through common assessments and normed grading, and to encourage student reflection (Devilline School, 2018). Emma explained that the high school has recently introduced standards-based grading, which will take some time to align, but will hopefully enhance the emphasis on learning and growth (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Multiple adults in the classroom gives students the opportunity for ample feedback. Most co-teachers reported they assessed together, though a few co-teachers reported that the specialist teacher focused on giving more targeted feedback to specific students on their caseload (personal communication, February 14, 2019). According to Charlotte, co-taught classes have both language and content objectives (personal communication, February 13, 2019). For example, in one English classroom in the middle school, both sets of objectives are included on the rubric.

Abigail, a middle school English as an Additional Language teacher, explained that the content teacher grades the content objectives while the English as an Additional Language teacher grades the language objectives (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The school is hoping to align its English language standards to California standards next year to provide alignment, scope, and sequence (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

The elementary school frequently shares data with parents. At the beginning and end of every unit, teachers collect on demand writing from students and share growth with students. The Bridges math program provides frequent data points in math. According to Scarlett, "That was basically our MO for this year. You can no longer have a parent meeting if you don't have data in front of you" (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Vision of a learner. Devilline School strives to recognize learning traits rather than academic achievement. In the high school, the principal recognizes learners each month that embody one of the learning attributes to "recognize a wide range of students who embody each trait in the classroom. So, it's less about the numbers. It's more about the attributes" (personal communication, February 11, 2019). The principal writes about these students in her monthly newsletter. At the end of each semester, students can earn recognition for their attributes by discipline, and at the end of the year mission awards recognize students for courage, confidence, creativity, compassion, and international mindedness (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Hugo, the director of teaching and learning, pointed out that while content has to happen in core courses, "Content is not king here" (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Grade point average free. This year the high school has stopped calculating grade point average on transcripts. Emma explained how she hopes this will enhance inclusivity and

encourage students to build the collaborative and learning traits they will use to become lifelong learners:

> I think that a lot of it is purposeful cultivation of an ethos of inclusion, making us aware that everyone has something to offer, and we are all stronger together than we are as individuals. So how do we celebrate our strengths collectively and independently, helping each other to improve in our areas of growth? (personal communication, February 11, 2019)

High school counselors are explaining the new paradigm to colleges, and so far, they have not felt an impact on college admissions. The school is discussing eligibility for National Honor Society. The result has been that students have become more aware of their areas of strength and where they need to improve. Discussions with teachers and counselors has become more centered on learning, and less on grades (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Gabriel pointed out that the shift away from using a grade point average is not a single step process. As much as the school emphasizes attributes and growth mindset, students still want to get into top colleges. "It's a difficult selling point for schools, because ... that's what society wants at the moment. That's what the market wants. It's going to be bold schools that are able to step away from that and establish the new conversation" (personal conversation, February 14, 2019).

Definition of success. When asked about their definition of success, many teachers and leaders said growth. Both the high school principal and assistant principal said this was the most important indicator of success. According to Emma:

> We are very, very careful about what we celebrate publicly here … What we are really interested in seeing is the growth. So, I would say the same holds true of our IB and AP

scores, while they end up on our website, we are not pushing them hard here in the high

school … What matters to me is, wow that kid moved from a two to a three in IB

psychology. That's way more growth than moving from a six to a seven. Those kids

who manage to squeak a 28, and they didn't know if they could do it, and they are so

proud of themselves, they got their IB diploma with a 28. That is just as important as the

kid who got a 42 and is proud of all the extra effort and energy that went into that 42.

(personal communication, February 11, 2018)

Hugo had created a more complete schematic of success for a Devilline School student.

In the center of the schematic are academics, arts, athletics, community service, and service

learning. This leads to students developing attributes to become lifelong learners. He explained

the role of the school in creating lifelong learners:

So, when students feel like they are supported as leaders and collaborators and innovators

and explorers, when they are supported in that, when it's being explicitly taught … I

think that you can only create opportunities for individuals to learn, and we want to create

those opportunities across a broad spectrum … they are not events that make them

successful, the events are the venues when it happens. (personal communication,

February 15, 2019)

Oliver declared that good scaffolding and differentiation allow students to face and

conquer a number of challenges in diverse areas, helping them develop an understanding of

themselves that will help them face challenges later in life (personal communication, February

13, 2019). Charlotte hopes that her middle school students will leave having tried new things

and gone out of their comfort zones. For English learners, this may be as simple as giving a

presentation to the class or explaining a poster, while other students may want to engage in the

school's wide offering of extra-curricular activities. Like Oliver, she hopes this will lead students to a greater understanding of themselves (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Scarlett felt that most parents in the elementary school want their children to have a well-rounded education (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

On the other hand, as a high achieving college preparatory school, there is pressure on students for academic success. Emily noted that parents enroll their children at this school with the expectation that it will prepare them to compete for admittance to elite colleges (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Gabriel felt that this pressure does not come from teachers or parents, but rather from peers and the collective environment of competition. He noted that collective peer competition is difficult to break down and alter. He hopes that by continuing conversations around purpose, meaning, values, and strengths students will begin talking with more authenticity about learning, and this will enable them to leave Devilline School with the attributes needed for real success in life (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Oliver admitted that all students leaving the school need to go on to some type of post-secondary option, although that may look different for different students. "If it's a college designated for special education in Canada, a community college, a foundation year in UK, community college in the US, an internship program in Germany, gap year with employment and a plan to go to university" (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

Adapted Teaching

Devilline School has a robust system of adapted teaching to provide in class supports to students with a wide variety of linguistic and learning needs. Adaptive teaching is important to support students in the classroom in line with the inclusive philosophy. Benjamin, a high school counselor, pointed out that because the school has such a high percentage of English language

learners, teachers have to be experienced and skilled at differentiation (personal communication, February 12, 2019), with the goal of "maximum student growth and individual success" (Devilline School, 2018). Hugo, the director of teaching and learning, indicated that differentiation begins in the hiring process, as during recruiting administrators are clear with potential teachers that they will not be teaching a homogeneous classroom (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Emily noted that inclusive models also help with self-esteem and ensuring that students are learning English in a fully immersive environment (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Scarlett explained:

> We really don't like pull-out models. I think that's exclusive. We really try to keep kids in community groups for as much of their day as they can. Kids can learn from each other. By pushing in with the English language acquisition model, by pushing in with the learning support, we are not pulling kids out. I think it decreases the stigma of being in a lower academic group, or with English proficiency. (personal communication, February 15, 2019)

For example, in one middle school English course, students have a choice of a wide variety of books at different levels to use for their readers workshop. The teacher encourages students to find books that are available also in their native languages, which they can use as a support if the English is too hard (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Another English teacher lets students choose their own books and book groups for literature circles. Each group is responsible for determining the number of pages they read each night and they can choose from among many different options to express their understanding. The learning support teacher assists several students in this class. He reported that the success of the class revolves around the teaching being able to build a strong academic environment and the high expectations for all

students. Students in this class read eight independent books per trimester or 24 books in a school year (personal communication, February 12, 2019). In a high school English course, students are using *No Fear Shakespeare* to help them understand Shakespearean language, and the class spends time discussing vocabulary terms. The teacher has explicitly instructed the entire class on taking Cornell notes. Because three teachers are in the room, they are able to work with individual students on individual questions.

The elementary school is making differentiation their focus this year. According to Scarlett, the elementary school principal, "Our elementary goal this year was to teach to the highest level of rigor possible, by differentiation. So, we have had a whole elementary school section focus on differentiation" (personal communication, February 15, 2019). When he visits classrooms, Liam reported that he is looking for teachers working individually or with small groups on instruction tailored to students. He recognizes the need to build even more capacity in teachers for tier two interventions, which he hopes will be good for everyone. "We often find the case that you do something, it's not just good for one student, it's good for a number of students. So, some of these things [are] kind of the universal supports" (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Several leaders and teachers in different divisions expressed the wish to build more capacity for tier two interventions among classroom teachers.

Students in the high school have a wide variety of choices in courses. They can take IB, Advanced Placement, or the regular high school program. They can also choose to take online courses to fulfill some of their credits. According to Emma, the high school principal, usually 15 to 20 students take advantage of this option every year (personal communication, February 11, 2019).   Emma gave an example of a girl who had used an online mathematics course to fulfill her math credit. Both the girl and her mother reported that the online course was at a much more

appropriate skill level, and that the student was proud of the independence the online course afforded (personal communication, February 12, 2019). The learning support teacher works with students with their online classes to "make learning accessible to students who could not reach the standard objectives" (personal communication, February 5, 2019), and the school has a full-time personalized learning coordinator for grades 11 and 12.

The school offers various other supports to students. Small class sizes help students succeed. Emma reported the ideal class size is 12 to 15 students in the high school (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Hugo noted that the community is small, so teachers and students have the chance to know each other and form relationships (personal communication, February 15, 2019). A student teacher in the English class explained that the high school has a writing lab, where students can come during lunch or after school to get help starting a paper or to polish a paper already written (personal communication, February 14, 2019). He further explained that the disadvantage of the writing lab is that students and teachers are already too busy and struggle to find the time (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Charlotte said that the middle school has just started a similar writing program (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

Co-teaching. Devilline School uses co-teaching extensively to support the development of academic language for all students. In each co-taught class, teachers explicitly state both a lesson objective and a language objective for students. Abigail, a middle school English as an Additional Language teacher, worked at the school seven years ago when co-teaching was piloted. She reported that she started by working with just two teachers, co-teaching either language arts or science (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Today in the elementary school, one English as an Additional Language teacher is paired with two homeroom teachers.

This teacher co-plans with both teachers and arranges to support learners in these two classes when they need it most. All elementary homeroom teachers have a co-teacher. Abigail reports that co-teaching seems natural because rooms and student groupings are flexible in the elementary school (personal communication, February 14, 2019). In the middle school, one English as an Additional Language teacher is assigned to two core subject teachers. Of the four blocks each teacher teaches, two will be co-taught, and the students with the most intensive needs are placed in those sections (personal communication, February 13, 2019). In the high school, one English as an Additional Language teacher is assigned to co-teach with several subject teachers in the ninth grade.

In the 10th grade, Heather utilizes her role as the English language development specialist flexibly and works with all the content area teachers at that grade level. Liam described her as the "new model" of co-teaching (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Her time is flexible. Some classes she co-teaches in the traditional sense of being present in every class, which she co-plans and co-assesses. Other teachers can schedule her to come when they know they can use an extra person to work with students one on one, or when there is a specific English language target they would like a specialist to instruct. Heather also works with teachers to scaffold lessons and build in support for language development. For example, in a co-taught chemistry class, the science teacher explained various chemical compounds, while Heather took notes on the board and discussed the meaning of the prefixes and suffixes of the chemical names. Another example is in an English class, where the English teacher has reserved her time to introduce the class to the idea of peer editing, and also when the class starts their research projects to give individualized help. On these days, the English teacher stated she would be assisting and observing, while Heather would be the main teacher (personal communication,

February 13, 2019). The high school learning support teacher also co-teaches this English class

and there is a student teacher, so three or four adults are present each day to help 17 students.

Heather would like to work more towards coaching to help teachers become more flexible in

lesson delivery to accommodate the needs of various individuals in their class (personal

communication, February 14, 2019).   Students are expected to be able to succeed without

additional support in the 11th and 12th grades.

      Co-teaching is used less frequently to support students with learning differences. The

high school learning support teacher co-teaches one or two classes, depending on student need.

Co-teaching is not used widely in the middle school or elementary school by learning support

teachers due to scheduling, though Liam wishes learning support teachers could also work in the

mainstream classrooms to support even more students and teachers (personal communication,

February 12, 2019).

      The co-taught classes that this researcher observed, both for English as an Additional

Language and learning support, were heavily dependent on the one-teach, one-assist model, with

the support teacher focusing on assisting a small number of students, presumably those on his or

her caseload. The advantage of this model is that with two or three adults in a relatively small

class, the teachers were able to give a lot of personalized attention to students. Charlotte noted

that even in classes where the co-teacher is not present, the signs of the English language teacher

are present in the form of charts, visual displays, and individualized scaffolding (personal

communication, February 13, 2019).

      Evelyn explained that to make co-teaching function seamlessly, at the beginning of the

year teachers create collaborative working agreements that are documented by administrators. In

these working agreements, each teacher makes clear what he or she brings to the table (personal

communication, February 14, 2019). Teachers complete periodic co-teaching check-ins in the form of surveys to assess the health of their co-teaching relationships. According to Scarlett, teaching partners share the results of the survey, and administrators address large discrepancies (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Teachers can also refer to the school's teaching and learning handbook and the school dedicates time with new faculty to clarify roles and models. Hugo explained, "We spend a lot of time, probably more than other areas, on role clarity. It's both a benefit and constantly a concern, constantly a need for clarity to be like what's the LSS [learning support services] teacher's job? What's the counselor's job?" (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Charlotte felt that the role clarity helps establish parity in the teaching relationships (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Scarlett pointed out that administrators are frequently present in classrooms to give feedback to both teaching partners (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Planning time is scheduled in most divisions. Several teachers reported that the middle and elementary schools schedule planning time both for co-teachers and for teams of teachers to meet (personal communication, February 13, 2019), but Victoria reported that learning support teachers report having to meet with their teachers outside of school hours (personal communication, February 15, 2019). In the tenth grade, Heather co-teaches with five different teachers and is not able to schedule regular planning time with all of them, however, she has taught most of the courses with her teaching partners in previous years. The English teacher, who co-teaches with Alice, Heather, and her student teacher, reports that co-planning takes a lot of time. She was one of several teachers who reported they cannot plan with everyone. She finds that planning is more efficient if she makes an outline of the class, and then the specialists make

recommendations and add supports such as graphic organizers (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

Most of the co-taught classes also use co-assessment. In the high school, because the English teacher teaches with so many other teachers and devotes a lot of time to implementing standards-based grading, to save time her co-teacher only spot checks the assessments and Heather only looks at her students' work. The English teacher enjoys the opportunity to talk about grading with another teacher (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

The school is moving away from having the purpose of co-teaching be to support English language learners toward having the goal of having a second teacher in the class be the development of academic language for all students. Evelyn explained that this furthers the school's vision of inclusivity, shifts away from using a deficit model, and ensures that students do not develop "playground English" (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

Student support meetings. Teachers at Devilline School meet regularly to check that students are making good academic progress. In the high school the counselors coordinate a meeting four times a year with teachers to check in on every student. Other divisions meet as teams more frequently. Teachers may be asked to submit information on a google document prior to the meeting, especially if they cannot attend. As they go through the roster of students, teachers give a thumbs up or a thumbs down to indicate if that student needs to be discussed further. For students they are concerned about, teachers bring samples of the student's work and data from interventions they have already implemented. The team runs through student strengths, challenges, strategies that have worked, and possible next steps. Teachers discuss short term interventions that are feasible for teachers to implement in classrooms. Mia and Benjamin, another high school counselor, explained that if there are continued concerns about a student, a

teacher collaboration meeting may be called to focus more on that individual student (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

In the elementary school, Liam is working to increase the capacity of teachers to make tier two interventions guided by data. He personally meets with each teacher, the counselor, and possibly the English as an Additional Language teacher before the student support meeting to ask what the teacher has tried, review the data, and make suggestions to help. Liam further explained that the online form to initiate a teacher collaboration meeting has suggestions for what a teacher can try in the classroom such as using guided reading groups more frequently, graphic organizers, taking time for the Bridges math intervention program, and using behavior contracts (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Teacher collaboration meetings. Teacher collaboration meetings are used extensively at Devilline School to support struggling students. Gabriel explained these meetings focus specifically on one student and ideally are held after at least one tier two intervention has been tried (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The teachers, counselors, the school psychologist, administrators, speech and language pathologist, and sometimes the occupational therapist will attend the meetings (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

In the high school the structure of the schedule makes it more difficult for teachers to meet, so the teacher collaboration meeting may be the first time that teachers are discussing a student. These before school meetings are where teachers discuss what they identify as the issues for a student and coordinate their efforts (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The counselors facilitate these meetings, and teachers share strategies that have worked. The result is an action plan for interventions for the student (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Benjamin reported that because the meetings start with talking about student strengths,

the tone of discussion has shifted away from negative deficits (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Because the teacher collaboration meetings and intervention plans are so well embraced, fewer students are referred to formal learning support. Teacher collaboration meetings run through several cycles to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and brainstorm new ideas (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Only after several cycles of teacher collaboration meetings would a student be considered for referral to learning support. Mia reported that the perspective at Devilline School has changed in the last several years. Teachers are no longer wanting to pass challenging students to the learning support department, but rather are willing to work with them in their classrooms (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Gabriel reported that the school is moving away from the idea of teacher collaboration meetings being a step towards placing a student in learning support, "We try to step away from this idea of it being hoops to jump through … That was the old perception ... I want to get this kid out of my class and someone else teaching him" (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Sophia reported that buy in from teachers is high because teachers see the progress that their students are making (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Teacher support. Devilline School has several systems to support teachers. Learning coaches are available to help teachers in each division. Teachers can work with these coaches to be observed, to observe another teacher, and get non-evaluative feedback on their teaching. Teachers can also choose from numerous choices of professional development strands, several dealing with differentiation or tiered support. At the beginning of the year, the elementary school had a specialist on project-based learning give a workshop, and most of the faculty meetings are devoted to topics relating to differentiation (personal communication, February 15,

2019). The school works with the Adaptive Schools Foundation Seminar, which comes from the Thinking Collaboration, to train co-teachers on the seven norms of collaboration. Scarlett reported that because co-teaching is such a robust system at Devilline, "Those norms of collaboration are alive" and teachers hold each other accountable for maintaining healthy relationships (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Oliver commented that teachers have a variety of approaches to supporting students, depending on their culture, age, philosophy, and teaching experience. One type of teacher may deliver an undifferentiated lesson to the class, and then spend many hours outside of class working individually with struggling students. Another type of teacher may refer students to an outside tutor, which is a large industry in Asia. A third type of teacher collaborates extensively with learning support, counselors, and other specialists to make sure that all students are supported. The fourth type of teacher delivers lessons that are truly differentiated:

> [Some teachers are] high capacity, high expectation, high help teachers, who take the top, take the bottom, and build their courses accordingly, and there's something for every kid. It's authentic, it's real, and it's spectacular. It takes every mitochondrial output that teacher has, and they are exhausted, and it's a glorious thing (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

According to Hugo, the school offers these extensive supports to students and teachers because they believe in an inclusive model, rather than a pull-out model that labels students (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Acceptance

Both teachers and leaders at Devilline School felt that students with linguistic and learning differences were easily accepted amongst their peers. Emma stated, "I think here we are

incredibly lucky to have a very inclusive community. And some of that is by purposeful design and ethos … culture creation and cultivation" (personal communication, February 11, 2019). She felt that the push in, inclusive model reduces students' feelings of being marginalized by being in a separate class, and it also helps that the school has such a large, transient population of English language learners. "It would be pretty hard to have a stigma as a second language learner. Half your population would have that stigma" (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Amelia explained that the school's method of scheduling students to go to learning support when their peers are going to a world language also helps to reduce stigma because everyone is going somewhere (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Victoria reported that many students are excited to come to her (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

The school's emphasis on student growth also reduces stigma. Emma explained that although the number of students in learning support is small, they see the benefits of the help they are getting and they embrace that support (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Scarlett felt that students could see the progress they are making, and they are proud of that. She explained, "It's kind of part of our culture here" (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Mia reported that she had seen a huge shift in students' willingness to come to counselling in the high school over the last six years. Even though the counselors are located near the administrative and discipline offices, which is not ideal, there is no shame coming to the counselors. This could be because the counselors are comprehensive counselors, who work with students on college and scheduling issues, as well as social and emotional problems. Other reasons could be that the counselors are highly visible, work a lot with groups, teach freshman seminar, and hold seminars with each grade during lunch. Students have a chance to know them

well. Mia summarized, "I think it's a pretty good vibe around that here" (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Several people observed that students would rather not be in learning support. Oliver reported that students do not really want to be different. They do not want to have to take an additional course or have their classes graded pass/fail. They would like to be the same as everyone else (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Amelia explained that students are extremely conscious of their academic achievement, and it is not fun to struggle in classes. It can also be difficult when there is group work. Because the other students are focused on their academic outcomes, they do not want to be in a group with someone who might not produce quality results (personal communication, February 13, 2019). Emily pointed out that students from certain cultures may have a more difficult time accepting learning support, because learning support does not exist in their home cultures (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Victoria further noted that some families resist having testing done because they are worried the label might follow their students (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Access

Through their inclusive model of having many adults in a classroom to support students in the mainstream, Devilline School strives to give access to all learners through professional collaboration, responsive teaching, linguistic scaffolding, and reflection (Devilline School, 2018). Hugo disclosed that the elementary school has roughly 80% non-native English speakers, the middle school has 60%, and the high school has 40% (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Gabriel explained that because of the high population of English language learners, teachers are used to thinking creatively and collaboratively about how to support struggling

students. Differentiation for language support occurs in all the classes (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

Having special therapists in the school gives more students access to learning. Although Sophia technically supports the entire school, she spends most of her time in the lower grades. She works with students individually on articulation until they have mastered the sounds, and then she works with them in their classrooms. She spends the first few months of each school year in the early years classrooms to help children get settled in and to watch for language and social problems. She works with students of all ages on pragmatic skills to give them access to social learning (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Similarly, Nicole also spends most of her time in the lower grades and uses a combination of push in and pull out. She uses the Handwriting without Tears curriculum to instruct students in letter formation, and she provides special paper for them to use in their classes. For example, she works with an elementary student who has particular trouble with handwriting. Sometimes they work together in the classroom to make her assignments neat, and sometimes she can audio record her thoughts so that she can focus on writing them down after they are out of her head. She noted that handwriting instruction is often useful for student with no diagnoses who come from different parts of the world. Because handwriting systems are different, for example in France, sometimes their writing is illegible to American teachers. In the high school she no longer teaches handwriting, but gives students pencil grips and other supports. She also works in the art class or local culture crafts class (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

The school is hoping to build a sensory room next year with balances, swings, and different surfaces for students to walk on. Nicole has noticed that this becomes particularly

important for students after they leave the early years program because they are getting less sensory input in the classrooms. She currently aids students by giving them texture pads and fidgets (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

The school gives multilingual students access to the curriculum by celebrating their home language and encouraging students to use their linguistic competence to build their skills and understanding. According to the school's teaching and learning handbook:

> We celebrate the many different languages that can be heard on campus each day … A variety of strategies are used, including "translanguaging," which acknowledges the power of having students converse, read, and write about academic topics in their home language to support the development of their understanding while learning content in English. (Devilline School, 2018)

Because students must pass a certain number of required classes to earn credits to graduate from high school, some students who are below grade level are counselled that another school might be a better fit. Students scoring below a particular threshold on the WIDA are not admitted into the high school. Gabriel questioned if the school can be truly inclusive if there is only one pathway to graduation:

> Because ultimately faculty are [informally] assessed on their ability to get students to achieve the standard. They are not assessed numerically on individual student growth, so they are going to continue to be frustrated by students in class that are not able to meet standards. (personal communication, February 14, 2019)

Support

A large number of teachers are dedicated to supporting students with linguistic and learning needs. In the elementary school, one English language teacher is assigned to every two

homeroom teachers forming a triad. The English language teacher uses her time flexibly, depending on the needs of each class. There are also teaching assistants, two full time learning support teachers, an occupational therapist, and a speech and language pathologist. Both of the learning support teachers work across all elementary grade levels. Emily confirmed that the elementary school has the most students receiving learning support services (personal communication, February 15, 2019). The advantage is that they can balance their caseloads, while the disadvantage is that they are collaborating with a large number of teachers (personal communication, February 11, 2019). They work mostly with students in pull-out support classes (personal communication, February 12, 2019). All classes are kept small, and Scarlett hopes that with so many eyes on children, students will be identified early if they start to struggle (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

In the middle school, one English teacher works with two subject teachers, and they co-teach half of the blocks. There is one full-time learning support teacher and a full-time learning support assistant. Both of them work flexibly with groups of pull-out students or as push-in support. The middle school runs an advisory program, so students can have daily contact with a trusted adult. Amelia is on a committee to coordinate the advisory program and explained that on Mondays and Tuesdays they focus on character building or social and emotional topics such as identity, caring, leadership, decision making, perseverance, respect, relationships, integrity, and transitions. Wednesday is about managing stress, Thursday is a games day to build relationships, and Fridays are flexible (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

The high school has one English as an additional language teacher for ninth grade, an English language development specialist for the tenth grade, and one full time learning support teacher. The English language development specialist's role was envisioned to strategically

coach teachers on differentiation and scaffolding, as well as deliver mini-lessons on specific language related objectives (personal communication, February 5, 2019). Emma explained the benefit of this role, "It's a more generative higher altitude conversation about language learning" (personal communication, February 11, 2019). High school students are also supported by a freshman seminar class, which is an introduction to high school that covers a variety of topics, and continuing seminars taught by the counselors in all grades (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

The school psychologist is full-time, and he works with all grade levels on mental health, wellbeing, and supporting learning needs (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The occupational therapist is contracted for 20 hours a week to support students, mostly with handwriting difficulties. She is available to see most students 90 minutes per week, but more severe cases she sees for 45 minutes every day (personal communication, February 15, 2019). The speech and language pathologist is contracted full-time. Although she is technically school-wide, she works mostly in the elementary school in a combination of push-in and pull-out settings, and she works with parents to support students at home (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Evelyn reports that in her time at the school she has seen the staff of the learning support department grow, which she attributes to the school's desire to be more inclusive of a broader range of students (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The caseloads of the learning support teachers are relatively small. Around 20 students out of 450 students are receiving formal support in the elementary school, not including those who are only receiving therapy (personal communication, February 15, 2019). The high school learning support teacher has a caseload of four or five. The small caseloads allow teachers to monitor the progress of their

students closely (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Sophia reported that over her 10

years at the school, the administration has become more supportive of learning support, and

teachers have become more willing to help with students with exceptional needs in their classes

(personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Students who need extra support in English in high school have the option to take an

extra course, English for Academic Purposes, that is available to any student. Students with

learning needs can take Learning to Learn. Students get credit for both classes, and they are often

taken in place of an elective or a world language. Students in 11th and 12th grade are expected

to succeed without additional support. Another option for high school students is to take online

courses. Emma pointed out that this is strategic for some students to take the most appropriate

course within the system to meet their individual learning needs (personal communication,

February 11, 2019).

Having a such a large student support team also has disadvantages. Hugo is working to

bring better alignment among divisions and specialists, and he pointed out the struggle to

maintain role clarity. There is a discussion about the ideal level of collaboration between

learning support and English as an Additional Language staff (personal communication,

February 15, 2019). Gabriel also noted that there is tension in the system because there is not a

clear cut-off or definition for who can receive learning support. Another problem is that it is not

always clear whose job it is to do what. The advantage, on the other hand, of these gray areas is

that it puts the individual student at the center of every discussion (personal communication,

February 14, 2019).

Training and support for teachers. Although the classes are well staffed, some leaders

feel more training is needed. Liam hopes to build teacher capacity to "really leverage all the

adults that are here" (personal communication, February 12, 2019). The school worked with an outside English as a second language consultant (personal communication, February 11, 2019). Scarlett reported that the elementary school this year is focusing on upskilling teachers in differentiation (personal communication, February 15, 2019). A particular area where the school hopes to expand teacher capacity is with tier two interventions implemented by general education teachers (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

The school is hoping to move away from one-time workshops that do not result in lasting change (Devilline, 2018). Professional development is not proscribed, but teachers can choose from different strands the school coordinates: Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, standards-based reporting, project-based learning, or understanding by design, among others. The school has 14 early release days that are devoted to professional development and can also be used for vertical teams to meet. The school also has learning coaches in each division as well as a technology integration coordinator to help teachers improve their practice (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Wellbeing. Several people reported school puts emphasis into their wellbeing program, both for teachers and for students. As Evelyn pointed out, if teachers are not healthy and balanced, they cannot impart those attributes to the students (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Amelia recalled that the school recently hosted a three-day wellbeing summit with teachers, students, and community members (personal communication, February 13, 2019). The school maintains an attractive, green campus and celebrates accomplishments of both staff and students (Devilline School, 2018). Gabriel, who takes an active part in the schoolwide wellbeing program, reported that the school uses an appreciative inquiry approach to frame the

conversation about how to promote wellbeing in the school (personal communication, February 18, 2019).

Alice works with a committee of four teachers from each division to coordinate the school wide wellbeing programs for teachers. The school has a wellbeing oasis, a room with massage chairs and meditation space where work is not allowed. Other initiatives include yoga classes, a wellbeing academy where teachers teach teachers during a wellness afternoon, and a planned trip to the beach (personal communication, February 18, 2019).

Alice and Gabriel hope to stretch the idea of wellness to students. Already the school has created four domains of wellbeing for students: healthy habits, self-management, self-awareness, and positive relationships (personal communication, February 19, 2019).

Resources

Devilline School is a well-resourced school that has put priority on providing ample staff to support students with various linguistic and learning needs. Foreign investment in the local economy, particularly in the sectors of industry and manufacturing, is strong so the school has a stable market from which to draw its students.

The school has a strong community feeling. The campus is beautiful and hosts many social events in the evenings and on the weekends. Emily summed up the atmosphere, "For a lot of us, it's home away from home" (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

The school is a bring your own device school where each child is expected to have their own laptop or iPad, though this researcher did not see technology being used extensively in instruction. Signs posted around the school ask students to put their technology away during lunch periods to socialize with their friends. This researcher did not see any students using electronic devices during lunch.

Local culture. Gabriel noted that the school community is affluent, and that affluence affords students the luxury of being able to go on to post-secondary where they want to go (personal communication, February 14, 2019). The mix of cultures is not without its disadvantages, and Oliver said that his one wish for the school would be greater cultural competence (personal communication, February 12, 2019).

Parents. The school works hard to build relationships with parents. Teachers and leaders generally felt that parents are supportive. Sophia summarized, "We have a range, but 95 percent are very involved in their kids and very keen to see how they can help them" (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Parents have the opportunity to attend student led conferences, and detailed reports on individual learning plans are sent home twice a year (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Parents get data on their child's progress every six to seven weeks in math and at the end of every unit in other subjects (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Liam described monthly parent coffees where the school invites parents to discuss issues that are relevant to programming for their students (personal communication, February 12, 2019). The elementary school hosts literacy and math weeks, where each day parents in a grade level are invited to discuss the curriculum, watch a class with a protocol guide for notes, and debrief with leaders and other parents. Scarlett described these sessions as "packed to the rafters" (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Liam is excited about using the Seesaw digital platform next year to maintain ongoing sharing with parents (personal communication, February 12, 2019). Charlotte pointed out that good relationships with parents are bolstered by the strong progress that English language learners make, and they are grateful for the resources the school devotes to each child (personal communication, February 13, 2019).

Oliver reported that the school's most important resource is intercultural understanding (personal communication, February 13, 2019). The school works to build a multicultural campus. The school library carries resources in over 50 languages (Devilline School, 2018). Korean, Japanese, and French schools use space on campus. Students attend these national schools before school, after school, or on Saturdays to keep up with the national curriculum from their home countries so they will be able to reenter the school system when they return (personal communication, February 13, 2019). There is even a Korean parent teacher association (personal communication, February 5, 2019).

Grace feels that the strong Asian population bolsters the school's ethos of hard work. "Culture comes from a history of really intensive hard work. If you can't, then it is hard to complete in global economy" (personal communication, February 5, 2019). Gabriel felt, however, that the pressure the students feel is not coming directly from the parents, but rather from the students themselves, although there is a definite family drive for achievement (personal communication, February 14, 2019). Different cultures can lead to parent push back in terms of rigor, when parents from some cultures are used to a national system that is more skill based and focused on rote learning. There can be misunderstandings that students are not progressing fast enough, because Devilline priorities inquiry, learning attributes, and depth of understanding over rote skills (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Leadership

Each division at Devilline School has its own principal and assistant principal. Though there are some slight differences in structures and procedures among the divisions, alignment seems strong. Evelyn is working on increasing that alignment and making sure that all divisions are moving forward with the same philosophy and vision. A teaching and learning leadership

team across divisions meets every other week to coordinate service delivery (personal communication, February 15, 2019). Evelyn added that a student support committee meets once a month including leadership, learning support teachers, and the director of teaching and learning (personal communication, February 14, 2019).

The student support services team consists of the English as an Additional Language department, the learning support department, and the counsellors (Devilline School, 2018). The school has an English as an Additional Language director across all divisions, but they do not have a learning support coordinator. Hugo, the director of teaching and learning, supervises the curriculum and alignment of all student support services, as well as professional development, wellbeing, and service learning. Teachers are supervised by the division principals (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

Large Asian School

Coesite School is located in a sprawling suburb of a large Asian metropolis. The building is set unobtrusively among concrete low-rise residences. Behind the school, a large park opens onto a river walk where local residents stroll under the trees. The school enrolls over 1,700 students, spread among several buildings. Space is tight, and some classes are tucked away in unexpected crannies.

A row of neatly parked buses greets visitors. Most of the school's population lives downtown and spends forty minutes to an hour on these buses commuting to and from Coesite School each morning and each evening. The school's population is largely bi-cultural: 20% of the students are American, 20% of the students are local, and 40% of the students have dual passports. The other 20% are from the rest of the world. Many of these families are long term, and the community roots of this school run deep.

Excellence is the legacy of the school. The school has a long reputation for being the best of the best in academics in this country. Although recent economic crises and natural disasters have forced the school to rethink whom it serves and to widen the scope of its linguistic and learning diversity, the commitment to academic excellence is a tradition that is alive in everything that the school does.

Vision

Coesite School's identity stems from its reputation for outstanding academic results. Andrew, the head of school, explained, "I think [Coesite School] deserved to be on a list as one of the most selective and exclusive international schools in the world" (personal communication, January 21, 2019). This elite status allowed them to be selective in their admissions (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

 However, recent changes in the local economy have created enrollment challenges for the school. The 2008 financial crash forced a lot of families to return to their home country, and in 2011 a large natural disaster caused many more families to repatriate. Although the school is back to full enrollment now and has even grown from 1,100 to 1,700 students, these shocks left lasting changes in the student body, as the school has begun to admit more English language learners and stopped exiting students with learning needs. Dereck, the high school physical education teacher, pointed out that this trend might be part of a larger trend in how Asian business dynamics are changing. Because English is more widely spoken in the local community today, more businesses are hiring people from the local community rather than expats to reduce costs. Whatever the cause, the school's market is changing.

Although previously Coesite School was a place where teachers came and stayed for more than 20 years, recently there has also been a big turn-over in the teaching staff because a

mandatory retirement policy forced many long-term teachers to retire and made room for new hires. Walking in the halls, it is obvious who is a part of the old guard and who is new. The new hires are younger, have different expectations of what their students will look like, and have more experience in differentiation and inclusion from other parts of the world. The entire leadership team is also new, and they are aligned in their vision of a more equitable school. The head of school, chief of operations, early childhood director, and middle school principal are all in their second year. The high school principal is new this year, and the elementary school principal is in his fourth year.

The school has been working hard on a strategic design framework to redefine their mission, core values, and idea of who they serve. April, the middle school principal, questioned who the school should serve:

> Are we going to say, we test at admissions, we only accept sort of a narrow range of cognitive abilities at the higher end? Or do we say that we serve all children of expat families? So, it's been a big challenge for the school and for our community, because parents have a real different view on that, too. So, there is a section of our community that would like us to be the elite private school, whose sole role it is to get Ivy League admissions. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

The school completed a learning support audit five years ago, and Jack, the elementary school principal, described the results as "pretty blunt in regard to where we were in supporting our students based on what we were doing" (personal communication, January 22, 2019). To address the results of the audit, the elementary school has introduced a form of response to intervention with tiered levels of support that continues to develop today. Amber, the high school learning support and English as an Additional Language teacher, worked to empower

more teachers at the classroom level to differentiate. "We knew what we wanted. We wanted to be more involved with teachers, so they were empowered. We wanted to give them tools, so they saw us as value added, that they saw us as helping them to improve" (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

The school board is supportive of expanding inclusion. According to Andrew, "Our board is very supportive of becoming more inclusive. Our board is composed by and large of parents who have students who have somewhat special needs" (personal communication, January 21, 2019). Co-teaching has started in all divisions, and staffing has expanded in recent years, though leaders are frustrated, it has not expanded enough to match the school's new vision of learning and including a more diverse student body. Teachers and leaders are unsure where the trend will go, as the school is full again, and now there is no economic pressure to diversify.

Legacy of excellence. Karen, an elementary school learning support teacher, explained how the school's emphasis on excellence has defined the school, "[Coesite] has this reputation that ... immediately things pop into people's head. It's amazing how for so long we have had that reputation and still have it, and not only in the parent community, but also in the teacher community" (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

Andrew explained that a hallmark of an excellent school is equity, which is why he seeks to expand the student support services. Maintaining the appearance of excellence was an impetus to implement co-teaching. As Amber explained, "Comparing ourselves to other schools. We look backwards. That's why co-teaching started. [The former head of school] said he really wants to do it because everybody else is doing it and we look bad…" (personal communication, January 15, 2019).

Dereck, the high school physical education teacher, pointed out that while he feels he has an excellent athletics program, that is not the emphasis of the school. "Ultimately, this isn't a sports school, this is a college prep school. We have by far way more kids that are trying to get into top schools than trying to be division I or II athletes" (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Time of change. Andrew is hoping to improve the quality of the learning support department. "I'm hoping to become a more inclusive school, a school that really understands students. Many of our students have additional learning needs and we need to figure out how to support them. We need to do a better job" (personal communication, January 21, 2019). He is working with division leaders to develop a student profile that is aligned across divisions and will help define what success means for Coesite School students. April explained that the motivation to diversify is ideological in order to prepare students for the real world:

If we want to prepare our children for the real world, then should school not be a cross-section of the real world where there are lots of different kids with lots of different needs and abilities? If we are truly seeking to know, value, and care for all the kids in our organization, or are we just saying we know, value and care for the bright ones ... If those are our beliefs, why should we not accept all kinds of students into our school who we believe would benefit from our program? (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Autumn, an elementary counselor, is excited about the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead for the elementary school:

[We will have] a couple of busy years in terms of looking at our strategic planning, and looking at learning, and looking at our kiddos ... looking at practice, what work that we

are currently doing is good work? What is best practice? And what are some things we might need to tweak?" (personal communication, January 22, 2019)

Most of the staff interviewed are excited about expanding the services offered to students in the classroom. They favor inclusion because they do not want to create another gap when students are removed from the learning situation and they want to reach more students.

Resources and staffing are a barrier to change at Coesite School. April explained that it is a dilemma for schools whether they should first expand their staffing or their student population. Recruiting teachers for international schools must be done six months ahead of the start of the school year (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

Placement

Coesite School has crafted its admissions policy to fit its legacy. Janice, the high school counselor, explained that academic excellence is what draws families to the school and creates a unique bicultural dynamic (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

April reported that the admissions team reviews standardized test scores, such as MAP or MAP test screener scores, so they know if a potential student will fit the Coesite School culture. Now that the school is full and has expanded dramatically in the last few years, people wonder how admissions will change. April thought that stable enrollment and financial stability might lead to an expansion in learning support services out of a sense of justice:

[Coesite] is fortunate in that … we are full in most grades, so we can choose to turn families away who we feel we can't serve. But I think morally we don't feel comfortable with that. And to what extent do we say that we would like to have a diverse community, cognitively as well as sort of ethnically and religiously and be a cross section of our world? (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Andrew explained that the school's reputation for elite admission was not necessarily a benefit as it encouraged parents to hide diagnoses. Elissa, the behavior specialist, noted difficulties in adequately screening overseas applicants may be leading to an apparent expansion of the range of students served at Coesite School:

> I would say a lot of our kids who are admitted with more significant needs are applying from overseas and aren't screened and there's nothing on their application that would indicate anything ... So, I'm not sure if they were exited in the past. But I think our current head, his attitude is that once they are here, they are ours. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Jack also noted a changing trend to keep students who might once have been counselled to change schools once they have been admitted:

> We continue to try to find ways to support them, versus saying, oh this isn't the right fit for you. So, there's been a change in belief in how we do business. They are our kids. I wouldn't say we have accepted more children that have higher needs. I would say they were here all along ... and we are doing a better job of supporting them. That they are not hidden away somewhere. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Many people notice a recent expansion in English as an Additional Language students, which Freddie, the admissions director, confirmed as the largest change in admissions. The expansion of students has been accompanied by a change in the teacher profile. Although five years ago most teachers had been there 20 years or more, the school has recently gone through a wave of new hiring spurred by the introduction of a mandatory retirement age. Freddie explained how the admissions policy for English language learners has changed and led to an increase in enrollment:

Previously you couldn't enter with intermediate English after grade three, and maybe even after grade two. And if you were a non-speaker, you were really out of luck unless you were coming in grade one. So since then we have been able to view those students who are intermediate in their English all the way up until grade six … The more dramatic increase in enrollment is around families who have a dual language background and have an interest in being long term enrolled ... where it previously had to be the mother was proficient, not always the mother, but the term was the primary caregiver … That went away completely, and it had to be one parent had to be proficient in English, and that even receded some to must be able to communicate effectively with the school in English and support young learners who are in an all English environment. So practically there has to be one parent who is comfortable and risk taking enough to be in English in this community. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

Pressure. The high standard of admission, high achievement, and academically driven clientele have led to a unique culture. The high school counselor keeps a graph of the school's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) average compared to SAT averages in the States to encourage students. The 50th percentile at Coesite School aligns with the 85th percentile in the States; the 75th percentile at Coesite School is the 97th percentile in the States. Janice explained, "The kids who are here, our lower 25 percent, are in the top 25 percent of the world, but they feel like the lowest 25 percent in the world" (personal communication, January 25, 2019). Additionally, 36% of students are taking 13 or more Advanced Placement classes.

Students must be recommended to enroll in an Advanced Placement class. If they want to challenge a teacher's recommendation, they can apply for a waiver, and the teacher will give them summer work to increase their skill and competency in that subject area. At the end of the

summer, students, teachers, counselors, and parents talk about what was learned over the summer and if the course is a good fit.

Teachers have tried to coach kids into taking a more balanced program without much success. Dereck explained that the school and its students often try to take on too much. The school has recently limited the number of clubs a student can join to encourage students to manage their time more realistically. "Because it sounds cool and it sounds interesting, but then when they have to put the time into doing it, there is only so many hours in the day" (personal communication, January 22, 2019). On the positive side, Dereck admits that the school offers a wide range of activities and trips to help students create a balanced program.

Some people feel that the high level of expected success encourages kids to prioritize superficial learning with measurable results over true understanding. Autumn noted that starting in the fourth grade, parents pressure the school for more math acceleration. Karen explained the negative effect of high-pressure tutoring services:

> They will send their kids to [tutoring service] every Saturday, and it's drill, kill, drill, kill, and these kids are like, I've got math. I'm in fourth grade. I can do fifth grade math. I can do sixth grade math, but they really can't. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

The high school math teacher felt that pressure from competitive college admissions is driving students toward higher levels of achievement. A high school counselor pointed out that the school published college admissions with the students' names, which adds to pressure on students for academic achievement. Martin, the high school principal, pointed out that the system hinges on the talent of the students:

So, in an environment that is doing that much, the only way it works is that the kids are so talented. In the sense that, whether learning comes easy or not, they are so engaged. … They do an amazing job getting caught up ... It also enables a program to move forward that is not a healthy balanced program. So, the power, strength, commitment, whatever it is, the quality, these students enable us adults to not be held accountable. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

Placement in learning support. The admissions profile states that the school serves students with mild learning needs who would not need more than an hour of support per day, and other students will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into consideration teachers' caseloads. April described that some learning support teachers are maxed out, not because of the number of kids, but because of the high level of expected academic achievement. The process is made challenging because the school does not have a school psychologist. Students do not need a formal diagnosis to access learning support, in order to facilitate short-term interventions with no labels.

Coesite School has created a four-level system of need to help level and compare caseloads and students. Level one students need minimal accommodations and 75 to 200 minutes per week of support. They have average to above average scores on standardized tests, though some subtests may fall below average. Level two students need 150 to 300 minutes per week of support. They also have average to above average scores on standardized tests, though they might need further support such as speech language therapy, occupational therapy, or physical therapy, and may have trouble with executive functioning. Level three students need extensive accommodations and 350 or more minutes per week, including individual pull-out support to make progress in class. These students may have executive functioning and/or

attention difficulties. Level four students need a specialized, modified program and are not admitted without approval from the head of school. These students may not be able to make graduation requirements and may have below average cognitive functioning.

Students are strategically clustered into classes that are co-taught by learning support teachers, in order to give these teachers access to the students. No more than 20% of students in any class can be receiving support. Teachers felt that there was not an issue maintaining parity among classes and that students do not feel ashamed to be in the co-taught class. In the middle school, the teacher noted the disadvantage that sometimes a cluster of students will spend too much of the day together.

In the middle school, math classes are ability grouped starting in the eighth grade. English and humanities classes are randomly assigned. The middle school uses a cohort model, where the 140 members of each class are split into two 70 student cohorts. This helps in clustering students and building meaningful relationships.

One difficulty with scheduling kids in a learning support stand-alone class is that these classes can only be scheduled when the other students are in local language class. For local students, this comes at the cost of not developing academic language and literacy skills in their native language. The middle school learning support teacher also runs a math club to compensate, but this is difficult because many students need to get on the bus right after school to start their long journey home.

Although the school does not have a formal gifted program, they are aware of the challenges for highly talented students. Autumn explained:

> … the constraints of a traditional school where you are at one grade level, is not going to
>
> cut it for them. Where you need that teacher to be very well versed in how to

differentiate in a way that is not exclusionary. That that student doesn't feel isolated,

silently doing one person projects, while the class is continuing with a specific goal.

(personal communication, January 22, 2019)

Enrollment in learning support and/or English as an Additional Language in the high

school stands at nine percent. In the elementary school, Freddie explained that the learning

support program is capped by the number of seats in the stand-alone learning support classes.

She further explained that admissions policy changes in response to difficult denials because the

school needs to take care that they do not lose important customers:

The decision about an expansion of staffing is a lot about who didn't get in, and how

difficult that was for everyone … So, let's talk about an example. Theoretically suppose

you have a denial that has irritated a major corporation or a major user group like an

embassy … increasingly this has happened to the corporation or the organization that is

not able to get their kids in. So, you begin to see the relationship tension develop ... I

think sometimes education cannot be as proactive as it would like to be, but it is reactive,

and it has an 18-month lag … So, the crisis in admissions came in June, it was a whole

year of study and evaluation, then there was a whole year of hiring, so it just takes a

while. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

Freddie further explained why increasing the number of seats for learning support

students does not necessarily result in an expanded program. As the seats fill in the elementary

school, those students move up through grades and carry their support with them. She felt that

learning support teachers, with the exception of the high school, are reluctant to exit kids to free

spots for others. Teachers may be worried about their future success, or they may be worried

about maintaining their caseloads. She also pointed out that if the impetus to expand learning

support is to increase diversity, then the school should consider admitting students with qualitatively different disabilities, for example blind students or those in wheelchairs.

Adapted Curriculum

Although only one student is on an officially modified program at Coesite School, the school works hard to create many avenues of success for individual students. To ensure the success of all children, April explained, "Up until now, if we've had to modify a child's program, then they haven't been admitted" (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

According to April, the middle school is making some innovative changes to their curriculum to make learning "stickier" (personal communication, January 24, 2019). They have combined the language arts and social studies class into one class, which meets every day. When the researcher was there, the middle schoolers were preparing for their intermission, which is several days focused on the United Nations goal of zero hunger. Students will have the chance to help at a farm, buy food at a farmer's market, set up bins to see how much food each grade wastes, and listen to speakers engaged in local and world hunger. April described how this is part of an initiative to do more integrated and concept-based projects (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Andrew stated that he felt the school was still a "tremendously silo school, basically English has no connection to social studies or anything else" (personal communication, January 21, 2019). He would like to promote more opportunities to integrate learning (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

The high school does not have a formal social and emotional learning program. The high school started an advisory program this year only in the ninth grade, and they hope to expand into the 10th grade next year. Olivia is excited about having a data specialist this year who can help them use data to target goals for the advisory program. Several teachers reported that the

social emotional teaching that Amber and Oscar do in their stand-alone learning support classes is important. The high school has a seminar program, which is once a month where students meet with their counselors during their free period.

The middle school has a robust advisory program. Two counselors support advisory teachers with social and emotional learning materials for students. A social and emotional learning institute came to the school to do a general training for the staff at the beginning of the year, and they will be offering their first institute in Asia in the spring. The advisory classes follow the rotation mentoring on Mondays, social and emotional learning on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, academic check ins on Thursdays, and whole school assemblies on Fridays.

Counselors in the elementary school also support classroom teachers with materials to support the social and emotional growth of their students. They use Second Step, a formal social and emotional learning curriculum and attended a training institute at the Nueva School to gather materials. This year they are in the process of formally documenting their practice.

Other voices in the English curriculum. The English department is making a concerted effort to add more diverse voices to their readings. This year, they have added *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. In the co-taught English classroom, on the bookshelf in the front of the room with class sets of books, three of the four represented authors were women. They are seeking texts with which students can identify. For this reason, the ninth grade English teachers decided to stop teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, because Asian students had no connection with the American Civil Rights Movement.

Amber's hope is that in the future students will get a choice of different books around a common theme to make the curriculum more accessible to different learners. Ava, the middle

school English as an Additional Language teacher, reported that already in the middle school teachers are looking for alternative texts for the one student with a modified curriculum.

Skills for Success classes. In their stand-alone learning support classes called Skills for Success, the learning support teachers have developed a curriculum that is individualized for each student. Amber focuses on skills such as note taking, organization, and setting priorities. Amber uses a google doc and asks students to report their own progress every week, so they can see a visual map of their own improvement toward their learning targets. Time is also given in the high school to help students keep up with homework. Ashley explained why this is especially important for high school students:

> The biggest thing is getting the homework done, because that is their opportunity for them to see what they are still confused on, and that is their opportunity to come and see me. Otherwise I don't know that they would advocate for themselves so much, and she [Amber] is helping them advocate for themselves. (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

In the middle school Skills for Success class, one teacher begins class by reviewing with students different ways to learn vocabulary words and then helps them prioritize their homework to-do lists. She then gives them math work, which is similar to a math test that will be given next week. She sits with each student and gives him or her detailed feedback on what they need to do if they want to receive full credit. She reminds the students that both teachers write and grade the test together.

In another middle school Skills for Success class, the whole class begins with a math warm-up that is constructed at various levels, and then they switch to silent reading, while the teacher helps one student with a math test. She gives the students a January calendar with their

goals attached and asks students to update how much progress they made this week toward their goals. The heart of the class is a lesson on self-initiation. The class closes with five minutes of guided mindfulness. Before the class is dismissed, she has the students help her update a large board that shows all the homework for all of their classes.

The teacher reported that one student just joined the class, even though he does not have a diagnosis, because he thought he needed extra help with his organization, and he wanted to get that extra help before his family moves back to the States in the summer. Several of his peers are twice exceptional, in that they have deficits in some areas but extraordinary talents in others. Karen works with counselors and administrators to make sure they are placed in appropriately challenging courses, sometimes in the high school, or that the curriculum is compacted and adapted for them.

The school does student led conference across the divisions. Amber reported that this is helpful for students in allaying parent pressure, because at the conference they have the chance to say, "I can do this" or "I will do that" (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

Adapted Assessment

Although Coesite School does not modify assessments in any way. Students are given scaffolds, extra time, preferential seating and other accommodations to reach the same learning standards as their peers. Oscar and Amber work with teachers on the formatting and design of assessments, and teachers reported they are happy to use these changes for the whole class. Oscar gives extra time to kids who need it in his stand-alone learning support class. When asked if she was worried about students cheating, Tamara, a high school math teacher, responded that she could not imagine them looking up or remembering the answers, "And honestly even if they did go home and work on it, at least they were working on math" (personal communication,

January 21, 2019). Yu, the high school Chinese teacher, felt that one reason so many learning support kids chose to take their exams in the learning support classroom was because that is where they felt safe and secure so that they could perform better. Yu also pointed out that the learning support kids sometimes do better than the high achieving kids, because the high achieving kids put so much pressure on themselves to be perfect, they cannot speak fluently.

Students at Coesite School are under pressure from peers and parents to perform at an academically high standard. Jack noted that kids in the elementary school walk around with t-shirts from Harvard and Stanford and go to many hours of tutoring outside the regular school day (personal communication, January 22, 2019). This can be difficult for students who, in other contexts, would be average or above average students. Janice reported, "A kid comes in here and goes, oh I did terrible on my SAT. I go straight to, what are you defining as terrible, show them the percentile ranks, and they are always 50th percentile or above" (personal communication, January 25, 2019). She reported that she is working with students to get them to stop comparing themselves with others without much success (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

April reported that in the middle school this year a student is on a modified program for the first time. She explained how she sees a modified program:

> We will modify usually two things, either the number of standards being tested and reported on or the level of the standards. So, the child we have has fewer standards and we are selective with those standards that are more achievable for her and chose instead to build a strong foundation on a few standards rather than have her fail at many. Next year we will have a child who will come to us in sixth grade and will be working on third grade standards. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Many teachers in the school use rubrics, and everyone gets the same rubric. Nicole reported that for students with English language learning goals, a language target is added to the rubric to ensure that progress is measured (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Definition of success. Although most of the staff members this researcher interviewed defined success in a broader, more holistic sense as helping students along their individual learning journeys, the staff felt that parents viewed success as high test scores and admission to elite colleges. Selena, the middle school counselor who has been in education for many decades and used to be a college counselor, confirmed that the pressure of college admittance on students today is much worse than it was before (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

For example, Ashley defined success for one of her students as achieving a higher grade by switching into a section where she was more comfortable. Jack said that as the school moves further along with differentiation, it is important to create opportunities for high achieving students and to retain the academic standard that the school is famous for, however he thinks that colleges are starting to shift away from looking at only grade point averages and test scores (personal communication, January 22, 2019). Even Elisa reported she feels pressure from parents in the kindergarten and first grades (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Dereck pointed out the disadvantage of students' defining success as being admitted to the school of their choice:

Unfortunately, I think it's getting into whatever school they want to get into, that's success. Even though you ask them, then what? And they can't answer that question. Go up to the senior group and say, ok you got into Brown. What are you going to study? I don't know. Their aspect is, a lot of it is, parent driven, and peer driven as well. It's more

I just need to get in there. Not like, ok wait a second, what are you going to do with that?

(personal communication, January 22, 2019)

Many teachers reported they felt torn between the parents' and kids' expectations of what

success should look like and their own ideals. Olivia summarized the conflict:

I really feel as an administrator, parents view success by what college you go to. That is

really a struggle for me … if that is how we are defining success, it's very limiting. And

so there is a lot of pressure … So many of our families would define it that way. Not all.

It's starting to change. I think our teachers would be the opposite and define success by

your ability, to have a good character, to have courage, to have compassion, to work your

hardest in a class and to fail and be OK with failure and learn from that … We say we are

a college prep school, and that really bothers me because what does that mean? If all we

are about is to get you to college, we have failed. We need to get you to be successful in

college. So, I think the parents and the teachers are a little farther apart. (personal

communication, January 17, 2019)

  When asked from her perspectives both as a parent and a long-term administrator, Freddie

said that success is a sense of belonging and a sustained love of learning. She explained the

apparent contradiction in visions of success between teachers, parents, and students:

So, in everything I'm talking to you about, it's really a parental voice. When people

come back as an alum, they just want to be in this space. They want a lot of what was

here for them has been changed, but their memories are about this being a very incredible

experience ... But in talking about what I just did, for a student who may find learning

difficult. A lot of what I just talked about is learning. The teacher celebrating learning,

the teacher celebrating their learning, so I'm not sure. I know students who have gone

through [Amber's] program, and they LOVE this school … I think there is a lot going on

about social emotional learning, and I know that [Amber] does all of that, but it's just

where they are in the larger context. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

Selena was more concerned with the real-world job skills that kids will need in the 21st

century:

You need people who can think, people who can react, people who are adaptable and

know themselves. That's the whole thing of growing strong, resilient kids who know

what to do. There are various ways to solve this problem. How should we go about this?

(personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Bruce also defined success in terms of getting kids ready for the 21st century job market:

Well, our mission statement with all of its grandiose language actually does kind of say a

lot about us. I want them to be curious. I want them to be compassionate. I want them to

be independent. And that independence is one of those things. We want them to be

equipped, so college and career readiness standards, we use that. I think that says a lot.

We want them to go out there and be competent and most importantly be able to, when

they do encounter things they don't know, to be able to self-teach. (personal

communication, January 17, 2019)

April has a more holistic vision of what success looks like for her students that ties

directly into the school's mission statement:

It's the idea that every child feels known, valued, and cared for. It's our outcome really,

and that they know that who they are is valued, that their growth, their goals, their

passions, are valued, that they all believe that they are learning at the level that's right for

them … that everyone feels like they are learning and growing and they are appreciated

in the school. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

For Yu success is having a student leave the classroom who is confident in their language

abilities. For Tamara, confidence is also critical to how she views success:

A student who walks out of that class and believes they can do it, believes they can do

math, no matter, maybe their grade wasn't a A+ but they had a positive experience,

positive enough that they don't resent math and would take another math class. They feel

happy about math, and to me, that's the important thing. (personal communication,

January 21, 2019)

Karen said that success for her is about progress, even if the kids cannot reach the same

standard, and even if the parents do not agree:

Progress. That doesn't mean that all my fourth graders need to be on fourth grade level

… That's hard to realize sometimes as a teacher and as a parent. Because my child is in

learning support, why aren't they now on fourth grade level? Why aren't they now on

fifth grade level? And it's hard to explain to them that when they came to me and they

were on second grade math, and now they can do third grade math. That's a ginormous

leap of progress. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

For Kelly, success for her learning support students is more about mastering the basic

skills they need to be a student:

A big part of it for me, because I feel like it's an area where their other teachers don't

have ownership over. It's when they know what they need to do and how they are going

to do it. And even if they can't do it independently, if they have to ask someone for help,

they know who they are going to ask for help and how they are going to get it. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Transcripts. As part of making the school's focus become more on deep learning and less on grades and test scores, Andrew explained that the school will be revamping its transcripts. They have joined the master transcript consortium to move away from the traditional transcript that communicates a traditional vision of what learning looks like (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

Andrew identified this as one of the school's strategic development targets, and he hopes that it will provide the impetus to think differently about what learning means and what is unique about a Coesite School learner. He hopes to begin to shift teacher, student, and parent perception of what success looks like (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

Students currently graduate with a Coesite School diploma. There is no cap on the number of Advanced Placement courses a student can take. Olivia described that Advanced Placement courses as "open access" and said that, "Any student should be able to take an AP course" (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Teachers and administrators are concerned that students in the high school are taking too many Advanced Placement classes. There is the possibility of capping the number of Advanced Placement courses a student can take, and the school is also working hard to create attractive, challenging alternatives to Advanced Placement courses. For example, the English department is creating new courses that are more alluring to students: Imagining Tomorrow, Law: Justice and Mercy, Fear and Loathing, and Chaos and Order.

Adapted Teaching

Teachers at Coesite School have a strong commitment to excellence in everything they do. Freddie summarized the legacy of excellence at Coesite School, "In a vast majority of the admissions decisions we are admitting great kids and matching them with great teachers. You could be in a shoe box and you would have excellence come out of that" (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Teachers are the biggest support for students. Janice pointed to the fact that teachers in the high school and middle school teach five out of eight classes. She felt that the reasonable load gives teachers ample time to meet with students and colleagues and plan great lessons. She explained, "It's again, our tremendous teachers that the kids will lean on, and the teachers will respond. So, a kid is having a rough time, and the teacher steps in and offers support and advice" (personal communication, January 25, 2019). Teachers are beginning to embrace differentiation and individualization. For example, Dereck explained that the high school physical education program is all individualized fitness training, including mindfulness, relaxation, and deep breathing, with the goal that students will be able to make their own fitness programs (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Standards are high for staff and students. For example, Bruce, a high school English teacher, explained the expectations of the high school English department:

Going back to the standards that we cover, what does a successful [Coesite School] student look like? Right now, a successful [Coesite School] student by our practice is someone who has shown proficiency in EVERY standard … it's 14 language standards we have. It's four in reading: it's coming up with theme, it's understanding craft, it's understanding an argument, I forget what the other one is. Writing: write argument, write

narrative, write expository, research, do citation, speak and listen as a group, listen to an

argument, give a presentation, 14 of them. To cover those in a year, it's fast. (personal

communication, January 17, 2019)

While the school is keen on maintaining academic rigor, they are also interested in

creating a more personalized learning experience for students. Jack explained that the school

seeks to create choices of interesting courses that tie into kids' passions. He sees education

moving more toward experiential learning, away from content-driven courses that hinge on

memorization. He framed the work of the current steering committee, "How do we get away

from that so that skills and concepts that are going to be useful for their lives? ...How do we keep

the rigor, but how do we support individual kids?" (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

This would help support a wider range of students, because with one exception in the middle

school, the school has a strict policy of accommodating, not modifying, curriculum and

assessment. Jack also emphasized supporting kids in the upper range of the learning spectrum.

He wants to help kids develop their passions and demonstrate their learning in ways that will

amaze colleges in innovative ways (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Jack stated the school is emphasizing differentiation, although it is difficult to get

teachers to switch from only focusing on the top achievers:

Teachers have been here for a while. They liked going to the former learning support

teacher, ok, I have this student, fix them ... That was a big challenge at first … now

everyone's responsible for every child in our school ... That took a while. (personal

communication, January 22, 2019)

An example of built in differentiation was Ashley's algebra two class, which she pointed

out demands a high level of differentiation because of the range of ability levels. As a warm up,

students worked in groups to answer using white board markers on their desk. Then she gave a direct instruction lesson introducing two different ways to solve these algebra problems. During the individual work time, she floated to give students additional assistance, and peers at their tables were also seen helping others. About half an hour into the lesson she insisted that students take a brain break, and she surveyed groups about who had had the most interesting weekend.

To facilitate this shift, the school has consulted with an outside differentiation specialist and is working to develop innovative teaching methods. The elementary school assistant principal and Tamara, the high school math teacher, were engaged as math coaches to focus on coaching teachers in differentiating math. Jack is excited that the school is now using math workshop to support a variety of learners. Elisa is excited about developing better math interventions. They are piloting new interventions that she hopes will better serve students' needs. "Right now, I think there is a lot of research being done in early math and number sense" (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

Jack emphasized the importance of using data. He referred to Elisa as a "data guru" (personal communication, January 22, 2019), and he supports her in bringing graphs to teachers to make data on student growth visible and demonstrate how data can be used to guide instruction. The school has hired a data specialist in the learning office to help support teachers in using data to drive individualized, differentiated instruction.

Freddie explained why differentiation, which has been talked about for many years, is just now taking hold at Coesite School:

> The reason differentiation has had more legs than it has in the past is because the student profile has changed a lot, and students are confronting the faculty on a day to day basis. It's not the learner, if you've been a long-term faculty member, that you taught before …

Because the vast majority of teachers that are hired really care about doing their work and want a good outcome and want to make the change that is essential to make that happen, are seeking that [differentiation]. How can I get to this student? What can I do? How can I improve? (personal communication, citation January 25, 2019)

Co-teaching. Teachers seem excited about co-teaching. Amber stated, "Oh my gosh, I'm a better teacher because I'm co-teaching. It's just amazing" (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Jane, a high school social studies teacher, reported that students in her co-taught class have an advantage over others, because they get direct instruction from the learning support teacher in organization, time management, note taking, and other essential high school skills (personal communication, January 22, 2019). Amber reported, "She's said multiple times, my kids don't really know how to write … My aims and my goals are happening, her aims and her goals are happening, and then it's fun" (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

In the elementary school, a learning support teacher is assigned two grade levels and teams with four teachers. In the middle school, the learning support teacher co-teaches two math classes, while the English as an Additional Language teacher co-teaches the humanities/English classes. In the high school, Amber co-teaches a ninth-grade social studies class, and Oscar, the high school learning support teacher, co-teaches one math and one English class.

In all of the lessons this researcher observed, learning support and general education teachers were both actively involved in instructing the class and seemed to have parity. For example, in a co-taught math nine class, students started with a warm-up via google slides, and both teachers encouraged peers to give feedback and help on others' work. Both teachers floated freely to help everyone. When students began to finish, they were encouraged to call a teacher over to check. The teachers encouraged them to move on only if they felt they understood the

lesson up until that point, otherwise they were available for addition help and explanation. Of the 22 students, five are officially on Oscar's caseload, plus they have strategically placed some lower performing students in that section. Tamara noted that because her other section is smaller, they tend to move a bit more quickly, which gives them time for a deep dive into the material. She is grateful for Oscar's formatting and organization suggestions that make learning easier for all students and that he offers help to the entire class:

> [He says] I'm going into the hall, and I'm going to recap this lesson. Who wants to come? And then he taps a few of his kids and is like, let's go do this. And then any of the other kids who would like to hear the lesson again can go out. So, kids can equally ask him or I questions. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

Kelly, a middle school learning support teacher, explained that she likes co-teaching because it is a way for her to grow as a professional. Karen explained how she feels co-teaching is a way to help more students:

> I think if co-teaching is done well, it's amazing, because not only am I working with the higher needs kids, but I'm working with all the kids, so I'm just sharing them in the classroom ... And I think when the co-teaching goes well, it really goes well. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

In Amber's co-taught social studies class, both teachers start the class together. Amber has taken the responsibility for explicitly listing the lesson objective every day, and she also lists the new vocabulary for English language learners. The homework for the class was to organize their google drive from the first semester, which both teachers check. During the direct instruction phase of the lesson, Amber gives explicit instruction on an alternative note taking method and asks students to try something new. The class then breaks into stations, and each

teacher leads a station that might be more difficult for students. Amber has previously hung new vocabulary sheets behind each station to assist students. Of the 21 students in this class, three are learning English and two are designated as learning support. Because of the success of the social studies co-teaching, Amber is scheduled to come into the English ten class later this semester to teach a series of strategies lessons connected with the curricular content (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

In a middle school co-taught math class, both teachers start the math lesson together with a bit of direct instruction. The learning support teacher gives real life examples of wanting to buy and sell brownies and other snacks from the school store, while the classroom teacher focuses on algebraic methods to solve the equations. After the direct instruction portion of the lesson, the teachers divide the students into two groups. The learning support teacher instructs a visual, hands-on approach to solving the problem, while the general math teacher instructs a higher-level algebraic method. The emphasis is on understanding why the two methods work.

Oscar noted that he would like more learning support teachers in the high school, so that a learning support teacher can be embedded in each department. Olivia, the high school assistant principal, echoed his sentiment. She wishes that there were more co-teachers, because every learning strategy is a good strategy for all students. She does, however, acknowledge several barriers to implementing co-teaching more widely. "There has to be money for that. There has to be time for that. It's more work for the main classroom teacher because suddenly now you have someone coming in" (personal communication, January 17, 2019). She has supported the current co-teaching models by scheduling planning time for teachers to meet.

Freddie noted that co-teaching is helpful to model. "And change in the learning support model to be a little bit more co teaching is giving energy to other programs because it is being

modeled and it's being facilitated and it's being supported" (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Amber emphasized that the learning support teacher must be value added to the classroom. "They are spending extra time. It's a lot of work for them. So, if it's a lot of work for them, only to have you show up and say what are we doing today in class? … I wouldn't" (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

Many of the teachers reported co-grading assessments. They reported that this helps maintain parity and gives the learning support teacher genuine input into where the class is going.

Planning time. Learning support teachers and their co-teachers in the middle school are scheduled one co-planning block per eight-day cycle. Although they reported that the time is not enough, they also reported a high level of fidelity to using this block as co-planning time. Several teachers use systems with google docs to further plan when face to face meetings are not possible.

The elementary and high school teachers must be creative in how they find time to co-plan. Karen reports that she feels she should be flexible to the wishes of the other teacher, so she meets with one teacher before school, and the other teacher during her planning or after school. Oscar catches Tamara in the halls or at lunch or they communicate using a google doc. Jane emphasized that it is essential to set aside time, "We read a book about it, so we made contracts, we set aside time. You can't just say it; you have to do it" (personal communication, January 22, 2019). She and Amber set aside one full block every other day. Amber noted that because time often disappears, "We both work hard to make it a priority to meet" (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Kelly noted that she also loves having time scheduled with the general middle school math department because she feels like part of the team. This time is necessary to garner respect, build trust, and align teaching philosophies.

Skills for Success class. Oscar pointed out that it is still important to keep the learning support pull-out class, in order to teach skills and remedy gaps for students who would be lost in the mainstream. Karen explained, "When I have them pulled out in a small group, I can really zero in" (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

Bruce explained that he often goes to Amber's learning support class when he knows his kids are in there, and he uses the supports she develops for all of his students:

> I would go in there whenever I had a free block and I knew that some of my students were in there and they were working on something. So, the support was often her asking them questions and reminding them about structures that she and I had developed for general use in the class, but with a target. For instance, if you are writing an essay ... here is a step by step, questions you need to ask yourself ... Here is an outline, is every paragraph doing this? Do I have sufficient paragraphs? Do I have phrases like this? Am I connecting my ideas, sorry my evidence to my ideas? And I say it was targeted because while I gave it to everyone in the class, for most of them it was obvious they didn't need it. It's there if you need to turn to something. (personal communication, January 17, 2019)

 In Amber's Skills for Success class, she splits the time between explicit instruction in study skills, social skills, and time for students to keep up with homework. She starts her class by handing each student a white board, where they can list and prioritize their homework. To

support students in social skills, she used the text *Socially Curious and Curiously Social* by Michelle Garcia Winner and Pamela Crooke (2009).

Asian languages as a way around dyslexia. The school offers several Asian languages to students. Yu suggested that learning to read an Asian language that is written with logographs, where one symbol conveys the meaning of the entire word, may help some students with dyslexia, because they do not have to put sounds together to construct meaning. She explained, "Because for kanji if you can read it, you know the meaning. But for English I can read everything for the whole thing, but I still don't understand the meaning of the paragraph" (personal communication, citation January 17, 2019).

Need for training. Several teachers and leaders pointed to the need for more training for teachers, so that they could more effectively differentiate. Selena described, "So we have kind of a discrepancy of philosophy and belief and all of that. I think it's been challenging. I think some people just don't have the experience of working with kids with greater needs" (personal communication, January 24, 2019). One teacher reported, "When I started teaching, I didn't know that maybe some kids have reading difficulties, maybe reading backwards. It didn't happen. It's not a problem" (personal communication, January 27, 2019).

Ashley described her struggles to differentiate:

It's hard. I would say that's my number one thing I am not good at. We have done some PD [professional development] and we have gotten some support. I can't always apply them right away, but it's hard, because there is always a huge range. It depends on the class, too. So, I teach algebra II, and I teach calculus. Algebra II is usually the more mixed bag of students. I've got student ranging from eighth graders who are extremely accelerated in algebra II, and then I also have seniors who also are struggling and just

need to get that math credit. So, I have five years of a difference of age levels with

different abilities and different skills. So that's always usually my class that is

challenging, and they are bigger classes too. I've usually got about 20 or 22. (personal

communication, January 17, 2019)

Amber and the other learning support teachers are coaching mainstream teachers to

increase their skills in differentiating. One administrator explained, "The learning support

teachers are facilitating the increased capacity for differentiation across all divisions" (personal

communication, February 11, 2019). She stated, "I'm so proud of the high school teachers who

are really uncomfortable differentiating, but I will do this with you" (personal communication,

January 17, 2019).

Acceptance

Most of administrators and teachers interviewed for this study reported that there was no

stigma or sense of shame associated with learning support, although the school has done nothing

to actively foster a culture of acceptance. Ashley felt that actually there was more of a stigma

against kids who learn quickly and get good grades easily (personal communication, January 17,

2019). On the other hand, in a high achieving school it is difficult to be a low achieving student.

Dereck explained:

> I think it's hard here, because it's a very high achieving, very competitive academic
>
> background ... In classes I think our kids are actually pretty good about being inclusive …
>
> Our kids are like any other high schoolers, they have their sections. They will split off …
>
> I know a lot of the learning support kids, and they hang out in different groups. (personal
>
> communication, January 22, 2019)

Andrew agreed with his sentiment that whatever stigma may exist centers around low achievement and comes from the parents:

I think there is a stigma … I think where it exists is not in our faculty, but in our parent community … There is an unusual level of grade consciousness among our students, where we spend a lot of time talking about mindset ... in terms of a growth versus a fixed mindset. ... my assumption was coming to [Coesite School] was that the school culture was somehow reinforcing the grade consciousness, the push for a fixed mindset around what my grades are. What I discovered is, I actually think we do very little of that … the forces that push a kid to take 13 AP courses is more of our parent community and it's more of a keeping up with the Joneses competition among students ... So, I think if there is stigma for a student who may not go to the University of Chicago, another school might be the better choice, that pressure really comes from the families. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

Oscar felt there is a stigma associated with learning support. He pointed out that learning support kids are in a compromising position because they are mandated to take a class that no one else has to take:

I know when kids walk into this classroom, they are taking a class that no other student is mandated to take ...and other kids know. I sit outside here, and I see kids looking in here, and they don't know what goes on in here. In my eyes to say that there is no stigma is us trying to fool ourselves. Outside, in the main population ... there might be less of that, less than there is in little bubble that international schools have that there's maybe more of a tolerance to it, or maybe more of a, I don't really care what goes on in that room over there. (personal communication, January 22, 2019)

Selena felt that the shame of going to learning support is ameliorated by the teachers themselves, who are warm and genuine. "They create an atmosphere that is warm and supportive. And those kids know they are loved and cared for" (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Janice pointed out that this was partly due to how much students share with teachers. "But given how much the kids seek out and share things with teachers, I think that there is a good culture on campus around voicing what's hard for you. That it's not perfect ... but it's not terrible" (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Bruce reported that none of his students seem shy about saying they get extra time on a test and going to Amber's room (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Yu added that students know they will do better on tests in her room because they feel safe and secure there (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Tamara felt that the stigma at Coesite School was less than in other schools. She explained:

> They are so nice to each other. I've never heard a student comment to another student about being on learning support, and I've never had a student be upset about being in learning support. In fact, I did have a student … who had been exited from learning support but felt like he wanted accommodations so he advocated for himself to get tested so he could get support. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

One reason for the lack of stigma could be that so much of the work is done in the mainstream classroom or at times when all students are transitioning. Olivia pointed out that when Amber or Oscar are in mainstream classrooms, they work with all the students because the strategies they are teaching are good for everyone (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Ava explained that the middle school uses space flexibly, so it is not odd if one group moves to a

different location (personal communication, January 25, 2019). Karen explained how the

elementary school schedules to avoid stigmatization:

> I think it's well done at [Coesite School], the fact that the kids don't feel separated out,
>
> only because they are not pulled from their class, class. All of the kids, during 1:15 to
>
> 2:00 go to either [local language] or learning support or [speech and language] or EAL.
>
> So here it's easier. There's not such a stigma because they are not being pulled out ... I
>
> think with everyone going somewhere … it's a little less. (personal communication,
>
> January 21, 2019)

Selena reported that it helps that the school talks about it in a normal way, focusing on

skill building, and because in the middle school they are not locked into the formality of a formal

psychoeducational evaluation, they can also give short term support. Kelly felt that not having a

diagnosis or a label avoids some sense of shame. It helps that the learning support department

has several students who are quite academically capable and do well in coursework beyond their

grade level (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

The school has done a lot of work around growth mindset. Posters are visible in almost

every room, and it is inherent in the language that teachers use with their students. This could

ease asking for help. As Autumn explained:

> I think they are very accepting, but I also think our students are pretty competitive ...
>
> There has been a lot of conversations and a lot of work being done in terms of growth
>
> mindset, and what does that mean and what does that look like? And our students have
>
> started understanding that concept and what does that look like and how does that relate
>
> to them. And therefore, how that relates to others, and I think though that, probably fifth
>
> year that growth mindset is very entrenched in what we do. It's become part of our

children's lives, and I think it has opened the door for ok, then, how do we increase our

diversity from that angle. (personal communication, January 22, 2019)

Dereck explained how the strong drive for individual achievement and success can

actually ameliorate the potential stigma around learning needs:

 I think the kids are so wrapped around where they are at, personally, they don't have

time to be worried about that or care about that. I want to get into Brown University. I

want to get into Duke. I want to get into here. I don't care what he's doing. Oh, you

want to go to Duke too? Now I am worried about you. That guy from back there, I don't

care. I just want me and what I want to get. (personal communication, January 22, 2019)

Oscar reported that parents are concerned about how learning support looks on students'

transcripts and how that might affect college admissions:

I find that parents have had kids pulled out of this program. Just this year, I've only been

here for one year, I've had three kids pulled out of the program, because parents are

worried about it on their kids' transcripts ... (personal communication, January 22, 2018)

When asked what schools could do to become more open to a more diverse range of

learning profiles, Andrew went back to the definition of success:

It's about redefining success that students' gifts sometimes manifest themselves in

different ways. Schools like [Coesite School] tend to be programmed to emphasize a

particular kind of academic learning, so it's more identifying and celebrating

opportunities, whether it's on the volleyball court or in art or in a concert or theater.

Rethinking how we define success, so it's not only about how many AP courses and what

your score was or GPA is or your SAT score … (personal communication, January 21,

2019)

Access

All students at Coesite School have access to whatever courses they wish to take with appropriate teacher approval, regardless of status as an English language learner or learning support status. There is an appeal process for parents who do not agree with their child's placement that is transparent and open.

Coesite School does not admit students who cannot be served to a high standard of excellence. The school does not use personal assistants or shadow teachers. Elisa explained why, although this is hard, in the end, it is in the best interest of the child:

> It's tricky, because I think in our hearts, we really want everyone to be here. But from my perspective we don't want to take beyond capacity … it's still not giving them the education that they deserve. Because it's, they need one to one support, but if you open the door and start offering one to one support, what kind of one to one training program do we have? … We don't want to sort of throw a Band-Aid on something and then have a bigger problem. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

This year Elisa has had several huge successes in her role as behavior interventionist. For example, the school took students on a camping trip, and although Elisa accompanied the trip, her support was not needed.

In the middle school the language arts and social studies classes are combined, several sections are co-taught, and student have this class every day. Math is only every other day, but several sections are co-taught, and struggling students can be strategically placed in those sections.

Safe and secure spaces. The learning support teachers at Coesite School have worked hard to make their spaces warm and hospitable. In Amber's room, she has a wall of artwork

donated by former students. Students can choose to sit at either round tables or the couch, and she has engineered the room around a corner so that student desks are not visible from the hall. She thought about hanging strategy posters, but decided her room should be a warm, communal space (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

Oscar had more of a challenge with his room, since the only room available for him was between the book locker room and the child safety officer. Yet his room has a soft glow from multiple lamps and soft textiles. Students have a choice to sit at either tables or couches. His room is one of more clean lines, more masculine, yet warm and safe.

Access to excellence. Martin is worried about the balance in one division between workload and student stress, an imbalance he felt is due to unnecessarily cumbersome institutional momentum:

We have no advisory system. We have a quadruple reviewed health and wellness curriculum. There are massive, massive, massive deficits that are deeply concerning, because we have gotten away with treating little kids, teenagers, as little adults who have amazing capacity for intellectual study, or rote memorization, depending on how you analyze it, in a performance culture assessed by assessment that hasn't changed in 30 years. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

When asked how Coesite School consistently produces such academic excellence, Freddie, who has been a part of the school community in various capacities for 20 years, replied that it was about admitting great kids and pairing them with great teachers. She also remarked that at Coesite School there is a culture of coolness around doing your homework, staying caught up with work, and not "goofing off" (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Martin found the willingness to rely on inherent student excellence to be deeply

disturbing and perhaps morally unethical:

> If you have incredible tires on your car, but your engine is crapping out, if you are
>
> coasting because your engine is busted, it's a smooth ride as long as you are going
>
> downhill, and that's the kids. There are lots of practices here that are insane to me.
>
> Insane. And I ask people, well it works, but you have put that on the back of a kid who
>
> is having social emotional stress because their parents are divorced or their parent died
>
> or they have a learning challenge and you don't have any accountability for the number
>
> of homework hours you are assigning and four exams in one day, even though there is
>
> supposed to be three and standard is two, but no one is policing and they kids don't say
>
> anything because they can just make it happen ... The kids make it all smooth. That's of
>
> deep concern because it is unethical and immoral, but it works because the kids make it
>
> work. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

Support

Coesite School uses a combination of in class, small group, and individualized supports

to help students obtain academic success. The school has three learning support teachers in the

elementary school, two and a half in the middle school, and one and a half in the high school.

English as an Additional Language works closely with learning support. The school has two

English as an Additional Language teachers in the elementary school, one and a half teachers in

the middle school, and half a teacher in the high school. The elementary school also has a

literacy and language coach. The school also has two speech and language pathologists in the

elementary school and early childhood center. Amber noted that the school does not have an

educational psychologist (personal communication, February 15, 2019).

The elementary school has developed an extensive, three-tiered response to intervention system. The first tier is the core, which involves identifying the problem, setting realistic goals, implementing research-based strategies, and collecting data. Tier two is the supplemental level, where teachers work with student support team members to set goals, implement research-based interventions, collect data, and contact the parents if necessary. Tier three is where teachers are invited to a Student Support Team meeting so that all team members can problem solve together. They may meet with parents to determine whether to continue to collect data, try another research-based intervention, or enroll the child in learning support (personal communication, February 8, 2019).

Some students with learning needs get push-in support in co-taught classes. Students with higher needs are exempted from instruction in the local language and go to a learning support class once a day for 45 minutes. Karen also runs a math club several days a week to give kids an extra booster lesson. The pull-out classes are not taught at grade level but are remedial lessons to help kids get caught up (personal communication, January 21, 2019). At the kindergarten and first grade level, Elisa tries to deliver all of her interventions in the classroom, so that students do not miss out on class time (personal communication, January 24, 2019). The school provides help to students to improve their skills without formal psychoeducational testing or a label until the tenth grade, which Elisa felt helps parents accept the transition into receiving help. She felt that requesting an expensive, formal report would not change the service being delivered (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Amber explained that in the tenth grade, students must get formal documentation to remain in the program, so that the school will be able to apply for formal testing accommodations with external agencies such as the College Board (personal communication, February 11, 2019).

Elisa has worked hard to improve the way data is used to make instructional decisions. She feels that by pinpointing which subskill a child is lacking, she can empower teachers to effectively differentiate in the classroom (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

The middle school divides each class of approximately 140 students into two cohorts of 70 students each. Kelly explained that one cohort works more closely with the learning support teacher, and one cohort works more closely with the English as an Additional Language teacher, although the learning support teacher also supports English learners, and the English as an Additional Language teacher also supports students with learning needs (personal communication, January 24, 2019). April reported the middle school has recently increased the number of sections of each class, so that it can decrease the number of students per class to between 14 and 18 (personal communication, January 24, 2019). This helps the students and staff form stronger relationships.

This year the middle school has started mini-meetings with students during advisory time. Once a week they meet one on one with their advisor on a rotating basis to talk about survey data on personal attributes such as grit or academic areas such as report cards. Together with their advisors, they set goals for personal improvement (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

The high school runs a drop-in tutoring center at lunch and after school staffed by interns. A big part of the support that all students at Coesite School receive is the determined commitment of their teachers to delivering a quality education to each and every student. For example, Ashley said:

The biggest thing is talking with [Amber] and really learning who they are at the beginning of the semester. And usually I will go check in with her if I notice B* in class

is having trouble with this. Help me, how can I serve him better? … So, she will tell me in the beginning, and I try to remember, and I try to implement them, but it's tough. I need to first see and experience him or her as a student, and then OK, now what do I do. (personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Bruce pointed out that with a large roster of students in the high school it is helpful to have another caring teacher onboard to help students:

[Amber] and I have talked, we are really happy with what we were able to accomplish last year, but in terms of inclusion, she did the work, and ... I created all the scaffolding materials. I tried to help them in class, and I met for hours and hours and hours with them outside of class time, but a lot of it comes down to that one on one, and when I had 96 students on my roster, she was able to do it more easily than I was. (personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Student of concern meetings. In the elementary school, the student support team meets every week, which includes learning support teachers, the speech pathologist, the English as an Additional Language teachers, counselors, and administrators. According to Autumn, teachers may report concerns about a child, and the team brainstorms solutions (personal communication, February 8, 2019). They also check back in to see which interventions are working. Jack noted that they focus both on students who are struggling and students who have demonstrated superior academic ability (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

April explained that the middle school has student support team meetings every month, including learning support teachers, English as an Additional Language teachers, counselors, and administrators, where they first discuss students who are receiving services, then other students who are "on the radar" (personal communication, February 9, 2019). They also have students to

know meetings by grade level, once every eight days for grade six and once every month for grades seven and eight, where any student can be discussed (personal communication, February 9, 2019). In those meetings any teacher can add students of concern to the agenda to discuss with the team (personal communication, February 8, 2019). The student support team is on the agenda at faculty meetings three or four times a year.

The high school currently does not have a student problem solving team. When students receive a D or lower on a report card, they are placed on either academic warning or academic probation, and the school sends letters to their families. According to Amber, the high school hopes to develop a comprehensive process similar to the other divisions where teachers meet once a week to discuss attendance, emotional, or learning issues (personal communication, February 9, 2019).

Communication about students. Several classroom teachers reported the most helpful support they receive from the learning support department was information about students' learning needs and reminders about their accommodations, (personal communication, January 22, 2019). Dereck commented how helpful it is to have Amber meet with him personally and explain each student and their learning needs, even for teachers outside the core academic subjects, "What's most helpful is just knowing who the kids are" (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Oscar additionally pointed out how helpful online tools such as the online grading platform and Google Suite can be for disseminating information to many teachers (personal communication, January 22, 2019). The advantages include that teachers can click on the linked individualized education plan and read the accommodation information when they need it.

Amber added that google suites has "really revolutionized individualized education" (personal communication, February 10, 2019).

Effective upskilling. Many teachers and administrators called for a need for upskilling teachers in differentiation and meeting the needs of students with different learning profiles. Teachers agreed that effective training should be practical, specific, and result in something they can use in the classroom the next day. For example, Elisa has started doing workshops on data analysis. She has the teachers collect data on students several days before the workshop so they can analyze it during the workshop. She then gives teachers a list of resources they can try (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

Several teachers pointed out co-teaching is its own professional development, as this is modeling differentiation in action. Tamara said she learns best when she is actually doing something, and with a co-teacher they are doing it together. She reported that she transfers these skills to her other classes (personal communication, January 21, 2019). Ashley wished that she could have time to observe other teachers' classes because seeing something in action makes it stick (personal communication, January 17, 2019). However, Selena pointed out that the learning support teachers do not have time to do coaching on top of their caseload (personal communication, January 24, 2019).

To support teacher's growth and development, Andrew reported that they are "completely redesigning our professional growth system to make sure that teachers' professional experience here aligns with ... the culture of learning" (personal communication, January 21, 2019). The school has worked with several consultants and maintains those relationships if teachers have questions (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Olivia pointed out that one of the biggest problems with professional development initiatives in schools is that schools have so many initiatives that it becomes impossible to do anything well. She explained that:

> If a school is going to say we want everyone to understand EAL [English as an Additional Language] strategies, then that has got to be our number one goal for the year. There can't be anything else on the plate. And then we bring someone in, and we are all working together on that goal. (personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Resources

Although the school has plentiful material resources, budgeting is tight because the school is tuition based. For example, to add the two new counselling positions to the high school, they had to raise tuition by one percent (personal communication, January 21, 2019).

Many leaders and teachers wished for more staff. Because of the high cost of labor in the local country and their relatively low tuition, the school currently has a hiring freeze. The principal said he needs at least ten more staff to bring the school to equal terms with competitor schools: two counselors, one assistant principal, one learning support teacher, and six faculty. Andrew would like to have a student services coordinator to focus on alignment and transitions (personal communication, January 21, 2019), and several people would like to have an educational psychologist (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Martin explained why the lack of staffing makes it difficult to ask teachers to increase their efforts in differentiation:

> Asking teachers to do something different is instantly more. But when you have resources you can articulate the how and the why better. You can say this is the why and we are going to help you do that better, but you can't do that here because you're asking the

same people to do just more, and that's not sustainable. (personal communication,

January 25, 2019)

Parents. The staff and administrators interviewed reported a strong split in expectations

between educators and the parent community in terms of what success means. Teachers reported

strong pressure on kids for achievement and college admittance coming from families, though

teachers mostly did not feel this was the most important outcome of school. Freddie explained

why some parents might put so much pressure on their kids and send them to cram schools,

schools which run evening and weekend programs to prepare students for high-stakes tests:

> When you are in a culture where cram school is the currency of raising children, and you
>
> have now moved yourself to an international school setting, and your American husband
>
> is involved, but not involved like you are, the only piece of your child's education that
>
> you can relate to is sending them to a cram school ... This is the first time that the two
>
> experiences have crossed over. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

The school does little with parent trainings, though leaders wish they could do more.

Autumn explained that they have a lot of working parents, and Ava added a lot of parents live far

away from campus. With her background as the president of the parent teacher organization and

a parent of two students herself, Freddie explained that parents of students with special needs

have a more difficult time earlier, but other parents face that struggle later:

> Parents of learning support children learn very early on how to navigate the social
>
> conversation about how your kid is doing in school. Parents who don't have kids in
>
> learning support don't face that conversation early enough, and it's resting on the college
>
> acceptance letter. And so, their parent evaluation is in that inbox, and that's unfortunate,

because it's really not their parenting, it's all the way back through here [the academic career of their students]. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

The learning support staff, administration, and counselors collaborate once or twice a year to put on a parent workshop in another branch of the school downtown, closer to where more parents live. They send a survey to parents about what they would like to know and put on presentations to address these concerns. For example, Karen recently presented about homework and the importance of letting children play and non-paper-and-pencil homework (personal communication, January 21, 2019). Autumn reported that in the spring, the child safety coordinator will do a parent workshop, and the technology department has done digital literacy workshops for parents, although she agreed there was much more of a need for parent workshops and trainings (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Parents and the school must work together through the challenges that the bicultural demographic of the school poses for some Asian students conforming to American cultural expectations. For example, Americans expect that students will learn to become self-advocates and ask for what they need, whereas in Asian culture this would be considered rude. Janice, the high school counselor, explained the split:

> [Parents enroll here] wanting to tear down some Asian stereotypes and making sure that their kids do not have that sort of deference to authority or lack of willingness to speak up or really are trying to build it very deliberately. (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Several teachers explained that the local Asian culture places a strong emphasis on achievement in the form of measurable test scores and college admittance. Some teachers felt that the Asian approach to teaching subjects like math tends more towards memorization, so

students can get into advanced topics quickly, but without the depth of understanding that an American curriculum seeks.

Community resources. English speaking resources such as speech therapists and occupational therapists are difficult to find in this community. Elisa pointed out there are only 11 trained Board Certified Behavior Analysts in the entire country (personal communication, January 24, 2019). The school has shied away from working with tutoring centers. Olivia explained, "I just think that there is learning, and there is doing well on tests. We always say to kids, your teacher is teaching you to be a good learner … a tutoring agency is only helping you to do well" (personal communication, January 17, 2019). The school does work with Global Online Academy to give students access to courses they could not otherwise take at Coesite School (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Students use outside tutoring agencies extensively, although many teachers felt that they spent too much time at tutoring. Students also extensively employ outside test preparation agencies.

Technology. Technology is widely used at Coesite School to make learning more accessible to students. For example, Yu uses VoiceThread to record vocabulary words. Her students can listen to the playback at home, then record their own voices. They can compare their own recording to the teacher's and rerecord until they are satisfied with their accent and intonation. She also records explanations of grammar points. She said she sometimes records a "faster one" and a "slower one" and sends targeted recordings to particular students (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

Ava is quite excited about the prospects of e-readers and electronic audio books that the library is introducing. Especially for students who must commute many hours each day, this

gives them the chance to spend much more time reading (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

The elementary school uses iPads to support student learning. Jack wishes he had a technology person who could help teachers use this technology in truly innovative ways to transform student learning (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Leadership

The leadership at Coesite School is in transition. Every leader that this researcher spoke with had a clear vision of becoming a more inclusive school, which represents a cultural shift from the former Coesite School. The school has recently redesigned its strategic design framework and determined six strategic priorities. Andrew noted, "That was a lot of work from a lot of people" (personal communication, January 21, 2019). The learning framework and goals make it clear that the school wants to move to providing a higher quality education for a wider range of learning profiles. Jack summarized, "[That's the direction] everyone wants to move towards" (personal communication, January 22, 2019).

Freddie pointed out that inclusion and differentiation have been talked about for a long time. Change in education is slow. She raised a more interesting question:

I think the interesting question to that is why? Because that's what good schools do. Because in the quality and diversity and community-oriented education that we are, we should be able to be more inclusive. (personal communication, January 25, 2019)

Andrew oversees the entire school, and each division has a principal and assistant principal. Instead of employing a full-time director of student services, the school uses a rotating department head model for the student support services department. This is a two-year role that rotates among the divisions and among learning support, English as an Additional Language, and

the speech language pathologists. This person is the leader of the student support services committee. One administrator serves as liaison to the student support services committee for two years. This role also rotates among the divisions, and this year, Andrew has taken it on personally. This administrator then reports back to the other administrators about what is happening in learning support and English as an Additional Language.

The school faces several challenges in becoming more inclusive. The school has a long legacy of academic excellence that does not include diverse learners and an entrenched community. Andrew explained why the moment may be now to disrupt the institutional momentum:

> [Coesite]'s current reputation is a tremendously entrenched high school faculty in particular. [Coesite] is a school you come to and stay for the rest of your career. And the product of that is teachers were hired in 1997 maybe didn't always have an attitude of real inclusion. [Now] the first day of the next school year over 75 percent of our faculty will have been employed at [Coesite] for five years or less. That's because the previous head of school introduced a mandatory retirement age ... We have reached a critical mass of people being selective in our recruiting, making sure the people we bring here really buy into the notion of know, value, care. Buy into the notion of their obligation to help all learners, not just the ones who will get a four or five on the AP exam. (personal communication, January 21, 2019)

Selena pointed out that the new philosophy and dichotomy of teachers has not been entirely easy:

> I think it has been challenging. We have a dual platform of teachers here. We have teachers who have been here for a really long time and only have the experience of the

same high-end kids coming through ... So, we have kind of a discrepancy of philosophy and belief and all of that … I think some people just don't have the experience of working with kids with greater needs ... I just met with the learning support teacher the other day to talk about this student and then talk to her math and humanities teacher, and I don't think either one of them understand what the modifications are. (personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Another issue in the school is that the divisions are not aligned. Even the terminology used sometimes differs across the divisions. Jack reported that even within the elementary school alignment is new:

When we first got here four years ago, there wasn't a curriculum. You could go into five fifth grade classrooms and they were five different things being taught. Totally different units. Whatever a teacher brought from a previous school, had no alignment whatsoever. So immediately we came in and said, you have collaborative time everyday ... We don't all need to be teaching in the same way every day, but we need to have the same outcomes for every child, and we need to make sure that the standards that are being taught and the assessments being used are the same. (personal communication, January 22, 2019)

The school does not have any system of accountability for differentiation for its teachers, nor does it have any system in place to measure and celebrate success in terms of inclusion. Olivia explained that the only accountability is Amber and Oscar's sense of professional responsibility:

Really the only accountability is [Amber] and [Oscar] working with the kids and the teachers. And I think even that's challenging for them because they are not in a position

of authority. So, they write the plans for the kids, they meet with the teachers about that

plan early in the year, they check in so are those plans going, but it's certainly not fool

proof. There're lots of holes. A teacher could go a month and not make any

accommodations, and no one would know. (personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Teachers in the high school report that they have a wonderful program, and everyone felt

that students are being supported, because they have a wonderful learning support teacher.

Amber is the longest serving learning support teacher. Bruce described how she has fought to

create the program that the school has today:

By sheer dint of will personality … she's lovely, she's warm, she normalizes, she

praises, she encourages, she makes them proud of every little step of progress that they

make. I adore her. I adore and admire her … I think a lot of it is her, single handedly. I

think of her as the program. (personal communication, January 17, 2019)

As a leader in a time of change, Martin described this moment as, "An amazing

opportunity, and there's massive changes already" (personal communication, January 25, 2019).

Leaders at the school reported a strong desire to make the program even more inclusive, while

maintaining its legacy of excellence, and teachers reported excitement about the direction of

change.

Comparisons Among Schools

Four international schools were compared for this study. Two schools were in Europe,

one large and one small, and two in Asia, one large and one small. The two large schools

enrolled over 1,500 students, and the two small schools had less than 800 students. All

international schools had an American style teaching philosophy, instructed in English, used a

college preparatory curriculum, and achieved high academic results as measured by standardized

test scores and college admittances. All schools had inclusive programming for students with exceptional learning needs and English language learners.

Three of the schools were located in or near a large metropolis. The small European school was located in the capital of the country, which was significantly smaller than other cities, but was the largest city in that country. With the exception of the small Asian school, all schools were fully enrolled. The small Asian school was not under economic pressure.

The table below summarizes basic demographic information published on each school's website in the high school profile. Alabaster School does not publish a high school profile, nor do they publish test scores.

Table 3

Demographics and Outcomes

	European	Asian
Small	- Alabaster School - Near the center of the capital, not large city - Only private school in its market - Approximate enrollment 500 - Average IB 33 - Average test scores not published	- Devilline School - Centrally located in metropolis - Best school for English immersion in its market - Approximate enrollment 800 - Average IB 34 - Average AP 3.87 - Average SAT 1350
Large	- Brookite School - Close suburb of large capital city - Most inclusive school in its market - Approximate enrollment 1500 - Average IB 33 - Average SAT 1275 - Average ACT 27	- Coesite School - Far suburb of large Asian city - Most elite private school in its market - Approximate enrollment 1600 - Average SAT 1360 - Average ACT 28.9

Vision

Although all schools had strong academics and inclusive programs, the vision and actualization of inclusion looked different in each school. In both European schools, the schools prided themselves on being inclusive. Including a population with diverse learning needs was part of the identity of the school, and that diversity was seen as an asset, not a deficit. They advertised the inclusion of students with special needs and discussed openly with teachers, parents, and community members the benefits of celebrating the diversity each child brings to the learning community. Stakeholders in both schools felt this was an effective selling point, as both programs have a waiting list. The schools have moved away from talking about accommodating for disabilities towards individualizing education for all students because all students are different. These schools plan to continue their emphasis on individualized education, want to broaden the scope of disabilities that can be included, and hope to expand their programs by inspiring other schools.

The Asian schools prided themselves more on high academic achievement. Although teachers and leaders sought to educate holistic, balanced lifelong learners, there was a strong sentiment that parents and students expected the school to produce academic results which would garner admission to elite universities. Inclusion in these schools was centered more around linguistic diversity and including students whose native language was not English in the mainstream classroom. These schools valued differentiation and individualization in the classroom to support linguistic diversity and as a means to improve the educational experience of all children in the school.

One possible factor that could influence to what degree schools pride themselves on inclusion and celebrate students who might be regarded as having a disability is the degree of

shame associated with having a disability in the local culture. The Asian schools both spoke of diverse learning profiles with a deficit model of disability, whereas European schools spoke more about celebrating diversity and individual learning paths. Fully researching the ideation of disability and shame in these cultures is beyond the scope of this study, but staff in both Asian schools reported families to have a degree of shame regarding disability, and parents were reported as reluctant to have their children labelled. The degree of shame in European cultures was less apparent.

Almost all of the teachers and leaders interviewed for this study sought to educate lifelong learners with the skills to have a fulfilling life beyond the classroom. Both small and large schools valued relationships. The smaller schools reported meeting more frequently in a variety of formats to discuss the individual progress of all students and to monitor students who may be struggling. All schools valued collaboration and problem solving.

In all schools, leaders spoke of increasing inclusion for students with diverse learning needs as a matter of justice and equity to benefit the entire school. Both schools in Europe reported that diversity itself benefits students by exposing them to other ways of being and prepares them to live in a diverse society, even if that diversity had previously been seen with negative undertones. Both Asian schools regarded inclusion of linguistic diversity as a matter of obligation to meet the needs of their constituency. The small Asian school fostered and celebrated linguistic diversity as a value in itself. Leaders in all schools saw the differentiation and individualization that comes with inclusive programming as a benefit to all students.

Three of the four schools have been able to implement their vision and mission into the classroom. At the large Asian school, leaders seemed frustrated by economic, financial, and institutional barriers to fully realizing their vision. The cost of living in this city is high, and

leaders complained that their tuition is similar to tuition at a similar school in a third world country (according to information published on the schools' websites, their tuition is actually more than $8,000 higher than the small Asian school. This will be further discussed under resources.) The leadership team and half of the teaching staff are new within the last five years, and they are revising their vision for a learner at their school, but they feel they lack the fiscal resources to support their new vision.

Change takes time. The large Asian school has strong institutional momentum towards academic excellence for a homogeneous student body, bolstered by the predominance of long-term families and its strong reputation in the local community. Change at the other schools was a long process. The push for inclusion started in the small European school in the early 2000s and the large European school in the 1980s. The emphasis on co-teaching and inclusion started in the small Asian school seven years ago. The change process at this school may have been accelerated by the high turnover rate of both students and teachers, and the fact that the vast majority of the families are expats, so the local reputation of the school has less bearing on adoption of new policies.

Table 4

Vision Comparison

	European	**Asian**
Small	- Diversity attracts families to the school - Inclusion centered around diverse learning profiles - Inclusion is part of the identity of the school - Relationships, flexibility, and individualized preparation of each student for his or her unique future - Not trying to be an elite school	- English language and academic excellence attract families to the school - Inclusion centered around diverse linguistic profiles - Goal is developing academic English for all, including diverse learning profiles
Large	- Diversity attracts families to the school - Inclusion centered around diverse learning profiles - Diversity and inclusion part of the identity of the school - Pride in supporting a broad spectrum of needs and abilities	- Academic excellence attracts families to the school - Inclusion centered around diverse linguistic profiles, specifically host country native speakers - Economic and natural disasters impelled the school to increase support of students with diverse learning needs - Large staffing turnover in last five years - New leadership - Currently revising vision of a learner and expanding individualized programming - New leadership wants to adopt an ideology of being more inclusive - Expanding staffing for student support

Factors that influence programming. Because international schools draw their

students primarily from successful expatriate families and wealthy local families, they are

located in a global context of high pressure to prepare students to be competitive to gain entry to top colleges and to maintain a reputation of academic excellence that college admissions officers will recognize and respect. This leads many schools to push students toward measurable academic attainment and to publicize those achievements. However, leaders at the two small schools in this study have begun to question the future of the college admissions process, predicting that it has become so competitive that it will collapse in the next few years. Leaders are striving to find alternative ways to prepare students for their futures. Alabaster focuses on individualization as its trademark, while Devilline has stopped calculating grade point averages and focuses on students' linguistic skills.

The two schools in Europe have visions of inclusion that include a wider spectrum of learners, including students with a broader range of disabilities and students with different sexual orientations. Their visions of inclusions have developed over a longer period of time than the Asian schools and the idea of inclusion has become a selling point for the school. Further research should investigate if this is the result of a disabilities movement that came earlier to Europe and if local schools in Europe are more inclusive than in Asia. Most of the research reviewed for this dissertation came from Europe or North America. One possible explanation is that according to Hofstede's six dimensions of culture (Hofstede, n.d.), the two European countries are higher on the dimension of individualism. This could explain why these two European schools strongly emphasize an individualized education for all students, whereas the Asian schools emphasize learning traits and academic outcomes. Leaders and teachers at the European schools felt that the diversity that inclusion brought to classrooms was helpful to non-disabled students as well because all students benefit from diverse perspectives. At the Asian schools, inclusion was valued because it resulted in better teaching techniques. Inclusion of

students with disabilities had expanded on the coattails of expanding programs for students with English language learning needs, and inclusion of students with different sexual orientations was not discussed. Further research should examine if inclusion might be smoother in countries with higher scores on measures of individualism.

Economic competitiveness is crucial to international schools facing a competitive private school market. Many international schools are having to attract customers who today have a wide range of choices of schools for their children. However, the two small schools have limited competition in their markets. Erik, a board member at Alabaster, explained that the board could make decisions based on what they felt was best educational practice without fearing losing families because there are no other private schools in the market. Devilline has a few other schools in the area, but they remain clearly the school of choice, which gives them the freedom to implement programming they feel to be best practice for their students with English language learning needs. Both the larger schools have a well-known reputation, and families come with expectations. In the case of Brookite, this was an advantage, as families came expecting diversity and inclusion. In the case of Coesite, the established reputation of the school for academic excellence both in the community and among long-term teachers makes expanding diversity more difficult.

All schools felt that this is a time of change and are seeking to modify their missions to better prepare students for a future that is not clear. Alabaster focuses on individualization and helping students develop their passions. Brookite focuses on diversifying and incorporating different perspectives while serving as a role model for other schools to become more inclusive. Coesite seeks to expand inclusion out of a sense of social justice while maintaining academic excellence.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. All of the teachers and leaders interviewed for this study want to do their best to prepare students for the future, and they want to help all students, including those with diverse profiles. Teachers, however, face barriers in actualizing their visions of creating an inclusive environment for all learners. Teachers in the modern world face a large number of competing priorities, and in the classroom the question comes to fore: what should be emphasized? In the European schools, diversity is a top value, so teachers emphasize including students with a broad range of profiles in order to expand the range of voices. In the Asian schools, academic excellence is a top value, and so teachers strive to improve pedagogical practice through inclusion. Teachers in Asian schools, particularly at Coesite, felt a gap between their vision of success and their perception of the parents' and students' visions of success, and they strive to prepare students for future success along more traditional pathways.

Teachers are supported in their quest to create an inclusive learning environment because the schools and the current global culture value diversity. This could be a characteristic of the modern Zeitgeist in education or it could be a characteristic of international schools. Individualized learning, co-teaching, and differentiation are valued in international school teacher culture. In the classroom, this takes the form of student choice, project-based learning, rubric-based grading, including other voices in the curriculum, and encouraging a growth mindset. Although individualization for diverse learning profiles was more predominant in European schools, the drive for excellence was more predominant in Asian schools. Teachers envision an ideal learning environment that has both.

Placement

These schools found different ways to balance the need to maintain a high level of academic excellence and be inclusive for a diverse student body according to their context and the needs of their constituents. Although all schools have an open, flexible admissions policy, and three of the four schools officially claim to serve students with mild to moderate disabilities, the student body looks different at each school. The European schools serve learners with more intensive needs. Alabaster School had a strongly individualized program with students on modified programs through the high school. Brookite School enrolls students with autism and Down Syndrome, and their intensive learning support program serves learners who need non-academic, life skills. The Asian schools both used standardized test scores at admissions to screen for academic and linguistic proficiency.

Schools must maintain a balance of students in their classes. Both the large schools had formal quotas on the number of learning support students. At Brookite School, no more than 15% of students at any grade level can be in learning support, and Coesite School makes sure that no more than 20% of students in any class are either learning support or English learners. The small schools have no formal limit on learning support students, though Devilline School limits the number of beginning English students to 30% at any grade level in the elementary and middle schools.

Only Brookite School requires a formal diagnosis for placement in learning support services. Not needing a formal psycho-educational evaluation in the other schools allows for flexibility with short term interventions. All schools use the WIDA to place English language learners. All schools reported giving the MAP test to all students to monitor progress, though the Asian schools emphasized its importance in the admissions process.

The Asian schools had additional screening for admission into the high schools. Both European schools had multiple, flexible pathways to graduation. The small Asian school offered students the largest choice in programs, but all students had to fulfill the same credit requirements to graduate. Three schools allowed students to freely decide if they wanted to enroll in IB courses, while Coesite School was strict about having a teacher recommendation for Advanced Placement classes.

All schools prefer heterogeneous groupings for academic courses, but they ability group for math in the middle and early high school years. The two large schools selectively clustered learning support students so that learning support teachers could co-teach those sections. The two small schools avoided clustering learning support students, though Devilline clusters students with intensive English learning needs. Brookite School had a system to place learning support students and English learners in separate classes strategically, so that teachers from each department could target their students.

Table 5

Placement Comparison

	European	**Asian**
Small	- All eligible applicants - No formal diagnosis needed for placement in learning support - Avoids clustering	- Mild to moderate - English proficiency needed for admittance to high school - High school students can choose regular courses, Advance Placement, or IB, but only one high school diploma - No formal diagnosis needed for placement in learning support - WIDA used to place English learners - MAP test to screen applicants - English language learners clustered - Quota of 30% beginning English speakers at any grade level in elementary and middle schools
Large	- Mild to moderate - Three distinct tracks for students with different levels of support, placement according to individual need - Three distinct routes to high school graduation, students can choose - Formal diagnosis needed for placement in learning support - Selective clustering for co-teaching - Quota of 15% learning support students in any grade level	- Mild to moderate - Only one high school diploma - Review MAP or other standardized scores for admissions - No formal diagnosis for learning support until 10th grade - Selective about who they can serve and still maintain excellence - Clustering

Factors that influence programming. Although schools value diversity and inclusion, they must make admissions and placement policies that allow them to remain competitive in their local contexts. The two European schools surveyed for this study had visions of inclusion so engrained into their identity that they had become selling points for the schools. The community supports and celebrates diversity in their schools. At Coesite, on the other hand, the perception of the community's expectations is for academic excellence. In the European schools, encouragement for inclusion seemed to come from the surrounding community, whereas in the Asian schools, encouragement to expand inclusion came from below, as the elementary and middle schools had admitted many students with high needs, and these students would be coming up. High school is where policies must be designed to ensure students' success on external measures. The Asian schools strictly monitored who was admitted to the high school, counselling some students to seek more suitable academic placements. The European schools provided multiple pathways to completion and counselled students which pathway was the best fit.

Admissions policies are influenced by local economic and political contexts. Alabaster school is located in a country with strong support for inclusion of students with disabilities. Coesite School expanded its inclusion policies out of economic necessity after enrollment dropped sharply due to an economic downturn followed by a natural disaster. Devilline School strives to meet the needs of students from Asian countries whose parents are sent to this city by their employers for a short period of time.

Formal placement in learning support programs may be also culturally contingent. A full survey of families on their attitudes and perceptions of disabilities and learning support was beyond the scope of this project, however more teachers and leaders in Asian schools were

concerned about the families' perception of having their child labeled with a learning disability and how enrollment in learning support would look on a college transcript.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. All schools balanced clustering students to make targeted support possible and spreading them out to avoid creating a special class. When scheduling allowed, schools generally preferred to place students across classes or to balance classes with learning support students with classes with English language learners.

The schools surveyed for this study were committed to placing students in mainstream classes only when they could access the curriculum and be academically successful, otherwise they were placed in pull-out classes, online classes, or other alternative learning arrangements. The goal was full engagement, participation, and empowerment, not merely being physically present in the mainstream.

In all schools, student choice in placement was seen as critical to success. In the two European schools, high school students could choose among three different graduation pathways, and Brookite is hoping to incorporate a fourth alternative with the IB certificate next year. Coesite is working to create course options that cater to different student interests, while Devilline has an extensive number of courses being offered and students can choose from an American diploma track, an Advanced Placement track, or an IB diploma track. The barriers include the large number of teachers needed to accommodate the large number of options and the need for more training for teachers to be prepared to deliver instruction in a large number of areas. Classroom inclusion is supported by the international trend towards student choice, co-teaching, and individualized instruction.

Adapted Curriculum

All schools in this study use a multiple tier system of support, which involves teacher interventions in the classroom, data collection, and collaboration with specialists prior to a formal referral for a student's placement in learning support. The same referral process is available for struggling learners and for students who are exceeding expectations. This process is similar at all schools.

In the high school, the European schools offer a choice between IB and regular school courses. The Asian schools offer Advanced Placement courses, and the small Asian school offers all three tracks in addition to online learning options. The European schools emphasized course selection in the IB diploma program to reduce problems for students with learning needs, whereas the Asian school emphasized gatekeeping and encouraged students to be mindful of the level of challenge they were undertaking.

Only Brookite School offers an intensive learning support program where curriculum is designed specifically for individual students. The two Asian schools both had formal curricula for their pull-out learning support classes so that students could gain credit, but these curricula were loosely followed to allow teachers to give individualized support where students needed it.

The two small schools emphasize social and emotional learning and the student services team actively contributes to parent workshops and education initiatives. At the large schools, these activities fall under other school wide functions. The two small schools placed great emphasis on wellbeing and mindfulness.

Table 6

Adapted Curriculum

	European	Asian
Small	- Multiple tier support system - IB program from elementary to high school - Formal social and emotional learning curriculum - Mindfulness training - No formal, separate curriculum for pull-out classes	- Multiple tier support system - IB, AP, or school courses - Social and emotional learning curriculum in the middle school - School focus on wellbeing - Formal curriculum for Learning to Learn - Interventions required before referral process - Student led conferences in high school - Many extracurricular activities
Large	- Multiple tier support system - IB in high school or school courses - No social and emotional learning curriculum - Formal curriculum for life skills - Interventions required before referral process - Student led conferences - Strong service and athletics program	- Multiple tier support system - AP in high school or school courses - Social and emotional curriculum in elementary and middle schools - Formal curriculum for Skills for Success courses - Student led conferences in the high school - Online courses

Factors that influence programming. In adapting the curriculum to suit individual

learning needs, schools consider how they can best serve their students who cannot access the

mainstream curriculum. In Europe, the current Zeitgeist promotes diversity, and the two

countries where the schools that were studied rate higher on individuality in Hofstede's cultural

dimensions (Hofstede, n.d.). These schools provide a wider range of options for high school

students in terms of curricular pathways. Although it might seem that larger schools would have

more money to invest in different curricular options, this was not the case in this study. The two small schools also had diverse curricular offerings. Alabaster offers an individually designed program in the high school to students for whom the mainstream high school track is not appropriate. Devilline offers a wide range of courses, but they must ask high school teachers to teach many different courses and use creative scheduling to reduce the demand for staff. The two Asian schools are located in contexts with high demand for English language skills, so they had well developed curriculum and supports for English language learners. The two Asian schools have also formalized curricula for study skills classes. This could be linked to their lower scores on Hofstede's dimension of indulgence, making the cultural context more willing to accept students coming home with large amounts of homework, whereas the European schools spent more time in pull-out classes helping students complete homework.

The referral process was very similar in all contexts, though the small schools seemed to have more frequent collaboration meetings to discuss and problem solve student concerns, including meeting the needs of high achievers. Close relationships are an asset of small schools.

Stress is an issue of concern for high school students at all schools. The two small schools had robust wellness programs with explicit curriculum or frameworks to instruct mindfulness and support general wellbeing both for students and for staff. The close relationships emphasized at the smaller schools may support these initiatives.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. Brookite has the most well developed, formal curriculum for students with moderate to severe disabilities needing a non-academic program. This can be attributed to the longevity of the program, its international reclaim, the cultural acceptance of disability on campus, and the celebration of diversity in the school community.

Teachers are working in many ways to include more students in authentic learning opportunities. Many teachers are working to include more voices in the curriculum. For example, many English classes observed for this study had a fair number of women authors on the syllabus and bookshelves, and educators in Europe are starting to talk about including gay and lesbian voices as part of the curriculum. Teachers in small schools are instructing mindfulness techniques and social emotional skills so students know how to identify, celebrate, and leverage diversity in the classroom.

Adapted Assessment

The European and Asian schools had different conceptions of success. Both European schools emphasized that success is not about test scores and that all students follow different paths to success and happiness in life. They are willing to modify assessments in appropriate circumstances. Alabaster School relies on the inherent flexibility of rubric grading in the IB Middle Years Program, whereas a middle school teacher at Brookite School reported that the Middle Years Program was seen as too rigid, and they prefer to create their own, even more flexible rubrics. Both schools rely heavily on projects and other summative activities that inherently encourage multiple means of expression. In the IB Diploma Program, Brookite School works closely with IB and begins applying foreseeable accommodations as early as possible. Alabaster School does not implement rigid testing conditions until near the end of the program to allow students to develop their content knowledge and skills with less stress.

Although in the Asian schools most teachers and leaders felt that success is also about individual growth and individual pathways, they reported strong parent and community pressure for academic achievement in the form of grades, standardized test scores, and other external attainments that students could use to contest for elite college admissions. Although these

schools reported they are moving towards inquiry based and project-based learning, they rely more heavily on traditional forms of assessment. At Coesite School, some teachers reported using rubrics, while others said that rubric grading was not actually being used. Devilline School used rubrics as a means of assessing language goals along with content goals. Teachers adhered to standards and held the same high expectations for all students.

While all schools offer students a choice in courses, only the European schools had multiple completion pathways that included an option that allows students to create their own, non-academic program tailored to their individual needs and interests. In Brookite School, this is the outcome of a formal intensive learning support program with vocational and life skills instruction, whereas in Alabaster School, only a few students need this level of support, so the program is created on an individual basis. In Coesite and Devilline Schools, courses are credit bearing in the high school and all students are expected to complete the required courses to graduate. In Devilline, some students take online courses to fulfill credits as a bridge to normal coursework. Devilline also focused more on learning attributes and made these attributes the source of public recognition. By taking the high school off grade point average, the principal hopes to shift the conversation more towards learning. Coesite School holds every child to the same high standards and strives to support every child in reaching those standards.

Table 7

Adapted Assessment Comparison

	European	**Asian**
Small	• IB diploma, school diploma, or school certificate • Modified exams, modified rubrics • Definition of success is preparing every child to their unique journey	• School diploma • Credit bearing high school courses, no modifications • No modifications to exams or rubrics • High school does not calculate grade point average • Definition of success is preparing every child to their unique journey, but perception that parents/students want elite college admittance • Success focused on growth • Frequent feedback and data • Focused on attributes • Pressure for academic success
Large	• IB diploma, school diploma, or school certificate • Definition of success is preparing every child to their unique journey • High school implements IB approved modifications • Middle school cautious about modifications for non-intensive learning support students	• HS diploma from credit bearing courses • Credit bearing high school courses, no modifications • Very few modifications to exams and rubrics • Definition of success is preparing every child to their unique journey, but perception that parents/students want elite college admittance

Factors that influence programming. The two Asian schools surveyed for this study were less willing to modify assessments. They focus on preparing students to be successful in competitive college preparatory curricula in high school, and so they want to give students honest feedback about strengths and weaknesses. These schools strive more towards success in the traditional, academic sense. This could be also due to the fact that the Asian schools are both

located in competitive markets, where many new international schools offer families more choices. The alternative graduation pathways in the European schools allow these schools greater flexibility in modifying assessments for students on different tracks.

The two large schools both come from cultures with strong long-term orientations, and they both have deeply rooted legacies of what it means to be successful. Coesite has a strong legacy of academic excellence at its core, and inclusive programming is tailored around this mission. Coesite's host country scores highest on Hofstede's masculinity dimension (Hofstede, n.d.), meaning they are objective oriented rather than people oriented. The culture is also risk adverse, and they have the most competition from other international schools in the local area. Brookite has a legacy of diversity and inclusion, which forms the core of their identity. The host country is also risk adverse, but strongly individualistic and less masculine, creating an emphasis on helping individual students develop individual strengths in the context of a well-tested program.

High pressure standardized testing is a hallmark of education in the modern era, but many schools are worried about the effects of too much pressure on young people. The pressure for academic attainment was observed to be particularly extreme in the Asian schools, and they are implementing strategies to refocus students on learning rather than on numerical outcomes. Devilline high school has stopped calculating grade point average, and leaders at Coesite high school would like to limit the number of Advanced Placement classes students can take.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. All schools surveyed for this study make accommodations for students with diagnosed learning needs including extra time on tests and separate locations for testing. Brookite works actively with IB to develop new accommodations when necessary to support students. In the European schools, grading with

rubrics helps individualize feedback for students. These schools also incorporate group work, project-based learning, service learning, real life skills, and student choice to allow students to express their learning in ways that are meaningful to them while still being asked to strive for high standards. The Asian schools rely more heavily on traditional forms of assessment that demanded the same outcomes for all students. One leader explained that this is the fairest form of inclusion, since it does not exclude students with learning differences from the standard of attainment that will be required by the real world after they have completed their schooling.

Adapted Teaching

All schools in this study use co-teaching in creative and flexible ways to meet student needs. Alabaster school was the smallest school and used staffing in the most fluid and creative ways. Devilline had the most established system of co-teaching, but their model was also the most limited. Co-teaching is used most widely in the middle schools as co-instruction and also in the elementary schools as support. Co-teaching becomes more difficult in the high schools. Co-teachers seemed to have parity and respect. All teachers interviewed seemed excited about co-teaching and interested in extending collaboration opportunities.

The European schools delivered instruction in a variety of spaces with flexible groupings. The Asian schools relied more on traditional spaces and groupings. This may be partly due to the architecture of the building and the availability of spaces that can be supervised.

Learning support teachers coach general education teachers to focus on essential skills that are most relevant to student success and the real world. In all schools, general education teachers value delivering differentiated instruction in all classes, even without learning support involvement. Administrators encourage differentiation and individualization in the design and

assessment of lessons at all schools. These schools emphasize differentiation and extensions for academically gifted students in the same manner as for learning or linguistically diverse students.

Time is a limited resource. Most divisions have specifically timetabled for co-teachers to meet, though this was also harder in the high schools where mainstream teachers are more focused on content, and the nature of class schedules makes it more difficult to find common meeting times. The European teachers reported not having enough time to plan and discuss student needs. The Asian schools reported more frequently that busyness is a problem for students.

Schools relied on various structures to address the needs of struggling students. The small schools met most frequently, both to keep teachers updated on students needing support and to problem solve around students who seemed to be struggling. Teachers are encouraged or required to make interventions in the classroom prior to referral. In Alabaster school, these were supported by learning support teachers. In Devilline and Brookite Schools, these interventions were required and supported by administrators. In the Asian schools, teachers reported a wish for more training on differentiation and individualization.

Table 8

Adapted Teaching Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	- Some co-teaching - Co-planning time is an issue - Lots of project-based learning, interdisciplinary, real life, rubric grading - Flexible staffing - Flexible use of space, no classrooms assigned - Focus on individualization	- Extensive co-teaching - Modeled on one teach one assist - Strong emphasis on differentiation and inclusivity in all classes - Planning time and working agreements supported by administration
Large	- Extensive co-teaching in learning support program - Mainstream teachers work with learning support and intensive learning support teachers to create inclusion opportunities - Flexible space - Focus on skills, outcomes	- Some co-teaching, more in middle and elementary schools - Mostly scheduled planning time - Co-teaching started to ensure school was implementing best practice methodology - Commitment to excellence - Driven by hard working kids

Factors that influence programming. The current Zeitgeist encourages schools to individualize the educational experience for students, and all schools surveyed in this study are working towards individualization. Including learners with diverse learning profiles tended to be more extensive in the elementary and middle schools. The Asian high schools felt pressure to expand learning support services in the high schools primarily in order to support students who were already a part of the school. The small size of Alabaster and Devilline facilitates interdivisional alignment of teaching, whereas the larger schools had divisions that were separate.

The Asian schools prioritize individualization for English language learners, whereas the European schools prioritize both programs. It could be that English competence is generally higher among students in European countries, and consequently the Asian students need more support in this area. It could also be that Asian countries desire improved English skills from the next generation in order to be competitive in rapidly globalizing economic markets and political platforms. While these cultures prize English skills, learning differences are still regarded as a source of shame, according to a medical model of deficit.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. All teachers surveyed for this study desired to support each and every student in his or her individual success. Schools are using co-teaching extensively to support differentiation, though co-teaching looks different in different schools, and each school has a different hallmark of success for co-teaching. Alabaster school is small enough that they can use staffing flexibly. For example, an elementary school learning support teacher with a passion for math can also co-teach a high school mathematics class to support highly able students. Devilline School has a well-developed co-teaching program that is well staffed in the elementary and middle schools, but the high school is also more flexible with co-teaching. The one learning support teacher co-teaches in the high school where she is needed. The tenth grade English language consultant uses a new model that gives her full flexibility. The larger schools use less co-teaching in the high school. Coesite High School is just beginning to implement co-teaching and uses co-teaching as an opportunity to deliver study skills instruction to all learners, whereas Brookite School has less co-teaching in the high school because they prioritize student choice in course selection, resulting in fewer classes with enough students needing support to justify a second staff member. Although teachers are excited about co-teaching as a means of supporting more students and developing

their professional practice, this model does require more time for teachers to meet, plan, and reflect. Teachers trying to teach with too many co-teachers or who did not have time to meet scheduled by the administration were less satisfied with this model.

Supporting students with exceptional needs in the high schools looks different than the other divisions, as high school students are expected to master external curricular objectives. Most programs fade support for students in the eleventh and twelfth grades. Because the European schools have alternative pathways to graduation, they were freer to adapt their teaching. Differentiation is prevalent in high school classes at Alabaster, and Brookite has a non-academic track for students for whom academic coursework is not the most appropriate preparation for future life. Devilline School has begun using online courses as alternatives for students not able to meet the school's curricular objectives.

Teachers adapt their teaching in a number of ways. Flexible grouping and flexible use of space help teachers adapt their teaching more in the European schools. The traditional architecture of the Asian schools lends itself more to traditional models. Many teachers strive to enhance inclusion by focusing instruction on essential skills and deemphasizing unnecessary knowledge. Focus on real world applications and student choice further promotes inclusion. Finally, as schools are adapting their teaching to meet the needs of twenty-first century learners, models such as group work and incorporating technology are a windfall for students with exceptional needs.

The biggest barrier to adapting teaching is time. Teachers who have successfully built differentiation into their units and included scaffolds for struggling learners report that they have worked on only a few units per year, so that several years are needed to develop a fully

scaffolded curriculum. Teachers are supported in differentiating instruction by a global culture that emphasizes differentiation and individualization.

Acceptance

Most teachers and leaders interviewed for this project reported that students with learning and linguistic needs were accepted at their schools with little stigma from students. No teacher or leader was aware of bullying around students with differences.

In the European schools, students' diverse learning needs were part of the school's identity, and this diversity was celebrated. Notions of inclusivity have extended to include lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer/questioning students (LGBTQ), and the schools have introduced formal supports such as support groups and gender-neutral toilets. These schools have moved away from deficit models, and diversity is truly celebrated.

In the Asian schools, staff reported problems with parents accepting a diagnosis of special learning needs. At Coesite School some staff thought that it was because of the high level of achievement and individual drive for success that stigma shifted to those who could not achieve, rather than those with a label. At Devilline School some staff thought the high degree of transience and linguistic diversity forced a greater acceptance of those at different levels. Some interviewees at these schools were worried about parent perceptions and parents not wanting learning support on the transcript, because some Asian cultures are not as aware of students with learning difficulties. Both Asian schools reported that their focus on growth and the fact that learning support programs deliver growth helped to garner support among students.

Table 9

Acceptance Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	● Acceptance of all strongly modeled and valued ● LGBTQ acceptance, gender neutral toilets	● No stigma because large transitory population at different levels ● Focused on growth ● Celebrates home cultures
Large	● Acceptance of all strongly modeled and valued ● LGBTQ acceptance, gender neutral toilets	● No stigma around LSS, but around low achievement ● Coming from parents, concerned about transcripts ● Students interested in self ● Skill building, students making progress

Factors that influence programming. In the area of acceptance, almost all interviewees in all four schools reported that students with learning differences were fully accepted. In the two European schools, teachers and leaders attributed their acceptance to the emphasis that the school placed on celebrating individual differences, and these two schools work actively to promote the celebration of individual differences. In the Asian schools, acceptance seemed to be based more on the fact that the support provided by the learning support and English as a Second Language departments helps students to make academic progress. Teachers at these schools reported some bias against students who were not able to academically excel, regardless of their membership in the learning support or English as a Second Language programs. At Devilline School, such a high percentage of learners had English as a second language that it would not be possible for them to be discriminated against. Devilline School avoids much potential stigma

from the local culture with a strong system of teacher collaboration meetings that solve many

learning issues without the need for a formal label or placement.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. Acceptance in the classroom

comes in two forms. Teachers and other staff members were careful about not singling out

particular students, working evenly with all students, and rotating support groups so that all

students get attention, particularly from any student support staff in the classroom. The barrier to

this strategy is that time is limited, and teachers need to focus their energy on targeted students,

so they are sometimes not able to rotate. The other means of encouraging acceptance on the

classroom and schoolwide level is to emphasize that all students are different, and those

differences should be celebrated. For example, at Devilline School the majority of students have

varying level of English competence, and the school encourages them to celebrate their native

languages and cultures as a contribution to diversity. Three of the schools take an active lead in

building this culture of acceptance, both with students and with families. A significant barrier to

accepting students with learning differences is the perception that they will hamper the academic

standard of other students or that the time needed to make accommodations and modifications

for these students will take away from time needed to plan and support other students.

Access

The European schools both had given considerable thought to how architecture and

spatial arrangements contribute to inclusion. They have worked with alternative seating,

adaptable furniture, flexible-use spaces, and ideal lighting with the goal of creating physical and

emotional environments that are nurturing for all students. The Asian schools felt traditional,

although there were a few alternative seating options for students with sensory needs.

The small schools had a strong feeling of community. At Coesite School, students seemed to form strong relationships with teachers as a means of academic support. Brookite School placed value on relationships by engaging staff and students in extensive advisory, extracurricular, and service-learning programs.

In all schools, students had a choice of courses, and these courses were open to all students regardless of native language or disability status. The Asian schools had stronger gatekeeping in the high school. Struggling students were reviewed individually before being admitted to the high school to determine if this school would be a good fit for them. Both schools had admissions requirements specifically for the high school, and Coesite School required a teacher recommendation to enroll in Advanced Placement courses.

Table 10

Access Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	- Variety of furniture, lighting, spaces - Model classrooms - Emotional environment - Strong personal relationships	- Resources - Transient population - Gatekeeping in high school
Large	Variety of furniture, lighting, spaces	- Emotional/academic support - Traditional architecture and furniture - Gatekeeping in high school

Factors that influence programming. Inclusion in the Asian schools started with English language learners and has extended to students with learning disabilities. The European schools have developed means of access for students with learning differences over more time, and now they are striving to include students with different sexual orientations. Further research is needed on how including students with different sexual orientations is influenced by the local culture and what a successful program looks like.

The architecture of Asian schools is more traditional than the European schools, and this changes how students can be included. All the buildings bear similarities to the surrounding community. This could be because the Asian countries are more objective oriented on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, or it could be because the European countries are more individualistic.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. The two European schools in this study are more creative with their architecture and design. Both schools had been newly

renovated to include spaces that can be used flexibly, both by students and by teachers. Alabaster has incorporated innovative design in multiple classrooms, and they have specialized lighting, comfortable seating, and open spaces that feel comfortable. Brookite school has spaces around the classrooms where teachers can regroup students creatively. The Asian schools were traditional in the arrangement of interior spaces and seating options. Evaluating the effectiveness of these new architectural designs needs further research.

The smaller schools explicitly worked towards creating a positive emotional environment for all students. Alabaster incorporates mindfulness instruction, a social and emotional learning curriculum, homegroups, an extensive advisory system, and an explicit emphasis on relationship building. Devilline has created a framework for well-being in the school. Teachers at the larger schools also work hard to build relationships with students and create a positive emotional environment, but their efforts are not formalized.

Support

Percentages of students enrolled in learning support varied widely among the schools. The small Asian school focuses their inclusion efforts on English learners, and so they had the smallest numbers of students in their learning support programs. Although both of the large schools appear to have similar quotas, they look different. Brookite School maintains a 15% quota, and there is a waiting list. They also have an intensive learning support program in each division. Alabaster School has an extensive program, which is well enrolled. Coesite School's 20% rule applies to a class where students may have been clustered to facilitate co-teaching. The size of Coesite School's overall program is similar to Devilline School, and their English language learning program is also larger and more visible.

Table 11

Student Numbers Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	● All students receive support ● Approximately 40 formally in learning support in the lower school and 40 in the upper school (18.8%)	● Elementary school 20 students out of 450 (4.44%) ● High school 5 of 201 (2.4%)
Large	● 15% quota	● No more than 20% in any class

Staffing. In terms of staffing, Brookite and Devilline have the largest number of staff in their student services department, though the primary emphasis of many of the staff at Devilline is to support English language learners. Several teachers at Devilline reported that the number of staff was overwhelming because it is not possible to co-plan or communicate with everyone. Several of the classes observed for this study had three or four adults to support a class of less than 20 students. In all schools, the level of support is most extensive in the lower grades and fades as student get older. The two Asian schools expect students to be independent in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

As the smallest school, Alabaster School has the most flexible and fluid staffing, with teachers working across divisions and blending supporting language and learning needs. Alabaster School is also able to take advantage of the extensive support resources available in the local community. Alabaster was the only school to use personal assistants tied to one student, though Brookite School has assistants who accompanied students in the intensive learning support program to their classes. Brookite has the longest tradition of inclusion and the most extensive program, and they also have the most formalized staffing structure.

Table 12

Staffing Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	4.5 learning support teachers - Reading specialist - Three teaching assistants - Personal assistants - educational psychologist (four days a week) - a school counsellor - Community counselor (two days a week) - a speech pathologist - a community liaison - occasional Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapist contracted - Strong community connections	Elementary school: - Classroom teaching assistants in homerooms - No personal assistants - Two full time learning support teachers Middle School: - One English teacher works with every two subject teachers, co-teaching half of the content blocks. - One learning support teacher - One learning support assistant High School: - One English as an Additional Language teacher - One English language development specialist - One full time learning support teacher All school: - School psychologist (all divisions) - An occupational therapist - Speech and language pathologist
Large	Elementary School: - One learning support teacher at each grade - One intensive learning support teacher - One intensive learning support assistant - Two intensive learning support interns Middle School: - Four learning support teachers	Elementary School: - Three learning support teachers - Two speech pathologists Middle School: 2.5 learning support teachers High School 1.5 learning support teachers Close collaboration with English as an Additional Language: - Two teachers in the elementary school

| | One intensive learning support teacher One intensive learning support assistant One intensive learning support intern High School: Four learning support teachers One intensive learning support teacher One intensive learning support assistant One intensive learning support intern Social and emotional counselor All School: Educational psychologist Two occupational therapists, Two speech pathologists, behavior specialist contracted one or two times per year | Language and literacy coach 1.5 teachers in middle school 0.5 in the high school |

Student support structures. All schools surveyed used a combination of push-in, pull-out, and co-teaching models, though schools preferred push-in and co-teaching when possible. Pull-out classes, which were given different names at each school, were used only for targeted instruction.

Co-teaching and push-in support look different at each school. Alabaster School uses less of the full co-teaching model where two equal teachers co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess. Devilline School had an extensive co-teaching model where many content courses in all departments were supported by either a learning support teacher or an English as an Additional Language teacher. In the two large schools, support teachers were assigned to co-teach strategically by embedding them in a particular department, which reduced the amount of

planning time for all teachers and allowed the support teachers to take more ownership over classes.

All schools had some form of an advisory system in the middle and high schools. Alabaster School generally emphasized strong relationships and had the most extensive advisory system. Coesite School generally emphasized academic achievement, and they are just beginning to implement an advisory system in the high school.

All schools had created their own form of a multi-tiered, response to intervention system. Mainstream teachers were expected to implement interventions in the classroom prior to referral and monitor the results of these interventions. At Alabaster School, the student support team was quite involved at this stage, whereas the other schools expected mainstream teachers to be in charge of this level of intervention. The three larger schools placed a premium on collecting data for documentation, though several people noticed that classroom teachers sometimes struggle to collect extensive data.

All of the schools rely heavily on teacher collaboration and scheduled formal meetings to structure the communication. The two small schools had the most frequent meetings, and Devilline had such extensive teacher collaboration system that perhaps this resulted in the low numbers of students officially enrolled in learning support. The structure of these meetings looks different in the different divisions. At all schools it was harder for the high school teachers to find time to meet, while the elementary school teachers took greatest ownership over the students with whom they spend the entire day.

All schools had a variety of opportunities for any student to access extra support. For example, Devilline School had a writing center, Coesite School had a tutoring center, and

Alabaster School had a formal after school homework program. All schools reported trying to keep their classes small to support all students.

Table 13

Support Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	- Pull out and push in - After school homework help - Strong advisory system - Frequent teacher meetings to communicate about kids - Full time counselor for emotional support - Wish for more training around techniques of differentiation	- Mostly push in for language support, pull out for learning support - Writing lab - Small classes - English language development specialist - Frequent student support meetings and teacher - Learning coaches - Online courses - Outside consultants - Emphasis on wellbeing - Push to use data to inform instruction
Large	- Co-teaching and pull out for learning support - Push in and separate class for intensive learning support - Extensive training and coaching meeting - Trouble finding time for meetings - Advisory strongly linked to service	- Co-teaching and pull out - Middle school advisory, just beginning in the high school - Three tier, response to intervention model - Emphasis on data - Tutoring center at lunch with interns - Elementary school and middle school student of concern meetings - Need to upskill teachers in differentiation

Factors that influence programming. Each school in this study relied on a combination of pull-out, push-in, and co-teaching models to support students. Economic and cultural factors shaped the form and implementation of these supports. Alabaster is located in a country that

emphasizes inclusion, so they emphasize placing students in mainstream classes as much as possible. They are able to take advantage of many supports and services provided in community to any resident of the country. Brookite does not have access to such extensive English-speaking resources in the surrounding community, so they use the resources of a larger school to build their own community on campus. They have a more extensive student support department with specialists and therapists on staff so that services can be offered on campus. They employ more teachers and assistants, which leads to more collaborative opportunities and also the possibility for a learning support teacher to specialize in a department, but the size leads to limited collaboration among divisions. Leadership and teachers at Coesite School feel they are not adequately staffed, due to the need to keep tuition competitive. They are limited also by the political need to maintain an appearance of excellence. Devilline relies heavily on co-teaching to support English language learners, and the resulting differentiation and scaffolding benefits students with learning needs as well.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. This study showed that student support can be made available in a variety of ways. Therapists and specialists need to be available to students and families, but those resources can be provided either through the school's resources or through community partnerships. With an advisory or homegroup system, teachers can ensure that students are maintaining progress, both academically and socially and emotionally. Schools can use learning support staff flexibly to support a wide variety of learners.

Teachers in Europe widely reported they lacked sufficient time to meet with specialists and fully prepare differentiated lessons. Teachers in Asia reported they lacked sufficient training

to implement interventions, effective scaffolding, and differentiated supports. These were two of the biggest barriers in supporting students.

In each of the schools surveyed, teachers and leaders were excited about the possibility of expanding and developing inclusion. The European schools want to expand their model to other schools; the Asian schools want to expand within, improve their programming, and consolidate their alignment among divisions.

Resources

How a school allocates its resources is an indicator of the relative importance of competing priorities. International schools are generally well resourced, but the purchasing power of their tuition revenue can differ depending on the cost of living in the local context.

Time. In the European schools, monetary and physical resources are plentiful, though time is scarce. Teachers and leaders reported wishing for more time with students and to plan with their colleagues. In the Asian schools, teachers did not report wishing for more time, though planning and meeting time were clearly limited. This could be due to the differing priorities in each school.

Technology. All schools surveyed are one to one technology schools and allowed the use of calculators in math classes where appropriate. In Devilline School, students were not seen using technology as often, and they were asked to put their electronic devices away at lunch to socialize with friends.

Parents. The small schools in this study worked extensively with parents. Alabaster School actively fosters parent relationships through innovative workshops, parent training sessions, and opportunities for parents to observe classes and plan lessons. Devilline School also has extensive opportunities for parents to observe classes and engage in the curriculum. Parents

were seen frequently on campus, and the school even has a small cafe for parents to socialize with other parents. Brookite School has extensive parent training workshops that are run by departments outside the student services department. Only Coesite School does little to foster parent engagement in the school, due to the difficulty for many parents who live far away to get to the school.

The three schools that actively worked to build parent engagement seemed to have fewer concerns about parents being aligned with their vision of success and fewer concerns about parent criticism of inclusion programs. Coesite School struggled to find opportunities to engage parents because most of their parents lived at least an hour away from the school.

Community. Three of the schools reported difficulty in finding English speaking therapists and specialists in the local community outside the school. Only Alabaster School was able to tap into the extensive social support system available in the host country. These outside resources allowed the school to provide a high level of support while employing fewer staff. Brookite and Devilline Schools worked to build their own communities on campus and employed their own occupational therapists, speech pathologists, and educational psychologists.

Fee for service. Charging a fee for learning support service is a contentious issue. While it affords schools the financial resources to offer more services, it curtails the fluid, encompassing nature of inclusion. The intensive learning support program at Brookite School involves a significant extra fee, but students do not pay to be in the normal learning support program. At Devilline School students pay a smaller extra fee for extra services. At Alabaster School and Coesite School, all students pay the same tuition.

The schools surveyed charged widely different tuition. According to the schools' websites, Devilline School has the lowest tuition, but they do charge a fee for service. Devilline

is located in a country with the lowest cost of living of the four schools included in this survey. Alabaster School's tuition is just three thousand dollars more, plus various extra fees. The cost of living in their country is relatively high, but the tuition they are allowed to charge is capped by the government. Coesite School charges approximately $8,000 more than Alabaster, and they are located in the most expensive country. Leaders at Coesite felt their tuition base was not sufficient to provide adequate staffing resources to fully realize their vision of inclusion. Brookite School has the highest tuition, almost double the cost of Coesite School or triple the cost of Devilline School.

When asked what resource they would wish for in a perfect world, interviewees at both Alabaster and Brookite tended to respond that they would wish for time. Respondents at Coesite tended to wish for more staffing, while teachers and leaders at Devilline had mixed answers. Several teachers and leaders at Devilline had no wishes.

Table 14

Resources Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	• Country respects teachers • School provides standardized laptops • Strong community connections • Most staff stay a long time because of quality of life • Legal requirements • Extensive parent programs • Most people reported time is only resources that is scarce	• School is own community • Resources on campus • Korean, Japanese, French schools • Extensive parent programs • Asian ethos of hard work
Large	• Parent programs run by school, not LSS • Time is precious • No links with outside community organizations	• Staffing tight • Limited parent workshops, parents downtown • Bicultural • Limited community resources so works online • Student's work ethic leads to success

Factors that influence programming. Although international schools are generally well-funded and well-resourced, the different schools are strategic in garnering resources to support struggling learners. Three schools reported having sufficient human and monetary resources to implement programming, but leaders at Coesite high school were frustrated with understaffing, not only in the student support services department, but in the rest of the school as well. Although the leaders reported this was due to their tuition being lower than other international schools, according to information published on school websites, both Alabaster and Devilline charge significantly lower tuition. The city in which Coesite is located does have a high cost of living and high wages, but so does the city where Alabaster is located. Alabaster,

however, was the only school where teachers and leaders felt they had access to sufficient, English-speaking specialists and therapists in the community to augment their programming. Brookite and Devilline have built communities of support on campus, while students at Coesite do not currently have easy access to outside specialists and therapists.

Alabaster, Devilline, and Brookite reported extensive programs to involve parents in the school in order to educate them about their child's learning and build a shared vision of success. Parent programs at Coesite where limited by the school's location. The school is located in a suburb one to one and a half hours from the center where many families live. Combined with the long working hours expected of many families, the distance makes it unlikely that many parents would engage in workshops.

The European schools reported that monetary and fiscal resources are not an issue, but time is scarce. Teachers and leaders wished for more time to collaborate, plan, and prepare. Teachers in Asia faced the same lack of meeting time, but they did not report this as a scarcity. Further research could determine if this is because the surrounding communities in Asia generally expect longer working hours. The city where Coesite is located is famous for long working hours.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. All international schools in this study were well-resourced with good technology, which could help to promote inclusion. For example, Devilline uses online courses to provide curricular access to students who would not have been able to access regular programming. Coesite uses technology to interactively monitor progress toward goals and to communicate information about students. In this regard, international schools occupy a privileged niche, which could be leveraged further to provide more access for learners with different profiles.

Staffing ratios varied widely among the schools. While Coesite school reported they did not have enough teachers to implement ideal programming, at Devilline School sometimes four adults were present in one classroom. Teachers at Devilline School reported not being able to co-plan with all their co-teachers, while mainstream teachers at Coesite School reported creative ways they could help struggling students without relying on a member of the student services department.

Leadership

The leadership structures at each school had some common trends. These four schools demonstrate that something has to happen to spurn inclusion. In three of the schools, with the exception of Coesite, the robust inclusion programs were the result of one or two people's strong passion and determination to implement inclusion. In these schools, the teacher was given a leadership position to allow her to coordinate and align the program, as well as to signal the importance of the program. In the fourth school, inclusion grew due to an economic crisis followed a few years later by a natural disaster that caused enrollment to drop. This school uses a rotating leadership model in the department, where the head of the department changes every two years. Although this gives greater input to different sections and divisions, it does not allow any one person to build his or her vision of a robust program. This comparison would seem to indicate that longevity is essential in implementing a perspective shift in how learning needs are supported.

Three schools had a student support services coordinator who worked across divisions and either has either no or minimal scheduled teaching time. These are senior leadership positions. At Devilline School, two people, the director of teaching and learning and the English as an Additional Language director, fill this role. These coordinators focus on alignment,

transitions, using data, and collaboration. These people are essential in formulating a vision for the department and communicating that vision to the teachers and families.

Three schools strongly emphasize teacher empowerment and mainstream teacher ownership over individualized learning. Alabaster School has strong participatory leadership, and Brookite School empowers learning support teachers as leaders in their divisions and sections. Devilline School used the process of teacher collaboration meetings to make classroom teachers the leaders of interventions for their students. Empowering teachers at the classroom level can be effective in reducing numbers of students formally identified as needing additional support.

Table 15

Leadership Comparison

	European	Asian
Small	- Inclusion started 20 years ago with a community of teachers and leaders who consistently believed in and actively supported an inclusive mission - Teacher given leadership position - Participatory leadership - No monitoring for improvement - Wants to expand out - Working on alignment	- Co-teaching started as the result of the teaching and learning director's passion - Seven or eight years ago - Student services team across divisions - Extensive monitoring for improvement via WIDA - Wants to expand within - Working on alignment
Large	- Inclusion started as the result of one teacher and one administrator's passion 30 years ago - Cross divisional learning support coordinator - Wants to expand out - Hierarchical - Empowering teachers - Working on monitoring system - Director ensures alignment	- Inclusion expanded as the result of economic necessity - Wants to expand within - Institutional momentum, dichotomy in teachers - New leadership - Rotating department head model - No alignment

Factors that influence programming. Having a dedicated individualized learning

support coordinator enhances the success of inclusion, though the availability of such a staff

member may be related to the economic factors discussed above in resources. The three schools

with a coordinator clearly value inclusion and diversity and have allocated their human resources

to reflect their values. Having a single person who stays with the school for many years allows a

vision of inclusion to be implemented, but only if that person is empowered by the administration.

Characteristics of the successful, inclusive classroom. Teachers in successful classrooms are empowered to make changes to their curriculum and methodology to adapt to needs of students. Student choice emerged as a common theme in successful classrooms. Giving students a voice in guiding their educational experience allows students with learning differences to work more in their areas of strengths and further emphasizes that all learners are unique and that difference can be a source of strength rather than deficit.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations

Overview of the Study

This study examined the inclusive programs at four international schools in order to broaden the discussion of the effective implementation of inclusion in this context. The schools were chosen for their attainment of excellent academic outcomes with college preparatory curricula while striving to include diverse learners. The study was designed to explore the impact of various social, political, economic, and cultural factors on inclusive programming and the characteristics of successful inclusive classrooms. The study examined two units of analysis: school policy and the classroom. By using the two units of analysis, the study explored how a vision of inclusion is created and how it is implemented. The data included multiple perspectives to create a picture of the broader context for inclusive education. Comparisons were made on two axes: small versus large and Western versus non-Western.

Table 16

Schools and Axes of Comparison

	European	**Asian**
Small <800 students	Alabaster School	Devilline School
Large >1500 students	Brookite School	Coesite School

Research Questions

The first research question considered which factors influence inclusive programming in international high schools, with particular regard to size, social, economic, political, and cultural factors. To address the first research question, vision, leadership, and policy making in the school as a whole were examined through interviews with leaders and content analysis of policy

documents to determine the factors that influence inclusive programming in international schools.

The second research question considered the characteristics of a successful, inclusive classroom and the supports and barriers in implementing inclusion. To address the second research question, the implementation of inclusion in the classroom was investigated through observation and interviews with teachers. A variety of strategies, methodologies, and characteristics were described and compared in chapter four.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that international schools can achieve academic excellence while including a broad range of learners. These schools are no longer satisfied with inclusion as allowing diverse students access to mainstream classrooms in the form of physical presence. These schools are actively striving to create genuine access so that students with various learning and linguistic profiles can fully participate and engage in learning activities with the goal of empowering all students, including those with exceptional needs, to become lifelong learners and create their own success in life. These schools are working toward the fullest level of inclusion according to Gidley et al.'s (2010a; 2010b) framework for levels of inclusion. Students are not just present in the classes, and teachers are no longer satisfied if all they can do is participate. The goal is to ensure they reach their maximum potential, by raising their aspirations and empowering them to celebrate the diversity they bring to their schools and their communities.

An Impetus for Reform

These programs demonstrated, however, that there must be an impetus for inclusive reforms to take hold. In public schools, this impetus often takes the form of a legal mandate

(Peters, 2003; Powell, 2016), but international schools are exempt from such legal mandates. At Coesite School, an economic crisis and natural disaster forced the school to reexamine its demographics and reenvision its clientele. At each of the other three schools, the drive for diversity started as the result of a teacher's passion and vision. Each teacher was empowered by her administration to build a robust inclusion program, a process which took many years. This would indicate the importance of empowering teachers with a vision and retaining teachers for a long period.

Expectations of Success

Among the schools investigated for this study, significant differences emerged between the schools in Europe and Asia. The communities of the two schools in Asia had different expectations for academic outcomes, which influenced the schools' notions of success. As discussed in chapter four, these differences may be related to the host countries' lower scores on Hofstede's dimension of individualism and higher scores on uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Even though most teachers and leaders at Coesite and Devilline espoused a definition of success centered around individual pathways and growth, these educators were keenly aware that the community defined success in terms of test scores and admittance to elite universities. Consequently, the high schools prioritized academic potential over diversity of learning styles in shaping their student body. Deficit thinking stemming from a medical model conception of learning disability colored the rhetoric surrounding learning support, whereas the rhetoric at the European schools surrounding learning support conveyed the same celebration of diversity that Asian Schools felt for their linguistically and culturally diverse students. It may be noteworthy that both Asian schools included in this study started their push for inclusion significantly later than the two European schools.

Multiple Pathways to Success

Another significant difference along this axis was that the high schools in Europe had created multiple pathways to graduation to support diverse student profiles and encourage a range of post-secondary pathways. Alabaster School, which is almost half the size of Devilline, offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma program for high achievers, a regular high school diploma, and a high school certificate that allows for broad flexibility in tailoring an individualized program. Brookite School also offers the IB diploma program, a regular high school diploma, and a certificate for students in the intensive learning support program, and they hope to begin the IB certificate program next year to further diversify the options for students. The Asian schools focus on offering a wide variety of college preparatory, challenging courses, but the courses are credit bearing in the high school, and students must meet the minimum requirements to graduate without modifications to curriculum or assessment. One leader felt that the program cannot call itself truly inclusive unless there are multiple pathways to completion. On the other hand, the Asian schools hold all students to the same high standards as a means of preparing them for life and work hard to make sure all of their students can attain those high standards, and thus be in a better position to be competitive, to be marketable, and to have the skills to be included in the top echelon of social and economic life.

Creativity to Fit Context

Fewer differences were found between the small and large schools, as each school had found unique ways to capitalize on the advantages of its size, adjust to its local context, and compensate for any disadvantages. Larger studies are needed to fully understand funding models in schools of different sizes located in countries with different costs, however the conclusion is clear that schools of different sizes and tuition bases can use resources in different ways to

successfully implement inclusion. Alabaster School had the smallest tuition base and is located in a country with a high cost of living. However, the school has access to the host country's robust social support network and works extensively with community resources. They prize the close relationships that can be fostered in a small school, communicate frequently about student needs, and value the flexibility of not having a large bureaucracy or institutional expectation. Devilline School does not have access to extensive English-speaking community resources, so they built their own community on campus. Their extensive co-teaching program creates a small student to teacher ratio, so that each student gets individualized attention from one or more teachers. The school capitalizes on its non-native English speakers, both by celebrating linguistic diversity as a value, and by fostering social networks among expatriate families. This school also has frequent opportunities for teachers to communicate and collaborate in support of all students. Both small schools eschewed clustering of students with diverse learning needs in favor of creating a more natural context.

Brookite School was well resourced to support a broad range of student needs, including students who need a specialized, non-academic curriculum. Brookite School devotes generous resources to making sure the needs of these students were well met, and they capitalize on the opportunity of having this program by boasting diversity as a value. Inclusion has become part of the identity of the school community. As a large school spread over several buildings, there is less contact or collaboration among the divisions, but each division has programs in place to foster close relationships. Although the school does not have access to extensive English-speaking community resources, they have built an incredible community service program for students to do substantive, meaningful work with community agencies according to their interests. They also garner school resources to create a community on campus. Coesite School

leverages its legacy of academic excellence to recruit students and staff who attain top results. Students with exceptional needs are included in this focus on excellence, and so teachers do what is necessary to support all students. The school is in the process of expanding its advisory system throughout the high school, as well as expanding and supporting co-teaching and tier two interventions. Although Coesite School does not have access to extensive community resources, tutoring and independent preparatory schools are popular in the local community, and so families engage outside support as needed.

Recommendations for Practitioners

While the context of each school may be widely different and the cultural, social, and economic context of a school does have a significant impact on its programming, the resulting inclusion program can still be of similar high caliber. International schools have the flexibility and creativity to compensate for various potential barriers to achieve full inclusion for diverse constituencies. As Ken, the head of school at Brookite, pointed out, schools should strive for programming that is the best fit for their desired outcomes (personal communication, November 27, 2018). Schools can have widely different goals for different constituencies and still use inclusion as a means to ensure that high outcomes are achievable for all students. As successful policies and practices in a variety of contexts were sought, common trends emerged from the four schools.

Mitchell (2015) Framework for Evaluation and Self-evaluation

The Mitchell (2015) framework worked well for evaluating learning support programs in international schools for this study. Although in this case it was used as a framework to compare schools in different settings, it could also be used as a self-evaluation tool for schools wishing to improve inclusion and supports for students in inclusive environments. This framework is

simpler than other existing frameworks, which may be too cumbersome for schools to use without an outside evaluator. All of the data collected for this study fit into the existing categories, and no additional categories were needed. Additionally, all of Mitchell's (2015) categories were relevant to these international schools, which is an advantage over other frameworks that would need adjustments to fit the international context.

Actively Build Partnerships with Parents and the Community

The support of parents and the local community is crucial in envisioning, implementing, and sustaining a robust inclusion program. The meaning of inclusion today is different than it was when the parents of today were in school. Depending on their origin, many parents may never have seen or even been aware of the existence of special education programs in their schools. Today, the most successful schools work with parents to help them understand the need for diversity in schools, the changing meaning of success in the postmodern age, and the types of skills students will need in the future job market to succeed.

Parent involvement and community support is critical for the success of any educational program (Chan & Yuen, 2015; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Naraian, 2014), yet schools must be creative in overcoming barriers in getting busy, working parents involved. This challenge also becomes greater in the high school. Two elementary schools have found success by offering parents the chance to get into the classroom, either to observe or to help plan a unit of instruction. Alabaster School engages parents by running a series of workshops targeting specific skills that interest parents. Coesite Schools offers its workshop at a more convenient satellite location closer to where families live. Brookite School is considering attaching presentations on social and emotional learning to college information nights.

Although international schools are generally well resourced, they face some significant barriers in accessing outside resources. Three of the schools reported a lack of English-speaking occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavior therapists, and speech pathologists in the outside community. School should consider ways of encouraging more specialists in these critical areas, and they should consider other means, such as Skype, for reaching these services.

Be Sensitive to Shifting Categories of Marginalization

Just as categories of disability shift over time, so do the categories where schools place their focus on reducing marginalization. The two Asian schools have established programs for English language learners and smaller programs for students with diverse learning profiles. The two European schools have been fine-tuning their inclusive programs for English language learners and diverse learners for several decades, and now they are starting to pay attention to gender and sexual orientation diversity. These categories of inclusionary focus shift with societal trends, new research, and new philosophies. Schools should continue to be aware that other categories of marginalization exist, even though they may not be aware of them.

Support Teachers to Individualize Education

Differentiation, scaffolding, and individualized education are critical as schools move away from traditional, one-size-fits-all, educational models. Freddie, the admissions director at Coesite who has been active in education for many decades, was one of the leaders who noted that educators have discussed these trends for many years (personal communication, January 25, 2019). Today, they are emerging as imperative to international schools to meet the needs of changing markets and demographics. Teachers in this study reported needing more training in this area, and schools are investing in consultants, workshops, and other professional development. Many teachers, however, reported that the best professional development was

hands-on, in the classroom. A number of teachers pointed to co-teaching as the best professional development. Teachers wished for more opportunities for instructional coaching and other release time to observe and collaborate with other teachers. Another barrier for classroom teachers is that creating scaffolds requires a significant investment of time, and time is a precious resource. Several teachers who had successfully scaffolded their units reported that they had focused on only one or two units per year and worked with the learning support specialist to differentiate them. These teachers scaffolded their entire curriculum over the course of several years.

Student Choice

Student choice, especially in the high school, emerged as a strong theme in the success of students with diverse learning and linguistic profiles. All schools in this study offered students a choice of pathways to graduation, and many high schools emphasized course selection within those programs as a means of access for students who might struggle. Both the IB and Advanced Placement programs offer some courses that are more accessible than others, and they both offer a variety of courses that utilize different students' various strengths. Schools should be sure that at least one accessible course is offered in each area and that students are aware of which courses best meet their needs. A barrier to offering a large course selection is the demand for staffing. For example, Devilline School had teachers teaching three or four different classes. Online programs and strategic scheduling can be used to reduce staffing demands and widen course selection.

Co-teaching

All schools used co-teaching extensively, and teachers reported being excited about this model. Co-teaching becomes harder in the high schools because providing students a wide

choice in courses means that there is seldom a concentration of students needing a particular class to justify an additional teacher and because the content-driven, academic demands in high school increase. This encouraged support teachers to make sure that students could be successful independently in the last two years of high school. For students who cannot succeed independently in challenging academic courses, the European schools provided alternative pathways to graduation while the Asian school counselled the students toward more appropriate placements. To be fully inclusive, schools should consider either alternative graduation pathways, online coursework, or continued support of students through graduation.

For co-teaching to be successful, the number of professionals any teacher is teaching with should be limited. Most co-teachers in this study who were satisfied with the collaboration reported working with only one or two other teachers. Some teachers in this study were working with three or more teachers, and they were not able to effectively co-plan or communicate. Administrators should formally schedule time to co-plan, ideally one block planning for every one or two blocks instructed, to ensure that other priorities do not overtake co-planning. When possible, it is helpful for this co-planning time to overlap with department meeting time, so that the entire department can be aligned for delivering differentiated instruction and the support teacher can be integrated into the department. Teachers at Devilline School formalized working agreements with administrative participation to facilitate clear communication and norms of collaboration. Schools should also consider adopting both formal working agreements and mid-year check-in surveys so that co-teaching issues can be addressed and resolved.

Flexible Service Delivery

More flexible models of service delivery allow learning support teachers to serve more students and target those who need support for short term goals. Freddie pointed out that too

often learning support teachers are reluctant to exit students on their caseloads because they feel they need to keep a caseload to justify their jobs (personal communication, January 25, 2019). Co-teaching, coaching, and consulting provide options for teachers to expand the range of students they can support without holding on to students who no longer need support. In particular schools should consider expanding the coaching role of learning support teachers with the aim of creating an individualized educational experience for all students.

Meaningful Inclusion

The schools in this study were thoughtful about meaningful inclusion. Students were not placed into mainstream classes for the purpose of aligning with the school's vision of inclusion. When targeted instruction was necessary, support was delivered in a segregated setting. Schools included a number of minutes of service on individual learning/education plans for parents and teachers, but the actual service delivery was flexible. Full inclusion does not entail merely the physical presence of students in a mainstream class, but rather genuine access to the learning experience, and schools recognize that sometimes pull-out lessons in a segregated location are necessary for the most meaningful instruction.

Advisory and/or Homegroup Systems in the High School

A robust advisory system is helpful for students to develop meaningful relationships with teachers and for teachers to closely monitor the progress of each individual student. Implementing advisory programs becomes more difficult in the high school, when the number of instructional minutes in content areas becomes precious. However, high school students were observed to benefit from advisory, particularly as a platform for launching creative and innovative service learning or other individual passion projects and for building meaningful

relationships. Advisory should be in addition to seminar, which instructs students in the skills

needed for high school and informs about the college application process.

Allow Students Various Ways to Demonstrate their Attainment

These schools should be creative in assessment. The two European schools were willing

to modify their grading when appropriate, for example in the form of using only selected strands

of a particular standard on a rubric or using standards from different levels. Schools can also

allow students to demonstrate their understanding in the form of projects, where students with

diverse strengths can build on their skills. The European schools demonstrated that alternative

assessment need not be at the sacrifice of rigor or authenticity. Allowing students means to

express their mastery of course material in different modalities widens inclusion.

Use Data

Data should also be used to celebrate the accomplishments and successes of both students

and teachers. Data, in the forms of formative feedback, summative feedback, and classroom data

for teacher use, is essential in monitoring student success. This is an area where schools should

consider further training for teachers, as many teachers are not trained in collecting different

forms of data and using data to drive instruction and monitor the efficacy of tier two

interventions. Leaders should develop systems of collecting and monitoring data to ensure

student success.

Align Vision of Success with Indicators of Success

Although most teachers and leaders interviewed for this study believe in a broad

definition of success where school prepares students for individual paths in life and gives them a

broad range of skills necessary to be happy as adults, the interviews suggested that educators

were not always certain that students and families held the same expectations of success at

school. Some schools worked actively with families to co-create a shared vision of success.

Along with that vision, schools need to broaden the indicators of success. Currently, high school

profiles published on school websites contain information about SAT and ACT scores, the range

of college preparatory courses offered, and college admittances. Schools should consider which

indicators match their vision of a successful learner at their school and publicize those indicators.

Create Well-being Programs for Staff and Students

Amid high-pressure academic demands, schools are becoming more aware of the

wellbeing of both staff and students. Many teachers reported that students in the high school are

under a great deal of stress. Busyness is an issue both for students and staff. Several schools are

developing wellbeing or mindfulness programs. Coesite School limits the number of clubs a

student can join, and they may limit the number of Advanced Placement courses a student can

take. Devilline has a robust wellbeing program for staff and a formal wellbeing framework for

students. The wellbeing program tailored to the unique needs of students and staff in each

context should be a priority in schools.

Empower Teacher Leaders

Each of these three successful programs was the result of the vision of one teacher. Each

teacher was empowered by the administration and stayed at the school for many years. Schools

should consider ways to empower teachers and find ways to encourage teachers in the transient

international school community to remain at one school and make a long-term investment to

implement programs. At the same time, administrators should be wary of constantly shifting the

focus of the school and starting a new initiative every few years. Real change takes time.

The most successful programs in this study had a dedicated student support services

coordinator. This person was responsible for the vision, alignment, and implementation of

student support across divisions. Two of these coordinators were responsible for both learning support and English as an Additional Language, while Devilline School has a teaching and learning director to oversee learning support and a dedicated English as an Additional Language director. These people were in leadership positions with few or no teaching obligations.

Areas for Further Discussion in the International School Community

A few areas emerged that need further discussion in the international school community. Although all of these schools stated they serve mild to moderate learners, the actual populations were different in Europe and Asia. For example, the European schools serve students with autism, Down Syndrome, visual impairments, and others needing a non-academic curriculum. The schools in Asia had enrolled only academically capable students with autism. A common terminology would facilitate transparent communication with potential families and other institutions. An example might be the leveling system at Coesite School, which provides clear guidelines for levels of support, needed accommodations/modifications, and expected outcomes.

International schools face a difficult decision in deciding whether to charge an additional fee for service for learning support and English as an Additional Language support. Although this fee would allow the school more resources to provide more extensive support to students, it necessarily segments a portion of the population. Charging some families a fee for service negates the goal of inclusion as providing an individualized education for all students, yet this fee may be necessary to provide meaningful access for students with more significant learning or linguistic needs. A detailed examination of financial and resourcing structures is beyond the scope of this study, yet it would be a worthwhile undertaking within the international school community.

Recommendations for Academics

The results of this study demonstrate that more research is necessary in the area of inclusion in international schools to guide the envisioning and effective implementation of inclusion in these schools. International schools have different demographics, funding structures, policy making procedures, and expectations for outcomes than public schools, and much research remains in this context.

Development of Inclusion

A longitudinal study would be worthwhile to better understand how inclusion develops over a longer span of time, how schools and communities influence each other in their thinking about marginalized groups, and how hiring and leadership practices influence the shape of inclusion over time. The four schools included in this study have been developing their inclusion programs for different lengths of time. Brookite has the longest running inclusion program, followed by Alabaster, both of which have been working with inclusion for several decades. Inclusion in Devilline is relatively new, the big expansion into co-teaching having come less than a decade ago, and Coesite School has a program that has been rapidly expanding in the last five years and which they hope will continue to grow. These schools seem to fall along a continuum in their development. It would be important to understand the developmental trajectories of programs because, as April, the middle school principal at Devilline School, pointed out, it is difficult to know if they should first expand their staffing, or wait for the program to expand first (personal communication, January 24, 2019). Such a longitudinal study could also investigate how the concept of disability changes over time, how schools respond to different groups being marginalized or included in the larger society, and how salient categories of difference shift.

Effect of Local Cultural Conception of Disability on International School Policy and Practice

Wider ethnographic studies are needed to understand the role that different cultural conceptions of disability have on shaping school policy and practice. Schools need guidance in understanding and working with families from cultures where having an exceptionality is a source of shame. These families may be reluctant to accept referrals for testing, labelling, and services under current models. This research could also help create effective parent workshops that work with local cultures to help parents understand the vision of the school, broader conceptions of success, the need for inclusion, and how to access services.

Student and Staff Ratios

Quantitative research is needed to investigate the effects of staffing and student ratios on measurable outcomes. These schools had allocated varying levels of resources to their inclusive programs. Devilline had the lowest student to teacher ratio with sometimes three or four adults supporting a class of less than twenty students. Although high staffing does allow for individualized help for all students, it is possible that increasing staffing beyond a certain level nets only diminishing returns. Similar research is needed to investigate the number of students with diverse learning profiles that should be placed together in a class. Both Brookite and Coesite had firm quotas on the number of learning support students that could be in a grade or a class, and research is needed to investigate the impact of this percentage on measurable academic and social outcomes for the overall class. Future research is needed to find the ideal ratios of staff and students with exceptional needs.

Caseloads and Class Sizes

Research is needed to validate and expand this leveling system. Coesite School has begun work with a leveling system to better understand teacher caseloads. This leveling system is clear and precise and could be used more widely to ensure that teachers have a manageable caseload to provide quality support to all their students and to make the most effective use of human resources. This research could also be used to better inform decisions about class sizes and student teacher ratios.

Communication

Research is needed to better understand how digitalization and globalization of the modern age effects communication regarding student support. Communication is critical to schools, and several areas of contention were uncovered in this study. In today's world of ever-increasing digital communication, local governments are passing privacy and data protection laws to protect student information. Schools face grey areas regarding privacy protection, and more clear guidance is needed. Schools also need to develop better ways to communicate about the nature of disability. One issue is that mild to moderate looks vastly different in different contexts. Another issue is that globalization has brought different cultural conceptions and philosophies into closer contact. Some labels and technical terms that are acceptable in the American school system can cause shame and withdrawal in other cultures. Schools need guidance in identifying problematic communication and shifting their communication away from a deficit to a social model, which avoids stigmatization. Linguistic studies are needed to better understand how specific interchanges lead to either increased partnerships or withdrawal.

Architecture

Research is needed to validate the efficacy of architectural innovations. The schools in Europe are using new and original architectural techniques to increase access for a more diverse population, and research is needed on what is actually effective. For example, Alabaster School has installed an advanced lighting system, but research is needed to establish if such lighting systems are actually effective in helping students learn. Alabaster School has also created two prototype classrooms that use space creatively. They intend to collect anecdotal data at the end of the year to determine if they are effective. Academics should consider this a potential area for research.

Student Perception of Acceptance

Further research is needed to determine what role, if any, stigma and bullying play in students' perception of receiving learning support and their educational experience. A study of students' subject experiences of receiving support could help schools ensure that they are sensitive to the social and emotional reality of students. No teacher or leader interviewed for this study reported any bullying or harassment around students with learning needs, and most of them reported that having a disability was not a source of shame at their school. Yet research shows that bias and stigma around disabilities exist and negatively affect the implementation of inclusion (Hornby, 2015; Liasidou, 2015; Mariga et al., 2014; Norwich, 2014; Powell, 2016). This study was limited to interviewing adults, so no students and parents were included in the data. More focused research is needed.

Supportive Curriculum for the Post-digital Era

Research is needed on the most important skills and most relevant curricula for students with learning differences in the post-digital revolution world.   Several teachers have created a

curriculum of study skills and social skills for their high school learning support classes, but these curricula are derivations from traditional educational programs. The modern age calls for different skills and allows students the opportunity to leverage their strengths in innovative and unique ways. Study skills in the modern age are fundamentally different than traditional study skills, and the nature of social skills has shifted in the digital age. Research is needed to help educators design programs to take full advantage of the digital renaissance.

Collaboration Between Learning Support Teachers and English as an Additional Language Teachers

Research is needed regarding if and how learning support and English as an Additional Language teachers can or should collaborate and support each other. In the schools observed, there were varying levels of collaboration between English as an Additional Language teachers and Learning Support teachers, largely dependent on local context, structure, and philosophy. Some programs focused on the overlapping nature of supporting students, while others focused on the specificity of learning targets in each field. Research is needed to ascertain the effectiveness of these teachers supporting each other and what training may be needed to maximize the benefit.

Training Classroom Teachers to Design and Implement Interventions

Research is needed to determine what training is most effective to support classroom teachers in implementing interventions in the classroom. Schools spend time and money training teachers, but many teachers feel unsure how to support struggling learners in the mainstream setting and many administrators feel that teachers need guidance in implementing tier two interventions. Leaders and teachers articulated good intentions, but often felt they were falling short of delivering effective supports. Tier two interventions may not be a part of teacher training

programs, and classroom teachers already have many competing demands to balance. Many teachers and leaders reported that workshops were not always effective, so research is needed to find more effective models. Teachers reported coaching and co-teaching as particularly effective professional development models, but research is needed to validate these perceptions.

Effectiveness of Feedback from Modified Assessment

Research is needed to determine if modified and flexible feedback has the same impact as feedback on traditional measures of assessment. Research has shown (Hattie, 2018) that feedback is one of the biggest factors in student success. The European schools in this study were willing to modify assessments when appropriate, whereas the Asian schools strove to hold all students accountable to the same standard of academic excellence. Academics should investigate the impact of modifying assessments and concomitant feedback versus holding all students accountable to the same high standards.

Innovative Uses of Technology

Further research should address how technology can be used to shift paradigms in teaching and how technology coordinators can support individualizing education for all students. These schools were well resourced with an abundance of technology. Technology offers vast possibilities for individualization and scaffolding. However, the usage of technology observed for this study was often just as a replacement for traditional pencil and paper techniques. Guidance is needed in how teachers can leverage the full, innovative potential of technology.

Concluding Comments

The results of this study have demonstrated that college preparatory international schools can deliver a world-class education with outstanding academic results and also include a diverse population. Inclusion is not without barriers and challenges, and these schools have

demonstrated that effective inclusion is possible in a wide variety of contexts. As markets and categories change, international schools may find that their constituents demand the inclusion of more diverse learners. As Goodley (2013) highlighted the pivotal changes that are reshaping how schools must serve their learners, "In a climate of economic downturn that is leading yet again to reformulations of what counts as disabled" (p. 632).

As society is becoming more globalized and the economy is demanding the full participation of a broader range of people, these schools are taking the lead in preparing future citizens. Lim and Thaver (2011) summarized, "The universality of inclusive education lies in how it resonates so befittingly with the hunger and pursuit of humankind for a more peaceful, just, equitable and inclusive global society" (p. 977). By celebrating diversity, these schools are preparing our children to create a kinder, more accepting world.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Design

This study expanded the limited research on inclusion to international contexts. Comparing large and small schools in Western and non-Western contexts gives educators models of successful, highly inclusive schools upon which to base their programming, outside perspectives, and new solutions from other contexts. Both the school and the classroom will be units of analysis to inform the discussion of efficacy in education for students with special learning needs.

Interview Protocols

Interviews allow researchers to access a rich source of information on people's lives, perspectives, and knowledge in a holistic way without the constraints of formal surveys or document analysis (Ortiz, 2003). Ortiz (2003) further argued that interviews are particularly appropriate when the research seeks to understand the meaning that people make of their lives. Interviewing is ideal when researchers desire to "expose the human part of the story" (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 1).

Interviewees will be sought to contribute maximum variety of perspectives and experiences (Ortiz, 2003), based on the recommendations of key informants at each site using a snowball method. The researcher will continue to seek interviews until saturation is met (Ortiz, 2003), even if interviews must continue virtually after the site visit has concluded. All interviews will use a semi-structured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ortiz, 2003) or general interview guide (Turner, 2010) approach. Interviews will be audio recorded so that data can be transcribed and accurately coded (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

To create this protocol, the researcher categorized the barriers to inclusion found in the research literature under the areas suggested by Mitchell's (2015) framework. The categories

were then used to create interview questions. Interviews will contain four types of interview questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016): introductory, transition, key, and closing questions. To refine this protocol, the researcher will follow suggestions from Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Refinement Protocol:

(1) Using a matrix to ensure that the interview questions align with the research questions and areas of Mitchell's (2015) framework;

(2) Solicit feedback to ensure that questions lead to an inquiry-based conversation;

(3) Solicit feedback from EDU 870 partner, instructors, advisor, and pilot testees on interview questions;

(4) Pilot the interview on teacher friends or fellow students.

As preparation for all interviews, the researcher will follow Turner's (2010) eight suggestions:

(1) work with interviewees to choose a setting where he/she is comfortable with little distraction;

(2) explain the purpose of the interview by email or in person before the interview;

(3) assure the interviewee that his/her information will be reported confidentially;

(4) explain that the format of the interview and that it will be audio recorded;

(5) tell interviewee the interview will take about an hour;

(6) give interviewee a card with contact information;

(7) ask interviewee if he/she has any questions;

(8) arrange for audio recording of responses.

Dilley (2000) further suggested that watching professional interviews is helpful to prepare the novice for interviewing. Therefore, the researcher will seek out professional recorded interviews on the topic of education to observe good interviewing technique.

Good interview questions are neutral and open-ended, and a good protocol should have follow-up suggestions (Turner, 2010). Specific feedback in these areas will be solicited. Furthermore, Ortiz (2003) argued that it is necessary to understand the full cultural, social, and historical contexts. Seeking information about the person interviewed is also helpful (Dilley, 2000).   The researcher will gather this background information before the interviews and site visits.

After the interview, MaxQDA computer analysis software will enable analysis through the constant comparative method (Ortiz, 2003). The researcher will engage in member checking to verify the validity of the report (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ortiz, 2003).

Table 17

Interview Matrix from Mitchell's (2015) Framework

M1 Vision Whole School Culture Institutional Momentum No Legal Mandate	M2 Placement Labeling Dilemma Definition of Disability	M3 Adapted Curriculum High Achievement Continuum of Service	M4 Adapted Assessment Clarity of Goals	M5 Adapted Teaching Training High Achievement
M6 Acceptance Attitude/ Perception	M7 Access Definition of Inclusion	M8 Support Parent Support Isolation from Community	M9 Resources Lack of Time	M10 Leadership Training Whole School Culture

Table 18

Interview Data Matrix

	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
Principal Interview	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Interview		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Admissions Officer Interview	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	

Interview Questions

For Principals/Administrators

1. Tell me about the special education program at your school.

2. What would be your ideal learning support program? What would that look like?

3. Some people worry that including students with special needs affects the standard of achievement for other students. What would you say to them?

4. How does your school adapt assessment for special learners and still make it equitable?

5. What kind of training is most helpful for your teachers and other staff?

6. How well are special students socially accepted by the other students?

7. What does success look like for an LSS student? How can it be measured?

8. How does your school work with community resources? Do you work with outside speech therapists, occupational therapists, or other therapists? Are they available in [your city]?

9. ~~How do you manage demands for time?~~

10. What supports are most helpful for classroom teachers?

11. What is the role of leadership in developing a school culture of acceptance?

12. In a perfect world, what systems of accountability could be put in place for LSS teachers?

13. Do you feel that international schools are able to offer the same continuum of services as U.S. schools? If not, how have you compensated?

14. Does having a special education program help the school's image or harm it?

For Teachers

1. Tell me about the strengths of your learning support program? What has worked well for you?

2. What are some difficulties you have faced in setting up this program [clarify according to school what type of program]?

3. How are students placed into classes/into the program?

4. To what extent/how do you modify curriculum to make it accessible for students with learning needs? Whose job is it?

5. Some people worry about inclusion and the standard of achievement for other students. What would you say to them?

6. To what extent do you modify assessment? How do you make it fair to other students?

7. What are some of the accommodations you use most often [in the general education classroom/with your students/in your classes]?

8. What is your experience with co-teaching?

9. How are LSS students accepted by other students and teachers?

10. What is your experience with working with parents?

11. In a perfect world, what additional resources would be useful to your classroom/school/program?

12. How do you manage conflicting demands for your time?

13. What is the role of leadership in creating a whole school culture?

14. What training is needed to effectively implement inclusion?

15. What are the advantages/disadvantages of inclusion versus another model?

For Admissions Officers/Administrators

1. How did the special education program in your school develop?

2. In your opinion, what would be the ideal learning support program?

3. What is your school's admissions policy regarding students with known disabilities?

4. How are students with known disabilities placed?

5. To what extent is your school able to personalize curriculum?

6. Critics might worry about inclusion and the standard of achievement for other students. What would you say to them?

7. How well are students with learning differences accepted by other students and by staff?

8. What is the role of leadership in developing a school culture of acceptance?

9. Are there barriers for students to access instruction? What are they?

10. What supports are needed for students with special needs to succeed?

11. How does your school work with community resources?

12. What does success for an LSS student looks like? What role does leadership have in making success a reality at your school?

Table 19

Interview Protocol Matrix

P = principal or administrator   T=teacher   A=Admissions Officer

The numbers in the left-hand column refer to questions from the protocol.

PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR										
Opening	How did the special education program in your school develop?									
Transition	What would be your ideal learning support program?									
KEY QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR										
	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
P1	X									
P2	X									
P3			X		X					
P4				X						
P5					X					
P6						X				
P7							X			
P8								X		
P9									X	
P10									X	
P11										X
P12										X
P13			X							
Closing	What are the advantages/disadvantages of inclusion versus another model?									
Closing	What are the biggest successes of your program?									

GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS										
Opening	What would be your ideal learning support program?									
Transition	What are some of the struggles you have faced?									
KEY QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS										
	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
T3		X								
T4			X							
T5			X							
T6				X						
T7					X					
T8					X					
T9						X				
T10							X			
T11								X		
T12								X		
T13									X	
T14									X	
T15										X
T16										X
Closing	What are the biggest successes of your program?									

ADMISSIONS OFFICER/OTHER GENERAL ADMINISTRATOR										
Opening	How did the special education program in your school develop?									
Transition	In your opinion, what would be the ideal learning support program?									

KEY QUESTIONS FOR ADMISSIONS OFFICER/OTHER GENERAL ADMINISTRATOR										
	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
A2	X									
A3		X								
A4		X								
A5			X							
A6			X							
A7						X				
A8						X				X
A9							X			
A10								X		
A11									X	
A12	X									X
Closing										

Appendix B: Content Analysis Protocol

Prior to and during the site visit for each school, the researcher will conduct a content analysis of relevant documents to gather information in seven areas of Mitchell's (2015) framework.

Table 20

Content Analysis and Categorization Matrix

	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
Document Content Analysis	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	

According to Merriam (2009), researchers should seek six types of documents: public, private, popular culture, visual, physical objects, and researcher generated. Some documents should be available at all schools, while other documents may or may not be available or provided by all schools. The final written report will include details of what documents were examined and what documents were not available.

Table 21

Documents for Content Analysis

	Documents to be requested by the researcher
Public	Mission statement published on website Information about learning support department School admissions policy
Private	
Popular culture	Facebook information Newspaper and other media information located via internet search
Visual	Examples of student work Pictures of classrooms
Physical Objects	
Researcher generated	Research journal

According to Elo & Kyngäs (2007), content analysis can be either inductive or deductive. This study will use a deductive method to code documents according to the categorization matrix derived from Mitchell's (2015) framework. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) referred to this as directed content analysis and noted that this approach is appropriate when a theory or framework already exists.

According to the steps outlined by Elo and Kyngäs (2007), the documents will first be read to give the researcher an overview. Next the researcher will use a data analysis software such as MinerLite to identify words and concepts relevant to each category. Words or concepts that are relevant to the research questions but do not fit the matrix will be noted and can be used inductively to form their own categories. Next, categories and subcategories will be created in each area. Finally, the researcher will theorize concepts and relationships in each category and

compare the results among schools. The researcher will look for evidence to support, enhance, and contradict Mitchell's (2015) framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

To increase the trustworthiness of the results, the researcher will describe the process, data, and results in detail and include tables to support relationships and comparisons (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The researcher will seek content validation by requesting member checks from participating teachers, administrators, and other informants.

Appendix C: Observation Protocol

Classroom observations will contribute data to eight areas of Mitchell's (2015) framework.

Table 22

Observation Matrix

	M1 Vision	M2 Placement	M3 Curriculum	M4 Assessment	M5 Teaching	M6 Acceptance	M7 Access	M8 Support	M9 Resources	M10 Leadership
Observation		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

The researcher has been granted permission to spend one to two weeks on site in each school. Four to five days will be spent observing inclusive general education classrooms, learning support classrooms, and other areas of interest, as suggested by key informants on site. The researcher will seek maximum variation of settings to provide the richest data.

In each observation, the researcher will take note of the six areas suggested by Merriam (2009): setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and the researcher's behavior. The researcher will use a checklist to ensure that sufficient data is collected in all areas, and observation will continue until saturation is reached.

Teachers will be asked for informed consent before beginning observations.

All observational notes will be kept in the researcher's notebook and coded in data analysis software using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Columns in the researcher's notebook will be used as shown below to aid in coding and to ensure that information in all areas is gathered.

Date	Time		Observation Place/Teacher	
Setting				The right column left blank to code for framework
Participants				
Activities and Interactions				
Conversation				
Subtle Factors				
Researcher Reaction				
Other				

M1   M2   M3   M4   M5   M6   M7   M8   M9   M10
Numbers correspond with areas of Mitchell's framework and will be crossed off as data is gathered to ensure that no areas are missed.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter for Teachers and Administrators

You are invited to participate in a study of inclusion in international schools. I hope to learn how your school is successfully implementing inclusion to meet the learning needs of a variety of learners. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you play a critical role in making inclusion a success at your school. This research is part of a comparative study of four international schools that I am undertaking to complete my dissertation at Bethel University. You will have a chance to review and comment on the findings before submission, if you wish, and you will be provided with a copy of the final results.

If you decide to participate, I would like to interview you for one hour to gain insight on your experiences with inclusion, differentiation, and education learners with special learning needs. The interview has been designed to be minimally discomfortable to you, and we can schedule at your convenience. Although there are no monetary benefits associated with this study because it is not funded, I hope that you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have contributed to the improvement of learning support programs worldwide.

I would like to audio record the interview to ensure that my transcription of the interview is accurate. If you are not comfortable with audio recording, an alternative would be that I can take written notes. The audio recording will be on my iPhone only, and I would only share this recording with my advisor at Bethel if she requested it for auditing purposes. This data will be permanently deleted after seven years.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you

will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only aggregate data will be presented.

I will identify your school only as a large/small school in East Asia/South Asia/North Europe or West Europe. You will be identified with a pseudonym only, and I will take care that the information in the final report, which you can review, does not contain enough descriptive information for you to be identified. You will have a chance to review my report before it is released to anyone.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with me or Bethel University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without affecting such relationships.

This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants' rights or wish to report a research- related injury, please email me at mss76857@bethel.edu or my advisor, Dr. Mary Whitman, at m-whitman@bethel.edu.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

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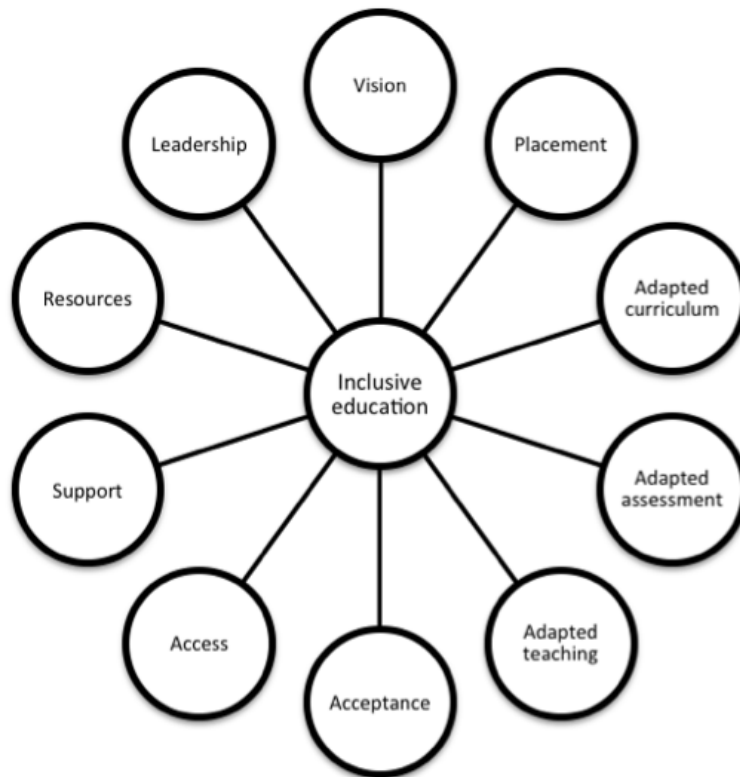Signature   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix E: Mitchell's (2015) Framework for Inclusion

This is a visual model of the ten factors that Mitchell (2015) claimed are necessary for an inclusive educational program. These ten factors will guide the content analysis, interviews, and observations of this study.

Appendix F: Gidley et al. (2010a; 2010b) Levels of Inclusion

In this diagram, Gidley et al. (2010a; 2010b) showed the levels and stages of inclusion, along with the driving social, cultural, and economic forces at each stage. This will be relevant to this study, as the researcher will be looking at various international schools to compare relative levels of inclusion and theorize contributing factors.