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**Choosing Educational Strategies to Develop Social Studies
Knowledge and Encourage Civic and Political Participation
Among Students With Special Education Needs**

A MASTER'S THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

MARC BIERMANN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

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AUGUST 2022

**Choosing Educational Strategies to Develop Social Studies
Knowledge and Encourage Civic and Political Participation
Among Students With Special Education Needs**

BY

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APPROVED

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AUGUST 2022

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I express my deepest gratitude to my parents John and Paula Biermann for their unwavering support and encouragement during my educational journey. And to my mentor and role model, Dan DeRuyck, special education teacher for the Journey Transition Program in the Centennial School District, for encouraging me to become a special education teacher. Additionally, I wish to extend my special thanks to my thesis advisor Professor Charles Strand and my second reader Jan Mrozinski for their insight and advice.

ABSTRACT

This research will address three questions: 1) To what extent do people with disabilities participate in the political process, 2) What do studies reveal about social studies education for students with disabilities, and 3) How can teachers prepare students with disabilities to improve their knowledge of history and government and thereby better participate in civic and political processes. In particular, the thesis will suggest a number of instructional strategies and interventions to improve students with disabilities' mastery of the traditional, heavily text-laden subject of social studies. The goal of this literature review is to synthesize this research in order to provide tools and strategies for working teachers.

Students with disabilities often struggle on assessments in history, as do their peers without disabilities. According to comprehensive national studies, only a small fraction of students with disabilities are proficient in Social Studies. There are a number of instructional strategies and interventions which teachers can utilize to improve their students' skills. Seven strategies discussed in this thesis: PACT, CoPD, CSR, CBI, TBL, SFA, and Concept Mapping focus on improving reading comprehension and content acquisition to improve students' understanding of expository texts.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The best stories are about people. People one has been lucky enough to know. People who have shaped the way that one thinks. This is a story of the thesis writer and the influences in his life.

Volunteer work and participation in education have been two long-standing traditions in the careers of this researcher's family. The grandmother/matriarch of the family, Olga, worked with students with disabilities for over 30 years. Across three states, Missouri, Minnesota and Virginia, she volunteered in schools. She was patient, artistic, and selfless. This researcher's father made his career in business but, after retiring, chose to follow her lifelong path. He became a paraprofessional and worked in special education. Today, at age 70, he drives a school bus that takes students to their special education classrooms.

This thesis writer has been a volunteer for several non-profit organizations including a food shelf, The Salvation Army, a county library, and an assisted living center. In addition, this researcher has also been a paid member of AmeriCorps, specifically a ReadingCorps tutor. This writer has baked food for people awaiting organ transplants and made quilts for babies in a neonatal unit.

This writer's first job working with students with disabilities was as a paraprofessional in a transition program. In this program, the researcher was fortunate to have worked closely with the head teacher, Dan DeRuyck. Dan is an amazing educator who was awarded the honor of Teacher of the Year in the Centennial School District. Dan is enthusiastic about teaching and has always sought to provide his students with a holistic education. He espouses the belief that education extends well beyond just math, reading and writing and his teaching encompasses a

wide curriculum that includes frequent community outings, experiences in nature, and talks with local community members and employers. Additionally, the curriculum includes instruction in areas such as job search, vocational skills, personal finance, interpersonal skills, and state and local history. Also, Dan is an avid outdoorsman, and he encourages his students to be curious about the natural world. Dan leverages his understanding of Minnesota's natural resources in order to teach his students about the state's history, particularly the role of flour mills and river transportation. His mission was broad: to provide students with a serious and wide-ranging education that could help prepare them for adulthood and community membership.

Dan always had a wager with his students. If they went out and voted and brought back a sticker or testimony from parents as proof of voting, he would give them a day off from the program. Students would perk up at the offer but would never follow through. This was true even when the student had encouragement from staff and family members. When asked, these students, who were aged 18-21 and had completed their high school educations, had little idea of how local government worked, who their representatives were, what they did and how they could communicate with them. Similarly, they were often uninterested in current events, had no political priorities or pet issues, and more often than not felt like they had no involvement in political decisions.

As this researcher followed the path that family and mentors have trail-blazed, the questions that led to this thesis emerged. Educationally, what can be done to improve the chances that students would vote, participate in the political process, and listen to or read current events? This research will address the questions of to what extent people with disabilities participate in the political process, and what do studies reveal about social studies education for students with disabilities. This thesis will suggest a number of instructional strategies and interventions to

improve students with disabilities' mastery of the traditional, heavily text-laden subject of social studies.

This thesis will also examine the existing literature on the political participation of people with disabilities. There is a growing body of literature that describes the political participation of people with disabilities as well as the factors that influence this political participation. Much of this research focuses on voting specifically. However, this researcher will examine other forms of political participation and investigate a wide array of tangible and intangible factors which negatively impact political participation. Although these factors partially explain the political participation gap between people with disabilities, and people without disabilities, these factors and this gap demand further study. Per Dr. Schur's findings (2017), "While the standard measures of resources, recruitment, and psychological factors play a role, they do not fully explain the lower turnout of people with disabilities" (p. 1375).

The field of education is tremendously important to the political participation of people with disabilities. As adults, former students will participate in a variety of political and civic processes, including voting, jury duty, protest and participation in political organizations. It is of the utmost importance that our students are well-informed and encouraged to play an active role in our society. The need to prepare our students with disabilities for their civic duty requires an increased focus on history, social studies, and political science education. A robust education in these areas will enable our students to better advocate for themselves and their peers.

Voting is one of the most important and direct ways for an individual to have input in government decisions that affect their lives. People with disabilities experience a number of voting difficulties. People with disabilities are less likely than people without disabilities to vote

though this gap has narrowed over several election cycles (Schur, 2021). Polling locations are not always accessible to people with disabilities and may lack crucial accommodations such as wheelchair ramps and braille ballots (U.S GAO, 2020). It can be difficult for people with disabilities to find transportation to polling sites especially considering that people with disabilities are more likely to live alone and less likely to be employed (U.S. GAO, 2020). In addition to these physical barriers, people with disabilities face a number of intangible barriers, including discrimination and social stigma (Schur, 2021). Moreover, people with disabilities may be less likely to believe that the political system responds to their needs (Schur, 2021).

Though there are a variety of factors that impede voting for people with disabilities, the participation gap is narrowing (Schur, 2021). There are several trends in this area that may be behind this reduction. According to the United States Government Accountability Office report on Disability and Voting Accessibility (2020), there was a substantial reduction in reported voting difficulties among voters with disabilities who voted at in-person polling locations: 30%-18%. “While the drop in reported difficulties is obviously good news, it is nonetheless noteworthy that the overall rate of difficulties for voters with disabilities in 2020 is almost twice the rate for voters without disabilities (11% compared to 6%)” (U.S. GAO, 2020).

Another positive development in this area is increased voting by mail. “Voting by mail can be an attractive alternative for many people with mobility impairments or other transportation difficulties and is about twice as high among voters with disabilities” (Schur et al., 2017, p. 1375). The GAO report of Disability and Voting Accessibility (2020) shows a major swing in the popularity of voting by mail in the 2020 election.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Throughout this thesis, a number of concepts will be defined, and several will appear as acronyms.

Cohort: A group of people, often in a research study, who are studied over a period of time.

Usually, these people share some sort of characteristic that makes them worthy of study.

U.S. GAO: The General Accounting Office of the United States is an organization within the legislative branch that studies and audits government programs. By monitoring the performance of government programs and agencies they can reduce expenditures and improve the efficiency of these programs.

EBSCO: A collection of databases containing scholarly articles and journals.

ERIC: The Education Resources Information Center is a database of scholarly papers pertaining specifically to education.

Transition Program: An educational program directly following high school that works with students with disabilities ages 18-21. Transition programs are designed to prepare students with disabilities and their families for adulthood. This training typically includes budgeting, life skills, vocational training, continuing education, and leisure/recreation activities.

Collective action: When a group of people work together to accomplish a task, often but not necessarily political.

NLTS-2: The National Longitudinal Transition Study - 2 was created to provide more information about students receiving special education services. The researchers who developed

this study sought to understand the achievements of students with disabilities in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. The findings regarding social studies are particularly relevant to this literature review.

NLTS Wave 1 and Wave 2: The NLTS-2 is a longitudinal study, meaning it collects data over time - from two data points. This was done in order to study changes in the population of students with disabilities over time and to compare these results with previous groups of students with disabilities and the general population in order to better understand how these former students experience adulthood.

DVS: The Disability and Voting Survey was created by researchers Lisa Schur, Mason Ameri, and Meera Adya to ask voting-age Americans about whether they identify as disabled and, if they do, how it affects major life activities, including voting.

VRS: The Voting Research Supplement is a form included in the Current Population Survey (CPS). While the CPS is used to collect employment-related information, the VRS is used to identify disability status.

WJ III: An acronym referring to the third edition of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities. These tests describe a test taker's cognitive abilities by screening a number of specific abilities such as auditory processing and processing speed, among others. The latest edition of this test, the WJ-IV, was published in 2014.

SWD: An acronym for Students With Disabilities. Commonly used in research, legislature, and pedagogy.

LD: Learning Disabilities. This is a broad range of disabilities that affect one's ability to learn and process information. Examples of well-known disabilities in this category include but are by no means limited to dyslexia (affects reading), dysgraphia (affects writing), and dyscalculia (affects the performance of mathematical calculations).

ELA: An acronym for English Language Arts. This is an academic subject that includes literacy skills such as but not limited to reading, writing and public speaking.

IDEA mandates: Provisions of the IDEA Act regarding the education of students with disabilities. One such mandate is that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

CoPD: The Co-Teaching Professional Development Approach is a strategy that educators can implement to respond to behavioral issues fairly in order to make the gen-ed classroom more inclusive to all students.

NAEP: The National Assessment of Educational Progress is a vast multi-domain assessment created by the National Center for Education Statistics, an organization within the Department of Education, that monitors the performance of students nationwide in a variety of subjects. The information gathered in the NAEP informs government policy in education.

PACT: Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text is a teaching strategy that focuses on content acquisition using text and discussions around the text.

CSR: Collaborative Strategic Reading is an intervention that targets reading comprehension. CSR focuses on providing students with reading techniques they can apply before, during, and after reading.

TBL: Team-Based Learning is an instructional tool that is used to prompt students to engage in classroom discussions about complex, abstract concepts from multiple perspectives.

CBI: Concept-Based Instruction is a strategy that educators use to make expository texts more accessible to students with disabilities who are participating in gen-ed social studies classes. CBI helps students to organize the information they encounter in expository texts.

SFA: Semantic Feature Analysis is a reading strategy that makes use of graphic organizers so that students can better understand how course concepts are related to one another.

UDL: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a paradigm for teaching that involves providing flexible learning opportunities for students that takes advantage of the unique strengths and abilities of all students.

Thesis Question

The guiding research question for this thesis is:

How can teachers of students with disabilities improve teaching strategies and interventions in middle/high school social studies to better prepare students for full participation in the civic and political process?

- I. Overview of disability and political participation
 - A. A definition of disability
 - B. Voting participation and its challenges
 - C. Voting discrimination
- II. Overview of the NTLs 2

- A. NLTS 2 Structure
 - B. NLTS 2 Data sources
 - C. NLTS 2 Social Studies Results
 - D. NLTS 2 Findings
 - E. NTLs 2 Wave 2 Summary
 - a. Academic performance
 - b. Independence and political participation
- III. Social studies instructional strategies and interventions
- A. State standards
 - B. Co-teaching Considerations
 - C. Behavioral Issues and SWD; Impact of Cooperative Teaching Models (CoPD)
 - D. Teacher content knowledge and pedagogy
 - E. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
 - F. PACT
 - G. PACT Intervention Study Results
 - H. CSR
 - I. Interventions which aid text reading
 - J. Team-Based Learning (TBL)
 - K. Concept-based instruction

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Process

The scholarly articles used in this thesis were obtained from Bethel University's digital library of academic search engines including: EBSCO, ERIC, and Academic Search Premier. This researcher searched for articles containing combinations of the following terms: students with disabilities, cognitive disability, politics, political participation, civic participation, voting, social studies, political science, civics, and reading comprehension. Of particular interest to civic participation were trends that appeared in the 2020, 2016, and 2012 election cycles and the corresponding midterm elections (2010-2020). Special attention was paid to the most recent research that had bearing on the research topic. The focus was mainly U.S. based research, but the literature review includes studies from Europe and the United Kingdom as well.

DISABILITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: TO WHAT EXTENT DO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS?

Definition of Disability

Nearly fifteen percent of the world's population has some type of disability (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016). Mattila and Papageorgiou (2016) noted that disability is hard to define and that the term disability is often used to refer to a lack of ability or characteristic. However, this definition fails to capture the interplay between a medical condition and societal treatment. This has given rise to the social definition of disability. "In other words, disability is a social construction that translates a health condition into a social pathology that may constrain persons from functioning effectively in their society" (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016, p. 506).

Discrimination against individuals with disabilities can have a substantial impact on the level of political participation of these individuals (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016). These researchers examined the relationship between discrimination and its effect on the collective action, or political participation, among people with disabilities. Mattila and Papageorgiou (2016) studied how collective action is influenced at the individual-level perspective using Olson's theory of collective action. Olson's theory emphasizes that individuals participate in collective action in order to obtain selective benefits (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016). People with disabilities are more likely to participate in group action when they are able to take part in a specific, meaningful agenda (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016). For this reason, Mattila and Papageorgiou (2016) hypothesized that voting is a less common form of political action among people with disabilities. Elections are rarely an opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in political action that pertains to their key interests or collective agenda (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016).

Voting Participation and Its Challenges

Mattila and Papageorgiou (2016) used data from the European Social Survey to gauge how people with disabilities participate in three areas: voting, contacting politicians or government officials, and participating in lawful demonstrations. The results of this survey indicated that disability-based discrimination decreases voter turnout but may actually encourage other forms of political participation, such as contacting politicians and lawful protest (Mattila & Papageorgiou, 2016). These results highlight the importance of group efficacy in driving political action. The researchers asserted that in order to increase political participation among people with disabilities, there must be a movement to make voting more accessible.

Levels of political participation can vary substantially across a wide variety of cohorts. A cohort is a group of same-age individuals. Broadly speaking, among those without disabilities, older cohorts participate in the political process more than younger cohorts. “Almost two-thirds of youth with disabilities who are 18 or older are registered to vote, a rate similar to that for the general population of youth (approximately 60 percent, Lopez and Kirby 2003)” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 10). The reason for this difference in political activity is hotly debated. There are three hypotheses that attempt to explain this phenomenon: the life-experience hypothesis, the life-cycle hypothesis, and the generational hypothesis. The life-experience hypothesis involves how resource acquisition affects political socialization. “The life-cycle hypothesis contends that young citizens are less likely to become active in political life because they lack the community involvement necessary to believe that politics and community are important arenas” (Schur et al., 2005, p. 487). Proponents of the generational hypothesis argued that political socialization happens differently among every cohort, changing political participation accordingly.

These explanations of political socialization provide insight into how discrimination hindered the political participation of individuals with disabilities. Schur et al. (2005) study explored how younger people with disabilities have levels of political participation similar to same-age non-disabled peers. This finding stands in stark contrast to the political participation of older generations of people with disabilities. The researchers analyzed data from two national random-household telephone surveys following elections in 1998 and 2000 (Schur et al., 2005). The surveys included questions on topics such as civic skills and disability discrimination. The findings revealed that this gap in political participation is significant. Older people with disabilities are less likely to attend group meetings, religious services, or be employed. Those who are employed or active in groups say that they are less likely to participate in civic skill-

enhancing activities in these environments. While dismaying, this gap is expected. When separated by age, one can see profound generational differences in political participation. Schur et al. (2005) separated the results into the following categories: age 65 and older, ages 40-64, and ages 18-39. People with disabilities above the age of 65 are considerably less likely to participate in political activities when compared to younger people with disabilities.

The researchers place special importance on group involvement's effect on political participation. The researchers assert that the lack of opportunities for group participation explained the impoverished level of participation among this older cohort.

“While children in the 1960s and earlier were often subjected to harsh lessons of segregation and inferiority, children born more recently have been provided increasingly clear messages of inclusion and equality—messages that should be clear to both people with and without disabilities.” (Schur et al., 2005, p. 488)

Since group involvement is a strong predictor of increased political participation, the researchers conclude that the disability gap may decrease as these younger and more politically active cohorts age.

“While people with disabilities have made tremendous political gains over the past few decades, most notably with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, they continue to have lower levels of voter turnout than otherwise similar people without disabilities.” (Schur et al., 2017, p. 1374)

In addition to cohort differences, voting difficulties inconvenience people with disabilities and may also contribute to the difference in voting turnout between them and people

without disabilities (Schur et al., 2017). One such voting difficulty is inaccessible polling places. Schur et al. (2017) noted that inaccessible polling places hinder democratic participation and have an alienating effect. Schur et al. (2017) analyzed the results of two sources to learn about the voting experiences of people with disabilities: the Census Bureau's Voting Research Supplement (VRS) and the Disability and Voting Survey (DVS). The VRS is a set of supplementary questions about disability that was added to a monthly population survey from the Department of Labor. The DVS is a survey created by the researchers in order to collect information about disability, voting experiences, group participation and political efficacy. The DVS collected information relevant to the 2010 and 2012 elections.

“When demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity, marital status, and education) are held constant, the disability gap is 7.3 percentage points and remains highly significant” (Schur et al., 2017, p. 1377). This gap remains significant even when controlling for turnout (Schur et al., 2017). Voting difficulties differ by type of disability. “Not surprisingly, people with mobility impairments were the most likely to report difficulty getting inside the polling place, or difficulty waiting in line” (Schur et al., 2017, p. 1382). Common difficulties, irrespective of disability, are: finding a polling place and securing transportation to a polling place. 8.4% of voters without disabilities report voting difficulties, while 30.1% of voters with disabilities report voting difficulties (Schur et al., 2017). Voting by mail is commonly purported as a solution to voting difficulties for people with disabilities, but this research shows that voting by mail is not a panacea for voting difficulties. Although Schur et al. (2017) found that people with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to vote by mail (28.1% to 17.3%), the most commonly reported difficulty with voting by mail involved difficulties reading the ballots. The researchers agreed that voting difficulties should continue to be tracked and

analyzed. They concluded that voting difficulties depress turnout and alter perceptions of the responsiveness of the political system (Schur et al., 2017).

Social Participation and Voting

“Participation in organized community groups and in volunteer or community service activities also has declined. In Wave 2, 28 percent of out-of-school youth with disabilities belong to organized community groups, and a similar share take part in volunteer activities, down from about 46 percent pursuing each activity in Wave 1” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 10).

In summary, each of these studies examined how people with disabilities participate in the political system. Mattila and Papageorgiou (2016) examined how discrimination affects political participation among people with disabilities. This research team found discrimination decreases voting but that other forms of political participation, such as lawful protest and contacting politicians, may be affected differently by discrimination.

Schur et al. (2005) showed how political participation varies by generational cohort. These researchers found that older voters with disabilities, those aged 65 and above, are less likely to vote than either same-aged peers without disabilities and younger people with disabilities (Schur et al., 2005). Furthermore, the voting gap between the youngest generation of people with disabilities and same-age peers without disabilities has narrowed considerably, and the researchers theorize that the voting gap will continue to narrow as a whole while this cohort ages (Schur et al., 2005).

The final study examined the relationship between voter turnout and voting difficulties among people with disabilities. Schur et al. (2017) confirmed that group participation is a significant predictor of turnout among people with disabilities. This research (Schur et al., 2017) suggested that voting difficulties account for part of this voting gap. Schur et al. (2017) concluded that in order to shrink this voting gap, voting difficulties such as polling place accessibility need to be addressed and that voting by mail is not a solution to these difficulties. In conclusion, this body of research suggests that while there are many barriers to political participation for people with disabilities, there are many positive developments, particularly along the lines of inclusion in education. This research demonstrated the importance of encouraging people with disabilities to participate in collective political action.

To further examine and address the thesis question, the following information is discussed.

OVERVIEW OF THE NLTS2: HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS PREPARED IN SOCIAL STUDIES FOR THEIR ROLES IN THE CIVIC COMMUNITY?

To ultimately identify educational strategies that can build on these positive developments and encourage political participation among people with disabilities, it is important to determine what education is like for students with disabilities, specifically in the area of social studies. One particularly useful tool this researcher utilized to determine the current level of social studies education attainment is the National Longitudinal Transition Study – 2. This is a national study that is funded by the Institute of Educational Sciences, in the Department of Education, in order to provide more information about students who receive special education services (Wagner et al., 2006, p. ix). The researchers of that study sought to

understand the achievements of students with disabilities in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies (Wagner et al., 2006, p. x). While this review will focus on social studies achievements, findings regarding reading comprehension are also important. Additionally, the researchers compared these achievements to the general population of students (Wagner et al., 2006, p. x). Furthermore, the researchers analyzed which factors may correlate with higher academic achievement among students with disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. x).

NLTS2 Structure

The NLTS2 was a ten-year study that collected data on five waves of students from 2001 to 2009 (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 2). The waves were made up of a representational sample of students in line with the demographic makeup of American schools (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 2). Over five hundred school districts participated in the study. 11,276 students who received special education services were eligible to participate in the study (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 2). These students were tested starting in 7th grade (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 2). The NLTS2 utilized five data sources to report academic achievement and functional performance of students with disabilities: direct assessment, functional rating, parent/guardian interviews, school surveys, and school/district identified primary disability category (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 2).

NLTS2 Data Sources

The direct assessment was built from research editions of subtests used in the Woodcock-Johnson III (WJ III). These subtests tested the areas of language arts skills, mathematics abilities, and content knowledge in science and social studies. The assessment was structured this way because the WJ III subtests allow for a comparable comparison with the general population (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 3).

The writers of the NLTS2 used a functional rating for students whose disabilities impacted their ability to follow test instructions or answer questions in a written format (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4). For the functional rating instrument, the researchers utilized the SIB-R. This is a set of behavior scales that measures adaptive behavior in multiple settings. “Its 14 18- to 20-item subtests focus on: motor skills, social interaction and communication skills, personal living skills, and community living skills” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4).

A wide variety of data sources and influences play a role in educational outcomes for students with disabilities. For this reason, the researchers elected to include parent/guardian interviews which identified key information which may play a role in these outcomes. This information includes household characteristics such as socioeconomic status, first appearance of the student’s disability, and family involvement in school-related areas (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4). Parents and guardians were interviewed over the telephone or by mail in Wave 1 and 2. In Wave 2, the students themselves were interviewed as well (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4).

Additionally, data were collected through two surveys. One survey was sent to school officials at each school attended by students taking the NLTS2 to gain general information about the school programs (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 5). Another survey was sent to general education teachers of classes attended by these students (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 5). These surveys were conducted in both waves of the NLTS2. Additionally, information about the primary disability category was collected from school staff in accordance with state law and best practices.

NLTS2 Results in the area of Social Studies

“The research version of the WJ III social studies subtest assesses knowledge of history, geography, government, economics, and other aspects of social studies. Similar to the

science content knowledge subtest, early items require only a pointing response, whereas remaining items require a youth to respond orally to questions read to him or her. Items range in difficulty from early preschool through college” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 16).

Broadly speaking, most youth with disabilities struggle on academic assessments regarding social studies relative to the general population (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 16). Substantially more students with disabilities score below the mean on the social studies assessment than do students without disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 16). Furthermore, only 2 percent of students without disabilities have scores two standard deviations below the mean (“very low”), while 14% to 27% of students with disabilities have scores in this very low range. One aspect of the NLTS-2 that is helpful is how the standard scores are sorted by primary disability type. On the social studies subtest, students with cognitive disabilities have the lowest performance with a mean standard score of 65.1, while students with visual impairments have the highest performance with a standard score of 88.4 (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 18). It may also be helpful to note the scores of students with autism (73.9), deaf-blindness (73.8), and multiple disabilities (67.5) as groups of concern. These distressing findings are perhaps unsurprising as, across schools in America, few hours are spent weekly on social studies instruction (Perie et al., 1997, p. 8). Within the core curriculum (English/Reading/Language Arts, Arithmetic/Mathematics, Social Studies/History, Science), a plurality of time is spent on ELA while social studies instruction is near last, just ahead of science (Perie et al., 1997, p. 9).

NLTS2 Findings

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only seven percent of fourth-grade students with disabilities were proficient in social studies in 2011 (Ciullo, 2015, p.

1). Of their peers without disabilities, 19% were proficient (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1). Students in both general education and special education continue to exhibit the same poor performance when it comes to demonstrating the knowledge of history and social studies. 85% of students with disabilities scored below basic on the social studies component of the national assessment (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1). The majority of students without disabilities also scored below basic (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1).

Clearly, the researchers' findings have several ramifications on social studies instruction for students with disabilities and academic instruction more broadly. The direct assessment regarding academic achievement showed that the academic achievement gap continues to exist. "Scores on the WJ III subtests suggest that many youth with disabilities do not fare nearly as well on these academic assessments as peers in the general population" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 22). There is a huge disparity between academic achievement in core subjects between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 22). Typically, students who test below the general population in one area score below the mean in each area though this is not exclusively the case (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 22).

The NLTS2 report separates results by disability category as well. In almost every category of disability, reading comprehension is among the lowest testing areas. And reading comprehension is usually lower than other reading-related subtests, such as the synonyms/antonyms test (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 47). This has unique ramifications for social studies instruction for students with disabilities in relevant age ranges. Social studies instruction for middle school-aged students increasingly relies much more on expository text use than younger, elementary-aged students.

While there is a significant gap in academic performance between students with and without disabilities, the NLTS2 results showed that a portion of students with disabilities performed above the mean in any or all of the tested areas (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 47). Another favorable finding pertains to the functional living section of the NLTS2. “However, across measures, from 11 percent to 15 percent of youth with disabilities score above the mean for the general population.” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 49)

A number of findings were reported about many disability categories. Youth with learning disabilities and other health disabilities tend to be registered to vote (70%) (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 12). However, recent trends suggest a drastic decline in group participation and volunteering. It is not clear whether this is a durable long-term trend or a short-term decline (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 12).

Employment is the way that most youth with emotional disabilities engage in their communities; more than 6 of 10 are employed following high school, although this number declines significantly over time (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 12). Research results show that a full third of this population does not find a way to connect with others in their communities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 12).

Cognitive disability: This group is among the least likely to engage in their communities. 18- to 20-year-olds with cognitive or multiple disabilities rarely participate in community groups or in volunteer activities. Only 23 to 24 percent join community groups, and only 23 to 29 percent volunteer (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 12).

NLTS2 Wave 2 Summary – Academic Performance

The results of the NLTS2 Wave 2 surveys solidify our understanding of certain phenomena regarding students with disabilities and their experiences in academia and early adulthood. Additionally, these results show points of concern and progress for the future. The major takeaway of this survey is that there is still a significant academic skill gap between students with disabilities and their same-age peers without disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4-6).

Of particular interest are SWD's scores on the passage comprehension portion of the NLTS2. Students with disabilities score significantly lower than students without disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4). Conversely, students with disabilities perform best on the vocabulary section – much higher than on other areas of reading (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 4). To this researcher, this indicates that considerably more focus should be devoted to reading comprehension for students with disabilities. This seems especially true given reading comprehension's centrality in understanding expository texts.

These surveys seem to reinforce the idea that the academic achievement of students with disabilities is related both to their disability and a broad variety of social-environmental factors. As one might expect, disability plays a large role in the academic performance of students with disabilities. This can be best seen by comparing NLTS2 performance across various disability categories. Students whose disabilities affect cognition consistently score lower on academic tests than students with learning disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 5). Students with visual and hearing-related disabilities outscore students with learning disabilities on some, but not all, measures of performance (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 5). Notably, from the Wave 2 summary, “students with hearing impairments score significantly higher than those with learning

disabilities on mathematics calculation but significantly lower on science and social studies content knowledge” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 5).

Disability, while central to this variance in academic performance, does not capture the whole picture. “Multivariate analyses demonstrate that several individual factors differentiate youth based on their academic achievement” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 5). Wagner and her colleagues (2006, p. 5) asserted that these factors are: gender, ethnic background, household income, and higher levels of parental expectations regarding postsecondary enrollment.

Wagner and her colleagues assert that the most substantial of these factors are ethnic background and household income (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 48). These two factors have the most outsized effect on measures of performance. Gender, while also significant, accounts for a smaller difference, about 3-4 standard score points in favor of boys for math performance (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 48). Alone or combined, these three factors can significantly impact performance measures.

NLTS2 Wave 2 Summary – Independence and Political Participation

The second wave of the NLTS2 survey and interviews provide us with a picture of what life is like post-high school for people with disabilities. Students with cognitive disabilities have higher school completion rates than students with emotional behavioral disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 7). Completion rates are highest for students with visual/hearing-related disabilities (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 7). These school completion rates are important because they greatly affect adulthood.

School completers are much more likely than dropouts with disabilities to be gainfully employed, go on to post-secondary school, and take part in job training (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 10). School completers are more likely to own a driver's license and less likely to spend a night in jail (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 10). Many more out-of-school youth with disabilities have their driver's licenses compared to previous generations (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 9). According to the NLTS2 Wave 2 results, school completers with disabilities are more likely than dropouts with disabilities to be registered to vote.

However, adults with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to be enrolled in post-secondary education (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 8). "Youth in the general population are about four and one-half times as likely as youth with disabilities to be currently taking courses in 4-year colleges" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 8). Students with only visual/hearing impairments are more likely than students with other kinds of disabilities to go on to post-secondary education (Wagner et al., 2006, 8). This is similar to how students with only visual/hearing disabilities are more likely than students with other kinds of disabilities to complete school in the first place. Though students with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to go on to college, about half of students with disabilities who do go on to college do not consider themselves to have a disability (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 8).

Another area of interest in the NLTS-2 survey results is employment. Out-of-school youth with disabilities are less likely than their peers without disabilities to be employed after high school (40% vs. 63% respectively) (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 8). Notably, there has been a shift in the type of work performed. Girls with disabilities are less likely to work in personal care jobs than in the past (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 9). Boys with disabilities have entered vocational trades in larger numbers than in the past (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 9).

Generally, out-of-school youth with disabilities report positive feelings about employment. “Four in 10 say they like their current job or liked their most recent job ‘very much,’ three-fourths believe their current or most recent job has put their education to good use and that they are well paid, and two-thirds believe they have opportunities for advancement” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 9). One particularly favorable finding is that out-of-school youth with disabilities are much more likely to make more than the minimum wage and to work more hours as well (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 9). One final finding of interest is that of those who are employed, eighty-four percent report that their employers are unaware of any disability (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 9). Again, it is unclear from the research why this might be. An area for further research might disclose whether out-of-school youth with disabilities refuse to notify either their post-secondary schools or their employers due to concerns about discrimination.

SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: HOW CAN TEACHERS BETTER PREPARE THEIR STUDENTS FOR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES?

Many students with disabilities have low high school completion rates. This has many ramifications for the education of these students. Social studies instruction should: start earlier, be more comprehensive, and be more accessible to SWD who often have difficulty interacting with text-intensive expository text-focused learning. Social studies instruction often gets crowded out at the expense of math and reading instruction for SWD.

State Standard

State standards for social studies provide an important frame of reference for social studies teachers and special educator co-teachers. Educators should use these standards to select topics that are appropriate for their students. Then, educators should use reading standards in

order to facilitate ELA learning related to these historical topics. “Mrs. James and Mr. Acosta found that determining main ideas, summarizing, and comparing and contrasting were all grade-level state standards for fifth grade” (Ciullo, 2015, p. 2). The proactive use of these standards in designing lessons and interventions helps integrate reading comprehension into social studies classrooms – helping students understand texts and more complex topics.

Co-Teaching Considerations

To provide skilled support for students with disabilities, teachers and co-teachers may employ co-teaching to coordinate with each other to cover areas they have expertise in during classroom interventions. “For example, one teacher may have expertise with teaching writing, whereas the other teacher is very knowledgeable about comprehension strategies” (Ciullo, 2015, p. 2). Furthermore, teachers should consider ability-based grouping to target instruction for students who need direct support with reading/writing (Ciullo, 2015, p. 2).

Behavioral Issues and SWD; Impact of Cooperative Teaching Models (CoPD)

It is well known that educators have a high burnout rate compared to other professions (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 1). The primary reason cited for teachers that leave the profession is dealing with classroom discipline (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 1). Teachers often have more than adequate content knowledge/skill but find themselves overwhelmed by behavioral issues they are not trained to resolve (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 1). Another feature of teaching that confounds this burnout rate regarding behavioral issues is that preexisting forms of professional development are insufficient for teaching teachers to resolve behavioral issues. CoPD can allow for more constructive content delivery to SWD in a general education social studies classroom.

Behavioral issues are an enormous challenge for educators. Many teachers believe they will spend most of their time teaching content knowledge only to find that they are preoccupied with resolving behavioral issues. Behavioral issues place unique and stressful demands on educators. Another factor that adds to these demands is the increased presence of students with disabilities in general education classes, as these students may have unique behavioral needs that pose difficulties for general education teachers and may require the skilled assistance of a special education teacher. Increased pedagogical knowledge can help to meet the needs of general education teachers who work with classrooms that are becoming more inclusive.

According to legislation, students with disabilities deserve to be educated in the least restrictive environment. Additionally, they must participate in the general education curriculum and environment as often as they are able. The increased presence of students with a variety of disabilities in the general education classroom poses many challenges for teachers. These challenges are amplified by the varied levels of implementation of IDEA mandates across school districts. This patchwork implementation of IDEA mandates can lead to conflicts between educators, administrators, and parents that are difficult and confusing to resolve. Co-teaching can ameliorate and minimize these conflicts (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 4).

General education teachers and special education teachers alike receive little training to resolve behavioral issues. Behavioral issues can monopolize class time, cause burnout among educators, and worsen educational outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Fortunately, the Co-Teaching Professional Development Approach (CoPD) is a strategy that educators can implement in order to respond to behavioral issues fairly in such a manner as to make the general education classroom more inclusive to all students. CoPD can deal with tough behavioral issues that impact learning for SWD in a general education environment.

General education teachers understand that they need additional training and pedagogical knowledge to teach students but lament the fact that available forms of professional development do not meet these needs (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 3). Pre-existing opportunities for professional development often consist only of several hours of training with little opportunity for questions and feedback (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 3). For this reason, practicing teachers benefit from seeking other avenues for professional development, particularly mentoring from peer teachers that may be found in co-taught classrooms.

A co-teaching approach for content delivery can synthesize the knowledge and abilities of both general education teachers and special education teachers to best serve students with disabilities in the general education classroom. In addition to CoPD, teachers of inclusive classrooms may also benefit from the use of a strategy called embedded professional development (EPD). EPD refers to a collection of formal and informal learning opportunities for teachers that occur throughout the workday (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 3). The learning opportunities consist of collaborative discussions and moments of mentoring that provide professional development for teachers that they would not receive otherwise regarding resolving behavioral issues (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 3). During these learning opportunities, teachers can provide each other with pedagogical knowledge that can aid in teaching students with behavioral, cognitive, and learning-related disabilities. Co-teachers can utilize EPD in order to teach inclusive classrooms and further knowledge of appropriate behavioral intervention strategies (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 3). These classrooms may be both academically and behaviorally diverse (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 3).

Several important findings regarding CoPD and EPD from Thomas-Brown and Sepetys' research provided further guidance as to the implementation of co-taught classrooms. First,

teamwork between co-teachers is absolutely critical to the successful implementation of CoPD (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 9). There needs to be frequent and clear communication between co-teachers. This communication is essential in order to transmit content knowledge from general education teacher to special education teacher (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 9). Likewise, it is essential to transmit behavioral knowledge from special education teacher to general education teacher (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 9). Second, classroom time is increasingly hegemonized or dominated by standardized test taking. The takeover of standardized test taking leads to fewer teachable moments during classroom learning (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 9). This problem is felt strongly by teachers of social studies classrooms. Third, the successful implementation of CoPD is greatly influenced by the personality of the co-teachers. Co-teachers who are open-minded about the process and are willing to share their classroom and find value in peer mentoring are best able to succeed (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 9). Fourth, co-teaching, while increasingly popular, is not predominant, so it may rely on foreign skills for both general and special education teachers (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 9). Fortunately, these skills are stressed and elaborated on by several features of the CoPD model.

The structure of CoPD involves clear expectations of each co-teacher and their students. Before the school year begins, co-teachers should discuss how best to run their classroom. As mentioned prior, co-teachers should be open-minded. They should collaborate closely on goal setting, curriculum usage, and the sharing of teaching techniques (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 7). Before classes start, co-teachers should review resources, such as texts and lesson materials, and create a basic plan for the semester (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 7).

Another important feature of CoPD is setting clear expectations for classroom behavior. Specifically, who will handle which task? This is a practical question of the utmost importance. Co-teachers will want to determine how responsibilities will be shared, who will perform basic classroom functions, how will assessments be carried out, and how will they be graded?

Generally, these questions are informed by the special education teacher's understanding of behavioral interventions and accommodations and the general education teacher's understanding of content knowledge and pedagogical delivery. Responsibilities should be distributed in accordance with the skills and knowledge of the co-teachers. Co-teachers should establish a time during the day to review how lessons went and how these observations should change future lessons. Good co-teachers monitor the performance of themselves and their students (Thomas-Brown & Sepetys, 2011, p. 8). Additionally, good co-teachers should show an appreciation for each other's contributions and seek to provide instruction on topics that would otherwise be overlooked or insufficiently covered in professional development sessions.

One important duty of the general education teacher, co-teacher or otherwise, is subject matter knowledge. Subject matter knowledge uniquely intersects with reading instruction. These general education co-teachers can utilize disciplinary literacy techniques to improve reading comprehension for all students in inclusive classrooms (Dobbs et al., 2016, p. 8). Students may need additional practice with reading comprehension strategies in order to better develop disciplinary literacy (Dobbs et al., 2016, p. 3-4).

Teacher Content Knowledge and Pedagogy

Content acquisition can be difficult for students with disabilities, especially during social studies classes, because of the use of expository texts, abstract concepts and jargon (Rice, 2016,

p. 1). Expository texts in social studies classes pose a challenge as these texts are often above the reading level of SWD, SWD may lack essential background information, and the text is organized in an unfamiliar manner (Rice, 2016, p. 1). As students progress past grade 3, their classes become more challenging – particularly their social studies classes (Rice, 2016, p. 1). In large part this is because of the increased reliance on expository texts to communicate more abstract ideas (Rice, 2016, p. 1). Educators can enhance the learning process by more effectively communicating complex content-area knowledge to students with disabilities.

Certain features of expository text inhibit reading comprehension for SWDs. One such feature is that expository texts, in this case textbooks, are organized differently from texts that SWDs had encountered previously (Rice, 2016, p. 38). Students who can understand the organizational patterns of textbooks are better able to comprehend what they read in these general education classes (Rice, page 39, 2016). “When teachers help students to learn complex text structures such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution, all students learn deeper levels of comprehension” (Rice, 2016, p. 41).

Wherever possible, teachers should relate confusing or abstract concepts to concrete and familiar examples from everyday life (Rice, 2016, p. 41). Graphic organizers are particularly useful in illustrating these conceptual relationships and activating background knowledge that can enhance learning for these students. Graphic organizers can be used to help students compare and contrast concepts, group concepts by certain features, order information, and provide visual representations of information using graphs, charts, and maps (Rice, 2016, p. 42).

Existing research indicates that SWDs perform better when they participate in student-directed learning activities (Rice, 2016, p. 28). Additionally, this research suggests that

cooperative learning activities in lessons strongly benefits SWDs (Rice, 2016, p. 28). One of the most important takeaways of this research suggests that SWDs learn best from explicit instruction. Thus, teachers should build explicit instruction into every stage (before, during, after) each lesson (Rice, 2016, p. 29).

Researchers have made several recommendations to support SWDs in reading expository text in social studies classes. First, teachers should make written instructions easier to understand (Rice, 2016, p. 30). Teachers can do this by reducing the amount of directions and underlining or highlighting essential passages and words (Rice, 2016, p. 30). Second, instead of lengthy assignments, assignments should be broken down into smaller chunks (Rice, 2016, p. 30). This can lower anxiety about academic work (Rice, 2016, p. 30). This also promotes assignment completion. Furthermore, teachers can differentiate the amount of work specifically for students who struggle with assignment completion, such as having students only answer some of the questions on a quiz or worksheet (Rice, 2016, p. 30). Third, there should be many opportunities for SWDs to practice academic skills during lessons (Rice, 2016, p. 30). By no means must this consist of rote learning; teachers should utilize a variety of activities, including peer learning, computer activities, and games (Rice, 2016, p. 30). Peer tutors are a powerful means of assistance for SWDs because peer tutors help SWDs feel more at home in the general education setting and help them understand and perform academic tasks (Rice, 2016, p. 36). Additionally, teachers can make use of embedded instruction to teach skills even during different subjects when relevant.

When designing lessons for inclusive classrooms, teachers should always write a clear objective for what they want their students to learn. This objective should be known to the students and can clarify what students should be looking for during the upcoming lectures,

readings, and activities. Of particular use to educators and students is the use of a graphic organizer. Graphic organizers can help students organize thoughts at any point in the lesson, keep the purpose of the lesson in mind throughout, draw out background knowledge to activate learning, and aid in reading comprehension (Rice, 2016, p. 32). Background knowledge plays a key role in helping students with and without disabilities to learn about any given topic, but this background knowledge must be activated. This can be done with a graphic organizer, but it can also be supported with an attention-grabbing activity. In addition to graphic organizers, teachers should display/present samples of completed work so that students can have some idea of what they will need to work towards (Rice, 2016, p. 36).

Teachers should ask questions of their students, with some frequency, in order to model the process of asking good questions. These questions can draw out background knowledge and help teachers scaffold instruction so students can learn in the zone of proximal development (Rice, 2016, p. 33). Background knowledge helps students develop a deeper understanding of both literary texts and texts in other disciplines such as social studies (Lee & Spratley, 2010, p. 10). Teachers should move about the classroom and provide targeted feedback to students. Scaffolded instruction and graphic organizers can be used to explain relationships between ideas encountered during the lesson (Rice, 2016, p. 33). Teachers should be mindful of the fine motor skills of their students for accommodations as well. For this reason, teachers should allow more room on written assignments and quizzes. Additionally, teachers can allow for the use of draw erase boards. Where it makes sense, teachers can include activities that are multiple choice, involve sorting pictures/items, and cutting and pasting responses on worksheets.

Another tool that can be used is mnemonic devices. Mnemonic devices can help students remember key ideas and vocabulary words by leveraging the unique properties of memory (Rice,

2016, p. 34). Teachers should recognize that every student is a unique individual and may benefit from any variety of learning devices/strategies (Rice, 2016, p. 34). When planning lessons, teachers should consider including a variety of response modes. Most importantly, all tools used by teachers should be explicitly taught and modeled to students. Teachers should provide multiple means of contributing to class and demonstrating content knowledge. Opportunities for practice should be frequent. Teachers provide examples of completed work. Teachers should use graphic organizers to help students activate background knowledge, organize thoughts, record important information, and understand connections between ideas.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

American classrooms are becoming more diverse by every metric. Students with disabilities are much more likely to participate in the general education environment than in the past. For this reason, teachers must be able to present an inclusive classroom with lessons and accommodations that can meet the needs of all students. This is a comprehensive challenge for teachers. According to the IRIS Center Module on UDL, UDL is “a research-based framework for teachers to incorporate flexible materials, techniques, and strategies for delivering instruction and for students to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways” (IRIS Center UDL, 2009, p. 1). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a paradigm for teaching that involves providing flexible learning opportunities for students that takes advantage of the unique strengths and abilities of all students. By providing multiple ways of demonstrating content knowledge, teachers can make their classrooms more inclusive and enable the success of students with disabilities. Additionally, in UDL-designed classes, teachers utilize multiple forms of media to present content to their students. This takes advantage of the reality that not all students are best served by expository text. To best present information in UDL-designed lessons, teachers

consider how best to engage each learning modality. In short, they must consider visual learners, auditory learners, tactile learners, and kinesthetic learners. This poses an interesting conundrum for social studies teachers. The choice of whether or not to use a certain type of source or media is a fraught issue. While primary source documents are prized over secondary sources, all sources are constructed by individuals who have any number of biases or intentions (Lee & Spratley, 2010, p. 6-7). A skilled reader seeks to understand the author's point of view and how these sources may be constructed with a purpose.

However, students may not readily engage with social studies texts but may seek information elsewhere. One place they might seek out this information is through pop culture texts (Hall, 2011, p. 3). These sources of information play a role in the intellectual development of students, so their use and interpretation must be considered. Naturally, these sources are host to many biases as with primary sources, but teachers may still want to use pop culture texts to drive interest and drive engagement among students who have visual modalities of learning. It should be known that students use these texts in classroom discussions to support or deny their own interpretations of historical events (Hall, 2011, p. 6-7). Teachers must encourage their students to think critically about the information in pop culture sources and how it is presented. Teachers should be mindful of the sources they include in their classrooms to avoid propagating misinformation and harmful ideas. There is a clear need for engaging and relevant forms of academic media to serve inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, UDL mandates that students play a more active role in their learning based on personal strengths and interests. Leveraging these personal preferences is key to the successful implementation of UDL. For instance, students in adapted math classes often perform a great deal of math activities related to money. This is for several reasons. Using money to make payments is fundamental to daily life so parents and

teachers want students to practice these skills. However, another reason is that this is a self-motivating task for these students. Students understand the authentic value of knowing how to manage their money. This personal investment, or engagement, in a math-related activity fosters learning. A full digression on the merits of UDL is outside the scope of this thesis. However, any teacher who is interested in making a more inclusive classroom (particularly one that is suited to the needs of students with disabilities) should avail themselves of the literature related to this topic.

PACT

Reading Comprehension is essential to social studies learning. Though many students without disabilities struggle with reading skills, many more students with disabilities score below the basic level on national reading tests like the NAEP (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 1). Current methods fail to meet the needs of these students, but researchers have developed two promising means of improving content acquisition and reading comprehension. These are evidence-based methods that have been tested extensively in general education classrooms for students with and without disabilities (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 4). Additionally, both methods make use of cooperative learning opportunities. These methods have been tested in inclusive settings and they can be adjusted to fit many educational needs. Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text (PACT) is a method of teaching that focuses on content acquisition using text and discussions around the text (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 2). It makes substantial use of collaborative, team-based learning, as well as self-monitoring strategies.

Students with disabilities face many barriers to active participation in general education social studies classrooms. One such barrier is the lack of strong reading skills. Educators should

cross-teach strategies that help to build strong reading skills such as: pre-reading, background knowledge, and review/self-monitoring strategies. Reading comprehension is important for educators of students with disabilities because it is key to understanding the expository texts used in general education classes like social studies and science. The skills and techniques which enable this reading comprehension can be harnessed through a validated intervention called Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text (PACT).

Another barrier faced by students with disabilities is the lack of specific content knowledge in the subjects they are studying such as social studies and science. In fact, PACT instruction primarily aids in the acquisition of content knowledge though it benefits other areas as well (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 1). These barriers are especially important for the target of this research – middle school aged students with disabilities. PACT can be a powerful tool for supporting SWD in general education social studies classes, but there are some questions around its use.

Wanzek and her fellow researchers were interested in two particular questions regarding PACT instruction. Firstly, “Are there differences in treatment effect on social studies knowledge acquisition or content reading comprehension based on class initial background knowledge in the content?” (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 4). Secondly, “Are there differences in treatment effect on social studies knowledge acquisition or content reading comprehension based on class initial reading achievement?” (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 4). Broadly speaking, the researchers were interested in how pre-existing levels of background knowledge and reading comprehension influenced the efficacy of PACT interventions.

To study these questions, the researchers observed 8th-grade social studies classrooms during the implementation of three PACT units (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 5). These classes either met daily for 50 to 55-minute sessions or every other day for 90-minute sessions (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 5). As with the research study on TBL, teachers were provided with a one-day training (eight hours) on PACT implementation (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 5).

In order to implement PACT interventions with fidelity, teachers must embed these five components in their lessons: comprehension canopy, essential words, knowledge acquisition through text reading, team-based learning comprehension checks, and team-based learning knowledge application (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 5). The comprehension canopy serves as a far-ranging overview of the main ideas contained in the upcoming thematic unit (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 5). The comprehension canopy contains questions that direct upcoming learning towards topics of interest and usually has some sort of engaging video or activity. During each lesson in a PACT unit students will review the main ideas presented in the comprehension canopy in order to focus their learning.

Another important feature of PACT interventions is essential words. These are “four or five high-utility, high-frequency concepts related to the content and the comprehension questions” (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 5). Educators provide the students with essential word logs to record observations and connections between the essential words and course concepts. Another key feature of PACT interventions is knowledge acquisition through text reading. Students spend at least 20 minutes per lesson reading texts related to course content during a PACT unit. Reading sessions need not be individual only, they can include partners, small groups, and large groups (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 6). Educators monitor these reading sessions and develop questions that can facilitate classroom discussion.

The fourth feature of PACT interventions is team-based learning comprehension checks. “The checks consisted of five multiple-choice questions and one open-ended writing question” (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 6). Checks are completed individually and then together with the rest of their assigned group. Notes and texts are allowed, and students are encouraged to collaborate to reach a consensus answer (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 6). Educators monitor progress and prompt students to rely on their texts and experiences from previous PACT lessons. The fifth feature of PACT interventions is team-based knowledge application. This is an activity, which happens on the second to last day of the unit, where students apply their learning to a “complex historical question that related directly to the comprehension canopy question that they had been discussing throughout the unit” (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 6).

The results of using PACT pre-instruction were promising. While there was still a performance gap between students with and without disabilities, students with disabilities clearly benefited from PACT intervention (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 15). Additionally, students in general education classes benefit from PACT interventions whether or not they have high or low levels of background knowledge and reading comprehension (Wanzek et al., 2018, p. 15).

PACT Intervention Study Results

To successfully learn in subjects utilizing expository text to deliver content knowledge, students need both social studies knowledge and reading skills to participate more fully in their classes. For this reason, it makes sense to integrate reading comprehension interventions into social studies lessons. This integration is especially important for students with disabilities, as many such students have underdeveloped literacy skills (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 2). One effective tool for improving these skills is PACT intervention.

“Improving Reading Comprehension and Social Studies Knowledge Among Middle School Students with Disabilities” is a research paper that demonstrated the value of integrating PACT interventions into general education social studies lessons for students with and without disabilities. These researchers performed two randomized trials to determine the efficacy of using PACT interventions in this manner. These treatment lessons were performed for 6 to 10 weeks. The treatment lessons used by teachers in this study included the key features of PACT (essential words, knowledge acquisition, team-based learning, warm-ups, and comprehension canopy), while two randomized control groups consisted of typical practice instruction for an eighth-grade social studies class (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 5).

“As hypothesized, students with disabilities who participated in general education social studies instruction implemented using PACT practices demonstrated significantly higher content knowledge than students with disabilities who participated in typical-practice general education social studies instruction” (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 14). In addition to this higher level of content knowledge, students with disabilities who participated in the treatment group made significant progress in building literacy in grade-appropriate content areas (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 14). These findings were promising for using PACT intervention in general education classes with mixed groups of students (with and without disabilities). Results were particularly promising for improving the learning for students with disabilities, in general education social studies classrooms, in the areas of content acquisition and reading comprehension (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 14). However, this improvement did not make up for the difference between students with disabilities and students without disabilities, and there is a clear need for special education services to continue to support these students in their learning (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 14).

CSR

The second method is Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). While PACT focuses on content acquisition, CSR focuses on reading comprehension. CSR teaches pupils many reading techniques that can be used before, during, and after reading classroom material (Capin & Vaughn, 2017, p. 2). Similar to PACT, CSR can use collaborative learning (Capin & Vaughn, 2017, p. 10). CSR was originally created to strengthen the reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities specifically. However, it has been found to be effective among both low and high-competency readers (Capin & Vaughn, 2017, p. 6). “There is strong theoretical and empirical support for CSR” (Capin & Vaughn, 2017, p. 6). CSR has been studied extensively in a wide variety of diverse classrooms and learner backgrounds. One added benefit is that CSR employs reciprocal teaching to increase the participation of students with learning disabilities or limited English proficiency (LEP). Such students may be reluctant to participate otherwise (Klingner et al., 1998, p. 18). This is especially important as diverse classrooms may have students that are both English learners and have learning disabilities. Additionally, CSR benefits both students who natively speak English and English language learners, further cementing its value in heterogeneous classrooms (Vaughn et al., 2009, p. 4).

CSR has several elements which differentiate it from PACT beyond the focus on reading comprehension. CSR places an emphasis on reading comprehension strategies that can be used before reading a text by previewing texts that are used in lessons. A short preview, approximately 2-3 minutes, is used to aid in the construction of background knowledge. This is useful for both struggling readers and students with learning disabilities who may lack background knowledge in a given content area. When explaining the preview process to students, it may be helpful to compare it to watching trailers before a movie they want to see

(Bremer et al., 2002, p. 3). When one watches a trailer for a movie, they intuit a number of things about the movie, such as the genre and the setting. They may be curious to learn how certain events unfold in the movie after seeing them in the trailer, and they may feel some tension about upcoming events. This is similar to how the preview process is used in CSR. Students are instructed to skim the expository text and to make predictions about what they will read about from information such as the title, pictures, subheadings, captions, and frequently seen words (Bremer et al., 2002, p. 3). The preview phase of CSR allows students to connect what they will learn in the current lesson to previous lessons. Then, they will use this new background knowledge to predict upcoming learning activities and determine a purpose for learning (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 7).

Another important element of CSR is reading comprehension strategies used during reading. One such strategy is Click and Clunk. Something that “clicks” are concepts that are intuitively understood, while “clunks” are concepts that do not make sense (Capin and Vaugh, 2017, p. 8). Students are asked to self-monitor for clicks and clunks during classroom reading. Then, the student uses one of four “fix-up” strategies to turn the clunk into a click. Fix-up strategies involve rereading the passage for key ideas, looking for clues, examining prefixes/suffixes/roots of the clunk word, and looking for cognates (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 8).

Another “during-reading” strategy is Get the Gist (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 8). In this strategy, students find and record the main idea of a passage or text. Then, they restate this main idea in their own words. Educators can modify how often students must find a main idea (e.g., once per paragraph, once per page, once per passage, etc.). After the student has restated the main idea, then they must explain what the passage is about and the most important piece of information related to the main idea. Educators often model this process aloud to help students

understand what text features are important (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 8). Get the Gist supports reading comprehension by “helping students with LD identify key details and main ideas” (Ciullo, 2015, p. 3). Additionally, there are frequent opportunities for guided practice in using this strategy. This is a three-step strategy. Students begin by identifying the most important “who/what” in a text. Then, they identify two or three details about the subject chosen in the previous step. Last, they summarize that information into the main idea sentence. The researcher estimates that this process can be taught in roughly two to three weeks.

Lastly, there is an “after-reading” strategy. This after-reading strategy is called Wrap-Up. This strategy aims to improve reading comprehension by having students ask and answer good questions, which will further their understanding of the ideas contained within the text (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 9). It can be hard for students to ask good questions (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 9). So, this is another area where educators should model this process (Capin and Vaugh, 2017, p. 9). Students may have questions that can be answered outright in the text, can be answered by referring to multiple spots in the text, or through the aid or background knowledge and the text. (Capin & Vaugh, 2017, p. 9).

Teachers may consider introducing learning logs to help students keep track of concepts they have learned from their readings (IRIS Center CSR, 2008, p. 11). Teachers and students can refer back to the learning logs as study guides for tests and just to refresh their memory after a long weekend. Another tool teachers may consider using is timers. If necessary, teachers can use timers to minimize off-task behavior and keep students from getting tunnel vision on any one area (IRIS Center CSR, 2008, p. 11).

Interventions which aid expository text reading

Students with disabilities will benefit greatly from playing a more active role in representative democracy as adults. In order to play a meaningful role in our political system, they would benefit from having a more in-depth understanding of the political system. This includes exposure to topics such as the role of voting (and how to), the role of each branch of government, civil rights legislation, and much more. This places demands on student literacy. Students with disabilities need to be able to engage with text-heavy subjects. This necessitates the introduction of curricula and methods which improve literacy skills like reading comprehension, writing, and content acquisition. Furthermore, educational demands continue for individual students to learn these abilities.

As students age up, they encounter activities requiring them to read and cite expository texts (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 2). Students need to be able to identify main ideas, use evidence to support reasoning, identify word definitions through context clues, and distinguish between fact and opinion (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 2). Students need to participate actively in classroom discussions and when exploring text in order to build these skills (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 2).

Discussions of expository texts are aided by using texts with a clear structure which begins with some sort of anticipatory set (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 3). An anticipatory set serves as an attention-grabber and orients the learning that will take place in the lesson. Ideas, questions, and facts presented in the anticipatory set can provoke a variety of responses that create engagement. After the anticipatory set ends, the main activity of the lesson begins. Educators should provide students with the text for that lesson. This text may need to be differentiated based on student needs (e.g., braille, simplified text, audio). During the main activity, the purposeful discussion of main ideas can further the understanding of an expository text. One way to prompt this discussion is through the use of high-quality Wh- questions such as:

who, what, when, where, why, and how (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 4). Educators may want to provide students with a graphic organizer with space for students to record these questions and examples. Furthermore, the educator should directly model this question-asking process. Questions can be used to uncover the main idea of the text as well as hidden connections that relate to previous lessons/learning. To help the students understand this strategy, educators can provide a generalized example using events from their own lives instead of the content area topic (e.g., Why was my brother upset?).

Another helpful tool that aids in using Wh- questions is a cue card. This is a graphic organizer contained on a single index card that includes a sample Wh- question along with the answer to the question. Each card should relate to a specific part of the text. This allows students to find the question and answer within the text, which can help if they struggle to generate a question spontaneously. This can be a form of scaffolded practice for struggling learners (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 5).

Classroom-wide discussions are important to developing an understanding of expository texts, but it can be intimidating for students with disabilities to participate in these discussions (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 5). For this reason, educators can make use of a procedure called Turn-and-Talk. Turn-and-Talks reduce this anxiety by compressing what would be classroom discussions into partner discussions. “During turn-and-talks, half of the class is answering a question or a prompt at once. The other half is listening to the partner” (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 5).

This procedure has three steps: question, turn, and talk. First, the teacher asks the students a question and tells them how long they will have to discuss the question (30 seconds to 2

minutes) (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 5). Then, the students turn to their partner, who is assigned ahead of time. Lastly, they will actively discuss the question for the assigned time and volunteer their answers. Like the use of cue cards and high-quality questions, the turn-and-talk procedure should be directly explained and modeled by the educator (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 5). During the turn and talk procedure, the educator should make sure that students stick to relevant discussions and discourage wandering (Swanson et al., 2019, p. 6).

In addition to these strategies, teachers should use other forms of media besides expository texts to foster content acquisition. Teachers may want to consider using videos and audio texts (read: eBooks) related to the topics addressed in the classroom. Attention should be paid to the length of the video or audio text. Both short and long videos can be useful, but the qualities of longer videos are different than that of shorter videos. “Research suggests two options for utilizing videos during social studies. First, short videos (3–5 minutes) can be shown to introduce new content by supporting background knowledge (e.g., settlers on the Mayflower) or to reinforce text reading” (Ciullo et al., 2015, p. 5). Second, lengthier videos, such as documentaries or historical reenactments, can be divided into segments (e.g., 6–10 minutes) and shown on different days based on the appropriate sequence of the events or topics (Gersten et al., 2006); (Ciullo et al., 2015, p. 5). However, teachers must be critical of pop culture sources and should encourage critical thinking among their students.

Another strategy to consider in aiding reading comprehension is Semantic Feature Analysis. This strategy involves using graphic organizers, called a Semantic Feature Analysis Chart, to “help students visualize how topics, people, or concepts are related” (Ciulo, 2015, p. 4). These visual charts are arranged in a grid. The left-hand column of the chart consists of the concepts to be compared. The top row of the chart has a list of semantic features (Read: Traits)

that the concepts may or may not have in common. The teacher will generate a table with the concepts and traits that they want their students to learn. Then the students will put a plus or minus in the corresponding box to indicate if there is a relationship between the trait and concept or not. This exercise helps students to understand more complex conceptual relationships that they may encounter in informational texts such as textbooks (Ciullo, 2015, p. 4).

Another tool that bears many similarities to Semantic Feature Analysis, and may be similarly helpful for aiding reading comprehension, is Concept Mapping. Concept Mapping involves sorting aspects of a concept into categories by using a graphic organizer. Teachers choose the concept to be diagrammed from the reading and whether the concept map is meant to be used during reading or after the reading is completed. The concept being studied is written at the top of the page, along with a definition of the concept. Then the students determine what categories are related to that concept. For instance, a social studies class covering political changes in the 1600s could have the concept of “monarchy” with two categories being “absolute monarchy” and “constitutional monarchy”. Then, inside the categories, the students would write down details that elaborate on these distinctions. As with SFA, this tool can be used to better understand complex ideas and how they are related to each other.

Team-Based Learning (TBL)

Nearly five percent of American students have a specific learning disability. Students with specific learning disabilities are a majority (60%) of students with disabilities in American schools (Kent et al., 2015, p. 1). Students with these disabilities, as well as students with speech/language-related disabilities participate in the general education classroom setting for 80% or more of their school day (Kent et al., 2015, p. 1). This has clear ramifications for social

studies pedagogy. Educators should focus their efforts on learning strategies and interventions that are effective for these students with high incidence disabilities.

Team-based Learning (TBL) is one such tool for educators of students with these high incidence disabilities. TBL is a tool that was initially developed to prompt students to actively engage in class discussions about complex ideas from multiple perspectives (Kent et al., 2015, p. 4). TBL was initially developed for college students. Researchers found that students with disabilities enjoyed peer learning activities and that students with disabilities benefit from its inclusion in lessons (Kent et al., 2015, p. 4).

In order to implement TBL, educators must be careful to follow several principles. First, they must assemble the learning teams – permanent groups of students with diverse interests, motivations, and skill levels. These permanent teams allow for rapport to develop among students over multiple sessions. These groups contain three to five students (Kent et al., 2015, p. 6). As these teams are heterogeneous, students with disabilities will be in teams with students without disabilities (Kent et al., 2015, p. 6). Additionally, teams have roles that rotate each session.

Second, there is a readiness assurance process, wherein students will be independently tested. After the individual test, the student takes the same test again together with their team, with opportunities to discuss each question with their team members. The results from the individual tests help educators understand what level of pre-existing knowledge exists for each individual student and provide immediate feedback. The group tests allow educators to reteach or elaborate on certain concepts.

Third, the teams participate in a knowledge application activity. This activity involves group problem-solving related to the target content knowledge. “Teams discuss and work together to complete the task, reporting their final decisions and evidence to the class.”(Kent et al., 2015, p. 4) The researchers provided the following example: “Imagine your team is an advisory board for presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. First, establish the top three priorities for the nation as it moves from isolationism to expansionism. Then, consider the most pivotal events in each president’s terms and make recommendations on how best to proceed” (Kent et al., 2015, p. 7). Students are asked to participate in group discussions, deliberate over concepts and evidence, and reflect on their contributions as well as that of their team members (Kent et al., 2015, p. 7). Students are provided with graphic organizers to help them collect information and share it with their teams and, later, their classroom peers (Kent et al., 2015, p. 7).

Following this problem-solving task, the teams participate in a peer evaluation process to determine their success at problem-solving and provide feedback to their team members. This provides accountability for both groups and individual students.

There are two other key features of TBL. First, there are comprehension checks. A TBL unit lasts for three classroom sessions. In each unit, there are three comprehension checks. The first two checks should take roughly 15 minutes, and the final check should take nearly the entire final class period (Kent et al., 2015, p. 6). Similar to the readiness assurance process, students must answer multiple choice questions to gauge their understanding of the content. As in the readiness assurance process, during the comprehensive checks, students are encouraged to collaborate with their team members to explore multiple perspectives. Educators monitor the group discussions and review the results of both individual and group understanding. This feeds

into the second key feature of TBL, which is targeted instruction. Educators check for content acquisition so they can provide targeted instruction in future class periods. This allows educators to triage collective knowledge on a given topic.

To investigate the effectiveness of TBL, researchers studied 14 U.S. History class sections taught by five different teachers (Kent et al., 2015, p. 5). Four classes served as a control, while the other ten classes introduced TBL into classroom interventions (Kent et al., 2015, p. 5). These classroom teachers received a six-hour professional development session on the principles and procedures of TBL (Kent et al., 2015, p. 6). Researchers studied the delivery of lessons over a period of six to ten weeks (Kent et al., 2015, p. 6). “Classes met daily for 50 to 55 min or every other day for 90-min periods” (Kent et al., 2015, p. 6).

Observing researchers rated the implementation of TBL on a five-point Likert scale (Kent et al., 2015, p. 8). The researchers performed several regression analyses and found that the differences between groups were not statistically significant (Kent et al., 2015, p. 12). The results were promising, but improvements among students without disabilities were mostly limited to the increased recognition of content-area vocabulary knowledge. Fortunately, students with disabilities who participated in these lessons greatly benefited from the new interventions. They “demonstrated significantly higher content knowledge than students with disabilities who participated in typical-practice general education social studies instruction” (Kent et al., 2015, p. 14). The researchers noted several instructional features that were especially beneficial: organization of content around a comprehension canopy, direct teaching of essential concepts, active engagement during class discussions, and application of content knowledge to other tasks (Kent et al., 2015, p. 15).

Concept-Based Instruction (CBI)

Students with disabilities must confront several barriers in order to participate in general education social studies classes. The primary pedagogical barrier is the extensive use of expository text in lessons and interventions. Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) that affect reading comprehension are common among students with disabilities. Students with disabilities often find it more difficult to read and comprehend expository text. Additionally, students with disabilities may also have trouble understanding the organization of expository texts. Furthermore, students with disabilities struggle to define and categorize abstract concepts that they encounter in these texts.

Concept-Based Instruction (CBI) is a strategy that educators may use to make expository texts more accessible for students with disabilities in general education social studies classes. A major draw of CBI is that it is very flexible and can be adapted to fit nearly any sort of subject and classroom. CBI can help students to organize and understand information that they encounter in expository texts. This is done by brainstorming major themes within the text (e.g., discrimination, colonialism, exploitation) and then writing down the characteristics that define examples and non-examples of that concept (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 4). Students use tools such as graphic organizers or note-taking templates to categorize these example ideas. By identifying course concepts and their constituent qualities, students can better organize and process information. By categorizing ideas in this way, students are creating a mental and visual sorting mechanism that can help them understand course content in the future (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 5).

In order to implement CBI correctly, educators should follow five steps. The first step, organization, involves reading through the text and identifying key themes and concepts that their students should identify. Then, the educator should align those concepts with state standards for his subject and classroom. Next, the educator should create a visual display to help students organize information (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 13). Examples of visual displays are descriptive maps, sequential episodic maps, compare/contrast maps, and problem/solution maps among others (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 8). During instruction, educators should directly acknowledge these concepts, attributes, and examples so students can practice organizing these ideas in their visual displays (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 13). Finally, the educator should check for understanding. One way of doing this is to use a concept maze as an assessment. A concept maze is a collection of passages where certain words are replaced by a choice of several words (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 10). Students select the answer that makes the passage coherent. Educators can review the results of these assessments in order to pinpoint which concepts require additional instruction or clarification.

A key benefit to CBI is that it makes expository texts and the abstract concepts contained within more accessible to students in general education social studies classrooms. The educator testimonial from the social studies teacher in this article makes clear the benefits of CBI. He found that his students were more able to answer abstract questions about the expository texts he was using (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p. 12). He was greatly satisfied by the performance of students who normally struggled in his classes (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p.12). Additionally, his students were able to complete coherent essays about these abstract concepts, and he felt confident that they understood his lessons (Twyman & Tindal, 2005, p.12).

Overview of Strategies and Interventions Table

The table in the following section contains a list of the strategies and interventions explored in the Literature Review Chapter. This list of tools for teachers can help to improve skills that benefit students with disabilities in general education classrooms that use expository text in lessons. Included with each strategy are a definition and several suggestions for implementation.

Table of Strategies and Interventions for Content Acquisition and Reading Comprehension from Literature

Strategy	Definition	Techniques
State Standards	These are the objectives for learning, by subject, for K-12 students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adhere to state and district standards regarding social studies and English language arts. ● Use standards to select appropriate topics. ● Reference reading standards when creating social studies lessons.
Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text (PACT)	Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text is a method of teaching that focuses on content acquisition using text and discussions around the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide an overview of the main ideas in the unit. ● Have students record high-frequency words with their definitions. ● Uses team-based assessments with an open-ended writing question. ● Final assessment should involve a team-based problem-solving activity related to the

		main idea of the unit.
Co-Teaching Professional Development (CoPD)	The Co-Teaching Professional Development Approach is a strategy that educators can implement in order to respond to behavioral issues fairly to make the gen-ed classroom more inclusive to all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gen-ed teacher-provided content knowledge combined with Sped teacher-provided behavioral knowledge can make classrooms more inclusive. ● Use collaborative learning opportunities and professional development to pass down expertise. ● Clear communication and open-mindedness are crucial.
Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR)	Collaborative Strategic Reading is an intervention that targets reading comprehension. CSR focuses on providing students with reading techniques which they can apply before, during, and after reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilizes before, during, and after reading strategies. ● Use a 2-3 minute preview to construct background knowledge that involves skimming the text and making connections to past lessons. End with a prediction about the current lesson. ● Click and Clunk: During reading, have students record ideas that do not make sense and deploy “fix-up” strategies to create understanding. ● Get the Gist: During reading, find and record the main idea. Then, rewrite the main idea in their own words. ● Wrap-Up: After reading, students practice asking good questions about the text and have them answer these questions with information from within the text.

<p>Concept-Based Instruction (CBI)</p>	<p>Concept-Based Instruction is a strategy that educators use to make expository texts more accessible to students with disabilities who are participating in gen-ed social studies classes. CBI helps students to organize the information they encounter in expository texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Very flexible strategy that can fit nearly every subject and classroom. ● The objective of CBI is to organize content information that students encounter in expository texts. ● Teachers pre-read the text and identify key themes and ideas they want their students to understand. ● Then, they create a visual display to help organize information. ● During instruction, teachers refer back to this graphic organizer. ● Afterwards, teachers check for understanding.
<p>Team-Based Learning (TBL)</p>	<p>Team-Based Learning is an instructional tool that is used to prompt students to engage in classroom discussions about complex, abstract concepts from multiple perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students are assembled into learning teams by their teacher. ● These are permanent groups of students with heterogeneous motivations, interests, and skill levels. ● Three to five students per group. ● Each student has a job of sorts within the group, and they choose a new one each session. ● Students are tested on content individually first, then together as a team. ● Activities involve group problem-solving related to target content knowledge. ● Students rate their peer's efforts and contributions.

<p>Semantic Feature Analysis (SFA)</p>	<p>Semantic Feature Analysis is a reading strategy that makes use of graphic organizers so that students can better understand how course concepts are related to one another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students use graphic organizers to understand how ideas are related. ● Aids reading comprehension. ● Helps students check for similarities and differences.
<p>Concept Mapping</p>	<p>Concept-Mapping is a reading comprehension strategy that involves sorting aspects of a concept into categories with a graphic organizer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers choose the concept in question. ● Students determine the categories that concept could fall into. ● Then, students record details that flesh out the categories.
<p>Universal Design for Learning (UDL)</p>	<p>Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a paradigm for teaching that involves providing flexible learning opportunities for students that takes advantage of the unique strengths and abilities of all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide multiple ways to receive academic content. ● Provide multiple ways to demonstrate content knowledge. ● Engage different learning modalities. ● Be mindful of source inclusion. ● Link to authentic value when possible.

CHAPTER III: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Literature

The next step in the process was examining what studies revealed about social studies education for students with disabilities. The NLTS 2 was a major, comprehensive study involving over ten thousand students with disabilities, including intensive interviews with parents and educators. It provided excellent data for the basis of this research. Particularly helpful is the separation of data by disability which allows for a clear and poignant picture of what the future holds for students with disabilities. Although youth with learning disabilities, sensory disabilities and also cognitive disabilities complete high school at rates similar to their peers without disabilities, only about half of those with emotional and behavioral disabilities complete school. Completers tend to become employed, seek post-secondary education, and become more involved in their communities. Further expansion of the NLTS would be extremely valuable in understanding the transition that youths make from students with disabilities to adults with disabilities and understanding if progress is being made in educating youth in social studies.

Limitations of Research

Although research, particularly focused on one aspect of political involvement such as voting or on a particular educational intervention, is plentiful, studies of political beliefs of people with disabilities, or polls, are not. It is difficult to say with any certainty what people with disabilities believe, now or in the past, because they were beneath the interest of professional study for so long. A great deal is still unclear.

Perhaps, no more stunning revelation of these months of research is the following finding summarized earlier in this thesis: In 2011, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only seven percent of fourth-grade students with disabilities were proficient in social studies (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1). Of their peers without disabilities, 19% were proficient (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1). Students in both general and special education continue to exhibit the same poor performance when it comes to demonstrating their knowledge of history and social studies. 85% of students with disabilities scored below basic on the social studies component of the national assessment (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1). The majority of students without disabilities also scored below basic (Ciullo, 2015, p. 1). Although some high school students grasp history, the majority of them fail to learn history or master social studies. 85% of special education students lack basic knowledge of the history of the U.S. or the functioning of its government (Ciullo, page 1, 2015).

Future Research Implications

Following the results of the research on education and youth with disabilities, the thesis suggested a number of instructional strategies and interventions to improve students with disabilities' mastery of the traditional, heavily text-laden subject of social studies. The strategies and techniques are identified in the literature review portion of this thesis and summarized in the conclusion.

In addition, two areas for future social studies and special education teachers to help improve are 1) the creation of textbooks organized for greater reading comprehension and 2) the creation of inclusive media such as audiobooks, documentaries, movies, and graphic novels to aid in the greater content acquisition. Textbooks could be better organized and written for students. States could place higher standards on their quality. Many textbooks attempt to simply

present lists of facts rather than focus on deep conceptual learning. Students must be more able to understand abstract concepts and their relations to better participate in the political process. Furthermore, they must understand multiple points of view and that history is not an objective list of facts; history is a story that society tells itself with all the subjectivity that entails.

In our society today, there are many issues that affect individuals with disabilities, including the movement from institutional care to group homes and the staffing difficulties and uncertain future of many group homes today, medical care delivery, prescription drug costs, vaccinations, inclusive instruction and mainstreaming students into general education classrooms. In recent times, there have been efforts to defund libraries and remove rights previously held by gay and transgender people and women. We live in a world where schools have banned flags, banned language, renamed buildings, and debated over teaching historical lessons about Native Americans and other groups. In Minnesota today, we are still reeling from police officers being convicted for killing a black man and violating his civil rights (George Floyd). We are seeing an exodus of experienced teachers and a pronounced shortage of qualified teaching staff in special and general education. The news and social media every day continue to flood us with information and misinformation. Improving our social studies education programs is both incredibly necessary at this time and incredibly difficult in today's environment.

Application of Research

Inclusivity in social studies education is an emerging concept. As a general education student, this researcher was not taught until college about the disability rights fight of the Civil Rights movement, the historical treatment of those with disabilities, and, in particular, the extermination of persons with disabilities during the Holocaust.

The techniques described in the literature review and summarized in the conclusion will be helpful to educators of general education and special education students alike. But education alone will not be the answer to improving the political participation of people with disabilities. Exercising one's right to vote, for example, is a complex action. In addition to improving students' social studies knowledge, accessibility to voting must be addressed. Socio-economic factors such as household income level, ethnic background and gender must be further researched, and poverty's effect on our society must be mitigated.

Conclusion

The impetus of this research was a personal story about students who, encouraged to exercise their right to vote, would not. The question that was formulated was: what can be done to improve the chances that students would vote, participate in the political process, and listen to or read current events? This research addressed the question of to what extent people with disabilities participate in the political process. There is a significant gap, particularly regarding voting, between individuals with disabilities and those without. This gap is especially pronounced for older persons with disabilities.

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