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THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY:

A CASE STUDY OF

TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO STUDENTS' CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

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THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY:
A CASE STUDY OF
TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO STUDENTS' CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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Abstract

The aims of social justice in education are defined and procedurally mandated in tenets of special education law. The history of special education services is replete with examples of underrepresentation and overrepresentation of student populations. This case study sought to understand teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for students for special education services through the lens of social justice theory. Teacher pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and archival data were collected and analyzed for meaning. Findings and themes for the study revealed teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors prompt referrals based on specific criteria, indicate needs for more and better training to support students with special needs, teachers address problematic and challenging behaviors, and teachers are unsure of the meaning and terms of educational equity and social justice, as well as the implications for students with special needs.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> *The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. (Dewey, 1938, p.13).*

The term *social justice* encompasses a variety of meanings including concepts of justice related to a society, and as such, focuses on issues of fair treatment and equal opportunities for all members of a society. The aims of social justice in a legal sense originated with the equal protection and due process guarantees of the fourteenth amendment of the United States Constitution. Additionally, values of social justice are rooted in doctrines of law, politics, and faith (Mayer, 2007).

Social justice in education encompasses the belief that individuals are entitled to equal rights and participation in educational opportunities (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2008). Educational researchers and theorists furthered the aims of social justice in education and have "advanced the need to make social justice the foundation of school reforms designed to bring about more equitable learning conditions for all students" (Shields & Mohan, 2008, p. 290). To further equitable learning for students however, constructs surrounding the interpretation and administration of educational equality and equity must be explored.

Constitutional amendments in the United States granted equality of status and rights to individuals, thereby mandating social justice. Measures of equality include concepts of identical properties, consistencies and measures of goods and services for all individuals. For education services equal properties, consistencies and measures for individuals includes equal expenditures, teacher to pupil ratio, and educational resources for all students (Berne & Steifel, 1984; Odden & Picus, 1992). Historically, while

constitutional amendments granted rights to individuals concerning equality of status under the law thereby mandating social justice, the interpretation and administration of educational resources and services assuring social justice in education for all students has been varied, even disparate.

Rawls (1971) discussed differences among individuals beginning at birth, along with society's responsibility to address compensation for inequalities. He proposed that to provide equality among persons, society must distribute more resources to individuals who were born with inequalities. Rawls further identified individuals born with inequalities as those born with, fewer assets, less favorable social status, and less intelligence. With a redistribution of resources comprising equitable distribution, persons would be treated equally (Rawls, 1971).

Aiming to provide equality and fairness demands that persons be treated differently, in an equitable manner (Strike, Haller, and Soltis, 2005). Equity related to constructs of social justice in education therefore includes the identification of differences of need, as well as differences in the dispensation of methods of teaching and learning. Identified differences involve race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, while dispensations in educational settings may include interventions and modifications to curriculum and regular or special education services.

Procedural mandates for educational equity assurances and practices related to students receiving special education services are found in tenets of law such as those enacted in the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA, 1997). Presently, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), the revised version of IDEA, continues to detail procedural mandates and safeguards for

students who demonstrate diverse or special learning needs in the regular classroom, and may require special education services for success in public schools in the United States.

Despite the legislative actions and procedural safeguards mandated by IDEIA, as well as previous legislative acts, the history of special education services is replete with examples of marginalized opportunities for students with differing needs (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2001; Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004; Harry & Klinger, 2006; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982). Documented examples of disparate opportunities include the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented programs (Daniels, 1998), and the overrepresentation of certain ethnic student populations in special education services (Artiles et al., 2001; Daniels, 1998; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Hosterman, DuPaul, & Jitendra, 2008; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998). Compounding such effects of underrepresentation and overrepresentation are the ways in which states vary the implementation of eligibility criteria espoused in special education laws (McLesky & Waldron, 1991; Merrell & Walker, 2004; Reschly, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002).

Eligibility teams in individual states differ concerning the choices on whether students are eligible for special education services, and they differ on choices of the appropriate category of special education service for the student. The student may or may not receive special education services, and if services are provided, they may or may not be consistently under an appropriate category. For the student, differing or compromised learning opportunities may be the result of inconsistent eligibility standards (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002).

In the situations mentioned above, instead of ensuring social justice or educational equity for students, equal participation in the appropriate classroom setting may be denied. For instance, when a student's behavior triggers a referral for special education services, the student's learning needs or academic competency may not be the primary concern (Abidin & Robinson, 2002). Instead, the student's deliberate or disruptive behavior may be the motivation for the referral.

Literature suggests that referrals based solely on challenging behaviors may be suspect and do not conform to the intent of the federal and state mandates (Reschly, 1996; Skiba et al., 2006; Ysseldyke, 2001). As a result, if appropriate eligibility or placement decisions are not made, students' levels of instruction, overall academic potential, and well-being might well be compromised (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Fierros & Bloomberg, 2005; Sideridis, Antonious, & Padeliadu, 2008). In fact, students who are referred inappropriately for special education services may, with appropriate supports and interventions, be successful in regular learning environments with typically developing peers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Wiener & Soodak, 2008).

Students who are determined eligible for special education services may also be successful in regular learning environments with supports and interventions (Algozzine, Serna, & Patton, 2001). It is important to note that teachers themselves report difficulty dealing with students' challenging behaviors and discuss the difficulties associated with making special education referrals based on students' challenging behaviors (Early et al., 2007; McLeskey & Waldron, 1991; Nungesser & Watkins, 2005; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002; Wheat, 2008). Finally, it is noted that, teachers and administrators need to be, "assisted in recognizing that there are substantial and persistent patterns of inequity

internal to schools (i.e., embedded within the many assumptions, beliefs, practices, procedures, and policies of schools themselves)" (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004, p.141).

Background of the Problem

While the United States was established in 1776, the expansion of educational rights for students with disabilities did not occur for nearly 200 years. Voices calling for educational rights for students with what at the time was described as "exceptionality" can be traced to some early writings in the 1920s, as well as some beginning advocacy group activities in the 1930s (Kauffman, 1981; Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996; Osgood, 2008). In the 1950s, voices among advocacy groups gained intensity and the beginnings of laws mandating educational opportunities for students with what was termed "exceptionalities" and later became "disabilities" began to be passed (Kauffman, 1981; Osgood, 2008; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2009; Winzer, 2009). Initially, disability laws were aimed at providing training for teachers who worked with students who were hard-of-hearing or mentally retarded (Kauffman, 1981; Winzer, 2009).

Laws granting resources and funding for special education services for students were enacted first in the 1960s. Later, in the 1970s, significant court decisions further defined and granted states roles and responsibilities for special education services for students (Martin et al., 1996; Osgood, 2008; USDE, 2009; Weintraub & Abeson, 1976). Court decisions related to special education services included cases regarding the delineation of funds and responsibilities at the federal, state, and district levels. State educational agencies and local districts are responsible for the majority of the costs of special education services for students with disabilities (Osgood, 2008; Weintraub &

Abeson, 1976). Currently, federal monies comprise approximately 9% of the funding needed for special education services for students in the United States (Planty et al., 2008).

The changes in special education laws in the 1970s brought notable transformations for students receiving special education services (Martin et al., 1996; USDE, 2009). During the mid to late 1970s, as a result of substantial revisions in the laws, students with special needs gained guaranteed civil rights and accommodations in the schools, as well as rights of appropriate education, tailored to the needs of the individual student, in an environment that was restricted minimally (Osgood, 2008; Yell, Rogers, & Rodgers, 1998). Later in the 1990s, after subsequent revisions to special education laws, individual plans for students with special education needs, plans for transitions after schooling, and an increased emphasis on opportunities to participate in a regular classroom with typically developing peers was mandated (IDEA Amendments of 1997).

In spite of significant advances for students with disabilities, educational equity concerns for students with disabilities persist (Theoharis, 2007). As a result, social justice in education and educational equity for students needing and not receiving special education services, or receiving special education services in settings more restrictive than necessary, related to issues of eligibility and disproportionality remains disparate. This disparity and lack of opportunity may result in part from teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of special education referrals (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Egyed & Short, 2006; Soodak & Podell, 1994; Theoharis, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The problem this research explored involved teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services, as well as understanding and concerns for diminished social justice and educational equity for students who undergo inappropriate eligibility and placement for special education services. One concern involved students' challenging behaviors as a proper trigger for special education referrals. A second concern involved teacher referrals for special education services for students with challenging behaviors and the degree to which the referrals are aligned with the purposes and intents of special education legislation. A third concern included ways in which teachers respond and deal with issues of students' challenging behaviors and special education referrals.

The concerns are important because of the significant impact that teachers have on the referral process. Teacher initiated referrals for special education services comprise most referrals made (Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1982; Egyed & Short, 2006; Pugach, 2001). Furthermore, the majority of students who are referred by teachers are identified, made eligible, and placed in special education (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1981; Pugach, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1983). Also, teachers most often cite students' behavior problems as the prompting concern for referrals for special education services (Podell & Tournaki, 2007; Pugach, 1985; Soodak & Podell, 1994).

While teachers individually initiate referrals with most teacher referrals for special education services ending in special education placement, teams of educators are formed and required to make the eligibility decisions (IDEA, 1990). Legislation mandates that teams decide a student's eligibility category and design services in an

Individualized Educational Program (IEP). Individualized Educational Program teams by law must consist of the parent, teacher, special education teacher, administrator, and relevant related service providers such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists (IDEIA, 2004).

Previous researchers supported special education placement decisions made by teams versus individuals (Pfeiffer, 1982). Because most referrals for students for special education services are initiated by teachers, and most teacher referrals result in placement of students in special education services, and teachers' participation is mandated on eligibility teams, it is important to explore teachers' perceptions of students' challenging behavior and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services.

Teachers' perspectives and practices that influence outcomes such as special education eligibility and placement must be explored (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Egyed & Short, 2006). Teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services affect students and learning. At stake for students is not only the complexity and richness of formal instruction, but also suitable and equitable opportunities for learning (Theoharis, 2007). Students taught in general education classrooms with less than ideal teacher-student interactions and poor academic supports, or students identified inappropriately and categorized as needing special education services and receiving education in special education classrooms, are at risk for marginalization, both personally and academically. The futures for either group of students may be compromised.

Therefore, the result of teachers' responses to students who display challenging behaviors appears problematic (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Egyed & Short, 2006). How

teachers respond, how they handle special education referral practices, and what alternatives are provided, greatly affect the learning processes for students (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Egyed & Short, 2006). As a result, objective of this study was to seek to explore and understand how students' disruptive behaviors may trigger teachers' referrals for special education services for students.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this case study was to explore teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom. This study was also intended to explore resulting referrals for special education services initiated by teachers who view negative student behaviors and are attempting to seek help for the students. The purpose of this study was threefold. First, the focus of this study concerned teachers' lived experiences with students displaying challenging behaviors. Second, it was intended to explore teachers' subsequent use of referrals for special education services based on students' challenging behaviors. Lastly, this study was intended to examine issues of social justice in education for students based on teachers' responses on students' challenging behaviors, as well as special education eligibility decisions and teaching practices resulting from such experiences. Central to the problem statements above and to study teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors, as well as teachers' referrals for special education services based on teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors, a case study design was used to explore the research questions for this study.

Significance of the study. Exploring teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services based on behaviors was significant because of the following:

1. If teachers explore their responses to students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their resulting use of referrals for special education for students, they may gain insight into their rationales for referrals. Also, possible with this study is a greater understanding of the differences in perspectives among regular education teachers about special education eligibility criteria and services.
2. With this increased understanding, teachers may be able to explore further issues of educational equity and social justice as related to students' learning and educational opportunities.
3. While exploring teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and special education referral practices, teachers may conceptualize alternate strategies for use in the general education curriculum to improve learning for students who demonstrate challenging behaviors.
4. Students' amount of time in regular classrooms as well as students' social experiences in regular classrooms, with typically developing peers may increase because of enhanced understanding among teachers.
5. Within school districts, administrators may identify instances when teachers' beliefs and practices are incongruent or unsuitable according to legislative mandates and students' achievement needs. As a result, schools that implement change may experience increased teacher satisfaction and student learning.

6. Researchers may be challenged to study further similar teachers' experiences, and as a result, find added teaching and learning strategies for teachers to use in the classroom.
7. Policymakers may develop a better understanding of how teachers are affected by students' challenging behaviors, as well as the impact of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors on special education referrals for students. Through this understanding, language use and procedures for interpreting and implementing special education laws, as well as those used to evaluate funding for program needs, might be clarified for ease and use by teachers and administrators.
8. Individuals in higher education may develop an increased understanding of the teachers' experiences in this study and conceptualize applications for use in pre-service teacher training programs.
9. Findings from this study may be used to design or improve professional development opportunities for novice and career teachers, adding understanding and knowledge to the field of education.

This study was significant because of a potential increased understanding among teachers, administrators, higher education personnel, and policymakers related to teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services. The result for students may include increased learning and higher achievement levels from the findings of this study. Finally, a result may include decreases in referrals for special education services resulting from teachers'

responses to students' challenging behaviors and more time for students in regular classrooms with typical peers.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were the following:

1. What are teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors?
    a. How do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teaching and learning, as well as referrals for special education services?
    b. Why do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teachers' referrals for student for special education services?
2. What issues of social justice in education emerge for students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom?
    a. How do teachers' referrals for students for special education services affect issues of social justice in education for students?
    b. Why are teacher referrals for students for special education services and subsequent eligibility decisions affecting issues of social justice in education for students?

Definition of Terms

Appropriateness as used in this study refers to the most suitable category chosen from those mandated in IDEIA (2004) or to the most suitable learning situation possible for a particular student.

At risk is used to describe students who may or may not develop problems in their development that will affect the ability to learn.

Categories of Special Education are those defined in IDEIA (2004) including autism, deaf-blindness, developmental delays, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment (including deafness), intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, specific-learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment including blindness.

Challenging Behaviors for this study include deliberate misbehaviors that do not meet teachers' expectations of appropriate classroom behaviors, have not been currently identified as accompanying a special education category under IDEIA (2004), and are of such occurrence or intensity that teachers deem them atypical or challenging. Terminology in the literature for challenging behaviors includes problem behaviors or difficult behaviors and examples include not attending to or following directions, inappropriate skills or means to make needs known, inability to ignore peer distractions, inability to demonstrate appropriate self-control and cooperation skills, and distracting behaviors (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006).

Equality refers to the identical distribution of access, resources, and services to all individuals regardless of differences.

Educational equity for this study is defined as the distribution of educational access, resources, and services based on individual differences and needs.

Eligibility refers to the determination of whether or not a child qualifies to receive special education services based on meeting the criteria for disability as established by the State Board of Education under IDEIA.

Exceptionality for this study was used to describe individuals who demonstrate a physical or mental handicap impacting activities of daily living or school performance as evidenced by differences in their performance from those of typical students.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is an educational setting which gives students with disabilities a place to learn to the best of their abilities, while still in contact with children without disabilities.

Special Education Services are programs and services for children ages 3-21 years old which are provided at no cost to families as mandated in IDEIA (2004).

Referrals for Special Education Services are formal processes initiated by teachers, parents, or school personnel documenting that a student is experiencing educational difficulties and as such, starts processes to determine if the student needs further evaluation and special education services.

Resource involves a term used to describe a room or location for special education services that is used to serve students' learning needs within a least restrictive environment for a portion of the school day.

Social justice for Students in Education for this study included foundational principles of democracy, as well as processes and goals that promote participation in education for all students in society and an includes equitable distribution of educational resources.

Summary

In summary, the objective of this case study was to explore teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and possible effects on subsequent special education referrals for students. This case study was further intended to explore teachers'

perspectives of students' challenging behaviors, as well as their practices surrounding referrals for special education services. Social justice theories and principles of educational equity are used to frame the exploration and further understanding sought in this study. In-depth interviews, archival data, and survey data, comprise the methodology and data that was analyzed using data triangulation methods. All findings were analyzed and discussed for any theoretical or practical significance.

Regarding practical significance, this study was an attempt to increase the understanding of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of special education referrals. Also, the richness and depth of the "stories told" are explored for any novel or different understanding of the phenomenon. Theorizing across disciplines such as education and psychology contributes to the breadth of understanding and practices in areas of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services. Finally, concepts of social justice and educational equity found in teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent practices in the use of special referrals for students are examined and explored.

To underscore the importance of the research questions for this study, and to explore relevant issues to this study, as related to concepts of social justice in education, it is important to understand teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors as researched by various disciplines. For this purpose an exploration of the historical and contemporary trends in referrals for special education services is determined important and reviewed. Also, needed is an understanding of how the principles of social justice

and educational equity frame special education services legislation and teachers' subsequent special education referral practices.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The bodies of knowledge, research, and practice that inform issues surrounding students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and special education referrals, as well as social justice concepts, draw from many disciplines including social and developmental psychology, sociology, and education (Beebe-Frankenberger, Lane, Bocia, Gresham, & MacMillan, 2005; Cunningham & Sugawara, 1988; Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade, 2002; Nungesser & Watkins, 2005; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Reschly, 1996; Vitaro, Brendgen, Larose, & Remblay, 2005). Understanding issues of teachers' responses to students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for students for special education services across disciplines provides researchers with a rich foundation from which to gain additional understanding, as well as prompts further exploration and expansion of discipline specific knowledge for purposes of increasing student achievement.

Rationale for the Literature Discussed in the Review for this Study

For this study, a broad-based cross- disciplinary understanding and review of the literature was presented to discuss the literature concerning the background of the problem including historical and contemporary practices and policies of special education services as well as relevant literature concerning social justice in relation to diversity, critical consciousness, schooling and education, teaching and learning, and issues in special education. Therefore the literature review for this study addressed the following:

1. What are teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors?

a. How do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teaching and learning, as well as referrals for special education services?
b. Why do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teachers' referrals for student for special education services?

2. What issues of social justice in education emerge for students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom?
    a. How do teachers' referrals for students for special education services affect issues of social justice in education for students?
    b. Why are teacher referrals for students for special education services and subsequent eligibility decisions affecting issues of social justice in education for students?

To address the research questions, literature for this study was reviewed relevant to issues involving teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services. For this a review of the history of exceptionality among individuals and students in society, as well as the history of special education services for students with exceptionality was designed to underscore legislative mandates and practices for use by teachers in schools in the United States as well as to address the issues of social justice that emerged over time. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and NCLB legislation are included in this review, along with issues of states' difficulties with the implementation of special education laws.

Also, to address the research questions concerning issues of social justice in education for students and the effects of teachers' referrals for special education services for students, literature associated with issues of diversity, critical consciousness, and educational equity were reviewed for this study. Furthermore, to explore fully concepts of social justice for students in education, literature related to major philosophical and theoretical underpinnings for education in schools in America, as well as theorists and theories of development, knowing, and learning related to students and teachers were reviewed. The major philosophical and theoretical underpinnings for education and the theories of development, knowing, and learning are relevant particularly to this study since education of students and teacher practices were considered.

Additionally, disparities discussed in the literature that may marginalize educational opportunities for students in schools in the United States are explored through literature concerning disproportionality, trends in the number of students in special education services, poverty and disproportionality, as well as data from the state and district for the school that were explored in this case study. Also discussed in the literature review for the study are difficulties with eligibility issues and specifically, differences associated with emotional and behavioral differences and disabilities.

Historical Context of Exceptionality and Special Education in Schools

The historical context is important to this study because it was used to frame the concepts of exceptionality of individuals and special education legislation. While the foundations of social justice in education in the United States in the early part of the 21st century may be traced to the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century, disparities in education and training for disabled students first were identified much earlier. Increasing

concerns regarding the recognition of exceptionalities among individuals and the need for special education services for students grew within Europe and the United States.

Exceptionality among individuals and students in society. Student exceptionality and special education services are distinguishable historically (Winzer, 2009). Though it is impossible seemingly to estimate accurately the number of individuals with exceptionality present at the beginning of society, authors propose that great numbers were present (Winzer, 2009). Possibly, poor health and medical standards contributed to an increased number of individuals with exceptionality, at, and directly following the development of society. The opportunities offered by society were different for individuals with exceptionalities and challenges from the populous at large (Kauffman, 1981).

While exceptionality is traced to the birth of society, special education services for students with disabilities were developed in the eighteenth century (Winzer, 2009). Kauffman (1981) reported Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard's training efforts with the *Wild Boy of Aveyron* in 1801 in Europe to be the first special education service for an individual with exceptionality. Since then, many special educational concepts and instructional methods that began in Europe have spread to the United States (Kauffman, 1981).

Around the early 1800s, the education and training of disabled populations gained some momentum. France and Britain were leaders in many of the first efforts for education and training of the disabled. Initially, only the special needs of individuals who were affected the most severely were addressed. People included in the initial efforts for special training were "the blind, the deaf, and severely retarded and disturbed" (Kauffman, 1981, p. 4).

Later, in 1848, a public school for mentally retarded people who were referred to as “idiots” opened in Paris (Winzer, 1993, p. 114). Around this time, the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology established institutions to treat individuals with exceptionalities (Winzer, 2009). Individuals with cognitive deficits were living in the institutions which were named asylums.

Asylums were thought to be dreadful places to live (Kauffman, 1981). Winzer (1993) reported that roughly 10% of the population in an asylum fit criteria to be labeled mentally insane. Doermer (1969, as cited in Winzer, 1993) described the populous of asylums as

> Incarcerated heretics, social dissidents, and others who threatened the established order without actually committing any crimes. Beggars and vagabonds; those without property, jobs, or trades; political gadflies and heretics; prostitutes; libertines, syphilitics, and alcoholics; idiots and eccentrics; rejected wives, deflowered daughters, and spendthrift sons---could all be incarcerated and thus rendered harmless and virtually invisible. (p.30)

Shortly after the establishment of asylums, popular written works linking intellectual deficits and criminality caused increasing fear of individuals with exceptionality among the society at large (Goddard, 1912). Fears grew in the populous and led to the passage of some of history’s most unimaginable practices. A grave example was the sterilization laws that were passed and practiced by states in the United States (Kauffman, 1981). Under this law individuals who were judged unfit to reproduce were sterilized by the state. In 1927, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote for the court, “It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for

crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind" (Holmes & Posner, 1992, p. 104).

Special education services for students with exceptionality. While the beginning of special education is traced to the early nineteenth century, levels of awareness and meaningful changes for schooling, education, and special education services have fluctuated. In some ways, the passage of school attendance laws bolstered the growth and emphasis on special education services for individuals with exceptionality (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982). With the Massachusetts School Attendance Act of 1852, attendance in schools became required.

By 1900, compulsory attendance laws based on benefits to the child and welfare and safety of the state and community were in place (Weintraub & Abeson, 1976). All children, including those with exceptionality were required to attend school which meant that the landscapes of schools were changing and new policies and plans were needed. Parents and educators began to question whether students with and without exceptionalities should be educated together (Ysseldyke & Algozinne, 1982).

Kauffman (1981) wrote that views of special education services as a problem were being documented in the United States around the 1920s. The first text on special education was by John Lewis Horn (1924), who discussed differences among learners, as well as how to classify individuals with exceptionalities. In the book, he further defined differences among children related to mental, temperamental, and physical exceptionalities.

Social justice principles and special education services. Not long after the first documentation of differences among students with exceptionalities, social justice

principles affecting special education services began to gain momentum and voice. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the World Declaration on Education for All were designed to address issues of education for students with disabilities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared that parents held a right to choose the kind of education for their children. In the World Declaration on Education for All, steps providing equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as part of education were prioritized (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2008). Many social justice initiatives influenced eligibility and inclusion practices for students within special education services.

Around 1899, in the United States, the first Department of Special Education was founded by the National Education Association. The Council for Exceptional Children also was formed, signaling heightened national awareness for individuals with exceptionalities (Kauffman, 1981). The need to address educational differences for children with exceptionalities was coming into focus. Kauffman reported that between 1901 and 1950, large cities in the United States began adopting early principles of special education services as part of public education. This, along with societal and economic events including World War I, World War II, and The Great Depression, heightened the collective national awareness of human issues in education in the United States (Kauffman, 1981).

Later, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s paved the way for changes in the educational system, specifically for students with exceptionality. Prior to the adoption of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA), the educational needs of students with exceptionality in the United States were

ignored (Martin et al., 1996). Strategies used to deny or exclude students with special needs from education at that time included "postponement, exclusion, suspension and denial of services" (Weintraub & Abeson, 1976, p. 7). The adoption of the NDEA, signed by President Eisenhower in 1958, provided added funding for teacher training and research for educating students with disabilities (Martin et al., 1996).

In the 1950s, The National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) was founded (Kauffman, 1981). This organization was among the first to inform and educate families with exceptional children, as well as inform the nation as a whole on issues of students with disabilities needing special education services (Osgood, 2008). The National Association for Retarded Children coupled with increasing grassroots advocacy efforts by parents for students with special needs, including physician and professional groups, and educators, began to redefine and reshape special educational services for students in the United States (Osgood, 2008).

Contemporary Contexts and Policies of Special Education Services

Legislative efforts following those in the 1950s and 1960s became more robust. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, also known as, Public Law 94-142 was enacted to further meet the educational needs of children with handicaps. Public Law 94-142 was designed to assure support to states providing special education services for students with special needs.

The passage of this law guaranteed a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities in every state in the United States. Objective of PL94-142 was to further address how students were referred, evaluated, identified, and educated, and more than one million children who had been denied an education previously, gained

access through this law to an appropriate education. Public Law 94-142 was designed to frame the purposes and practices of special education for the future for schools in the United States (USDE, 2007).

Reauthorized and renamed in 1990, Public Law 94-142 became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Martin et al., 1996). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized again in 1997 and 2004 (USDE, 2006). With the subsequent revision in 2004, the name of the law changed from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004).

While it is true that individual states' participation in IDEIA is not required, states in the United States are required to educate all students, including those with special educational needs. For states to receive funding based on IDEIA they must carry out the mandates and statutes of the law (IDEA, 1990, 1997; IDEIA, 2004). Constitutional rights and federal laws govern practices for special education services, and currently all states, in the United States, take part in IDEIA and receive federal funds for services to students with special needs (USDE, 2005).

In the early part of the 21st century, the principles of IDEIA remain constant. All students with disabilities have a right to FAPE. The rights of children with disabilities and their parents or guardians are protected; state and local assistance must provide this special education, and the assessment and assurance of effective efforts to educate students with disabilities must be demonstrated by schools (IDEIA, 2004; USDE, 2006). Subsequent revisions to IDEIA have further served to strengthen and clarify the intents

and purposes of the law for students needing special education services in schools in the United States.

IDEIA and the No Child Left Behind act. While IDEA was being reauthorized for the first time in 1997, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which was the legislation requiring FAPE, was also being amended and renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (USDE, 2002). Furthermore, the alignment of NCLB and IDEA became both required by law for schools, and regulated by government agencies (USDE, 2001). This requirement provided, in part, for the development and implementation of early intervening services for students in kindergarten through Grade 12 with particular emphasis given to kindergarten through third grade students who were not enrolled in special education services, but who demonstrated a need for added academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education curriculum (USDE, 2002).

States' difficulties with special education laws. While continued efforts to focus legislation on the special education needs of students have been robust, inconsistencies of procedures and practices are discussed in the literature. Previously, Reschly (1996) reported that the special education referral process was plagued with non-uniformity across districts, states, and regions. In addition, it was found that issues of classification, funding, eligibility interpretation, test selection and scoring, and cut-off scores, further complicated the system of special education services (McLeskey & Waldron, 1991). The result of such diverse practices among states in the identification and eligibility of students for special education services may involve inappropriate overidentification or underidentification of students needing special education services, as well as those

categorized as learning disabled (Artiles et al., 2008; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Kauffman, 2001; Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007; Kavale, 2005; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002).

Diversity, Critical Consciousness, Equity, and Social Justice in Education

Dealing with student diversity in schools remains a central challenge for 21st century educators in the United States. It is impossible to prepare tomorrow's teachers to succeed with students without exploring how students' learning experiences are influenced by their home languages, cultures, and contexts; the realities of race, and class privilege in the United States; the ongoing manifestations of institutional racism within the educational system; and the many additional factors that influence students' opportunities to learn within individual classrooms (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Social diversity in education encompasses the above-mentioned differences among students. Cymrot (2002, as cited in Darling-Hammond et al., 2002) proposed that differences among students include

> [T]he spectrum of students with different learning styles. They are the readers and nonreaders. They are the young scholars and the young athletes. They are the students whose 50 or so native flags hang in my former school's cafeteria. They are the students with full bellies who are dropped off at school as their parents head to work, and the students who come to school each day hungry and malnourished. These are the diverse and we are charged with offering them the mythical "level playing field" of the American Dream. (p. 14)

Social diversity among students presents educators with challenges in school perspectives regarding educational equity and social justice principles. While student

diversity and educational disparities have been acknowledged in the literature, educators differ regarding how to address issues of diversity and disparity for students in schools in the U.S. (Shields & Mohan, 2008). Researchers posit that awareness and critical consciousness on the part of educators is critical to the development of schools that celebrate diversity and create classrooms for educational equity (Engel, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 2007).

Critical consciousness. Critical consciousness includes the ability to perceive social, political or economic oppression and take action against oppressive elements in society (Freire, 1970, 2005). Coupling critical consciousness with action, allows individuals the ability to facilitate change in institutions and society (Freire, 1970, 2005). In education, teachers who develop critical consciousness skills regarding oppression may further develop the awareness and understanding of social diversity among students, and thus provide "high-quality education for all students, while addressing social justice issues of power and inequity, alienating and marginalizing beliefs, values, and practices" (Shields & Mohan, 2008, p. 291). For educators, the ability to facilitate changes related to social justice in classrooms for high quality education for students demands teachers' heightened awareness of social diversity and critical consciousness coupled with actions, thereby increasing social justice and educational equity for all students in schools (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008).

Educational equity. As mentioned above, educational equity encompasses equal opportunity and access to learning for all students in educational settings. Components of educational equity include student access to learning facilities, resources and curricular programs, as well as instruction. Instruction for educational equity incorporates different

learning and teaching styles, confronting bias and stereotypes in the classroom, and using materials free of cultural bias (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; McKenzie et al., 2008). Additionally, educators with heightened awareness of social diversity among students, as well as critical consciousness skills for change, demonstrate the ability to focus on attitudes, interactions shaped by attitudes, language use in teaching, and non-biased assessment practices for educational equity for all students (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Rusch, 2004).

Social justice in education. While social justice and social diversity in education have become a focus of formal education systems in the United States, issues of social justice and social diversity also have an international focus (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2008; Frattura & Topinka, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008). Concepts of critical pedagogy and social justice in education, the origin of which are found in the works of Paulo Freire, have drawn international attention. Mayo and Thompson (1995) discussed Freire's concepts of society and educational freedoms stating:

> There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 5)

The central focus for social justice in education in the United States includes the aforementioned issues of educational equity for all students, as well as issues of educators' awareness of social diversity and critical consciousness (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008). Theoharis (2007) defined social justice in education "to

mean that these [leaders] make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the U.S. central to their advocacy, leadership practices, and vision" (p. 223). In doing so, educational resources available to teachers, schools, and communities, and the subsequent use of educational resources for students affects issues of social justice in education for all students (Shields & Mohan, 2008). Furthermore, social justice in education includes paying attention to and planning for instructional interventions and practices for increased student achievement, supporting students, preparing students to live as "critical citizens" in society, and providing learning experiences for students in heterogeneous classrooms (McKenzie et al., 2008, p. 122).

Social Justice and Schooling and Education

The focus of social justice in education and schooling is based on approaches to teaching and learning and the overall organization of schools that is intended to minimize inequities that students experience based on group affiliations, as well as inequities perpetuated through social processes which include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Marshall, 2004). As previously stated, concepts of social justice in the U.S. may be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement and *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka (347 U.S. 483 (1954).* Furthermore, disparity among students in educational classrooms in the United States based on gender, ethnicity, race, disability, or language continues to be explored and discussed (Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Marshall, 2004; Shields & Mohan, 2008). In this section of the discussion of the literature for the study, selected philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of education are discussed, as well as issues of social justice

and regular and special education, social justice and teaching and learning, social justice and teacher training, and social justice and issues in special education.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Education

While a contemporary focus on social diversity and social justice in education as described above has gained momentum in educational training and practices, the principles of social consciousness and social justice, education through experience, and issues of schooling and education may be traced to the works of John Dewey and his visions of a "dynamic democracy where gender, race, class, and territory were no longer barriers to participation [in schools]" (Rusch, 2004, p. 14). Dewey (1907) argued for the development of a society that prioritized "mutually interpenetrating interests" (p. 87). Additionally, Dewey proposed democratic representation of all individuals as members of society and members of schools (Dewey, 1907, 1916).

Dewey (1897) further posited that educational processes for students consisted of two sides, the psychological and the sociological, and that through psychological and sociological constructs successful teaching and learning occur. Dewey discussed a child's first attempts at babbling, observed by an adult, as an example of the interaction between the psychological instincts of the child or student, and the role of the adult or teacher. Within these constructs, Dewey proposed, "it is the ability to see in the child's babblings the promise and potency of a future social intercourse and conversation which enables one to deal in the proper way with the (child's) instinct (for learning)" (p. 77). For Dewey (1897, 1916), educators must first see the potential for learning within the student before the child is able to transform their individual instincts for learning into learned behaviors for use in society.

Dewey (1897) also proposed that schools and social progress were interrelated. Dewey wrote,

> I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform . . . I believe that education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction. (p. 79)

For Dewey (1916), social progress and social reform included democratic principles and ideals in education for all students. Democratic principles espoused by Dewey included equal opportunity and participation for students in education (Rusch, 2004). In contrast to the aforementioned democratic principles and ideals are concerns of marginalization among students in education.

Dewey (1916) discussed concepts of social justice related to disparities in education for students' learning based on ways in which educators' perceive students' differences or disabilities. As previously mentioned, Dewey (1897) conceptualized two facets of education, the psychological and sociological. For students with perceived disabilities, Dewey criticized the sole use of psychological testing to categorize students based on their performance on cognitive assessments, and label students as unable to learn. Danforth (2008) suggested that "teachers who believe that students with intellectual disabilities lack a general capacity to learn often fail to notice the academic skills that these students do develop" (p. 59). While Dewey (1916) acknowledged some informative purposes for intelligence measurement constructs and comparisons, Danforth promoted moral equality for students in schools, where, "individuals are uniquely

diversified in capacities, interests, and tastes such that comparisons between individuals on external standards of evaluation are not feasible" (p. 54).

Dewey (1916) proposed an education based on principles of democracy for students within the constructs of schools as communities, where diverse students hold equal rights of participation and receive equal educational opportunities. Dewey's philosophy of education aligns with tenets of social diversity, social justice constructs, and principles of educational equity. In democratic schools and classrooms, coupled with critical consciousness of issues of diversity, justice and equity for students, educators may cease, "enabling the continuation of societal oppression through educational programming . . . (and) move beyond maintenance of routine to a second-order shift that will challenge the very core of the system on behalf of all our learners and society" (Frattura & Topinka, 2006, p. 328). Changing the way educators view students' diversities and abilities may influence learning theory.

Theoretical underpinnings of education. *Jerome Bruner (1915-).* Jerome Bruner, a social psychologist and professor of psychology, challenged thinking about learning as he studied needs, motivations, and expectations that influence perceptions, which he termed mental sets. Bruner (1996) developed a theory of cognitive growth emphasizing environmental and experiential factors related to learning. Bruner's initial focus of study centered on cognitive processes involved in the construction of meaning. Bruner later conceptualized theories of information and processing related to learning (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

In his early work, Bruner (1960) incorporated a behaviorist approach to thinking, later moving toward a constructivist model of learning. Using behaviorist philosophies

he developed a language acquisition model and studied the social and cultural processes of communication (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Bruner's (1960, 1996) learning theory provided a framework in which learning is an active process.

In the process of discovery, learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon current or past knowledge (Bruner, 1960). In later work, Bruner (1996) expanded this framework to encompass social and cultural aspects of learning for individuals. Bruner (1996) additionally proposed four constructs of instruction based on his cognitive theory of learning including a predisposition to learning, ways knowledge can be structured to be used by the learner, most effective sequences to present material for learning, and information on the nature and pacing of rewards and punishment critical to learning.

Within the aforementioned notions of cognition and learning, Bruner (1996) asserted that instructors should encourage students to learn through discovery. Bruner posited that the use of active dialogue methods, appropriate presentation and pacing, and organized curriculum are critical for student success. For this study, Bruner's concepts of discovery learning, instructional presentation and pacing, and curriculum organization are examined through the lens of social justice and educational equity for students. Educators who acknowledge diversity through a lens of critical consciousness using Bruner's work may develop an understanding of students' experiences and further plan meaningful discovery learning for all students.

Social Justice and Teaching and Learning

Theories of teaching and learning affect individuals, students and teachers, as well as educational systems, schools and universities. The literature is rich with theories on teaching, learning, and knowing, that serve to shape educational purposes and practices

across schools in the United States. Social science researchers explore teachers' and students' interactions related to student learning. Theory, the foundation for educational practices, provides the basis for exploration of teachers and teaching, and students and learning. Current educational practices of child-centered learning have been influenced by child developmental theories posited by Piaget and Vygotsky (Tzuo, 2007).

Theorists assert that a child's construction of knowledge is based on previous knowledge and experience or may be a result of social interaction and adaptation (Thomas, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget's and Vygotsky's significant contributions to constructivist approaches that define learning as the creation of meaning from experiences are among the educational foundations for student learning (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1991). From theories on knowledge and social experience, instructional practices that promote high-quality early learning experiences for children have evolved. In turn, the use of early effective instructional practices, constructivist in nature, allows students to create meaning which provides foundational supports for later learning successes (McWayne, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2004).

John Dewey (1859-1952). In the United States, amid a history of traditional and formal educational thought, grounded in notions of scientific management, progressivism as a philosophy of education gained voice (Egan, 2002). Prior to this time, philosophical perspectives of German idealism dominated the field of education. Idealists posited that knowledge was based on rational processes of thought, while Idealists valued and prioritized ideas, values, and essences for knowledge acquisition (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Dewey studied both the Rationalists' emphasis on the mind and the Empiricists' emphasis on the world. Dewey's studies of the mind and world led toward

notions of progressivism and a pragmatic, constructivist approach to knowing and learning (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

Progressivism, according to Dewey (1897, 1916), included notions of what an individual needed to be an effective educator. Proponents of progressivism argued that teachers must attend to and tailor instruction to a child's nature, modes of learning, and stages of development (Egan, 2002). This belief concerning tailoring instruction to stages of development for effective teaching and learning was in stark contrast to Traditionalists who viewed teaching and learning as "a linear predictable process that can easily be systematized and manipulated" (Pogrow, 2006, p. 142).

Dewey became most influential in facilitating changes in how teaching and learning was viewed and practiced. Of particular interest to him was epistemology, the study of the nature and structure of knowledge, as well as learning theory, which addresses how knowledge is acquired (Schwandt, 2007). Dewey's works provided insight into philosophical pragmatism and interactions related to knowing and learning.

Dewey emphasized concepts of reflection, experience, and interests of community and democracy (Dewey, 1916, 1934, 1938; Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). According to Dewey (1916, 1938) knowledge is gained through reflection, experience, and democratic processes and practices. From his work, theories on teaching and learning in the United States changed as priorities for teaching and learning included valuing and planning student experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey (1938) argued that through self-guided activity one interacts with the environment. Through this interaction, the learner integrates and interprets responses which facilitate knowledge and learning (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Additionally,

important to Dewey's educational philosophy were practices of inquiry and reflection. Dewey posited that inquiry involved three phases including a problem, situational parameters, and reflection on the problem.

Dewey (1934, 1938) wrote that reflection, as a practice of inquiry for knowledge, is accomplished through disciplined consideration of a subject in the mind following experiences. Therefore, Dewey (1938) placed acts of reflection at the highest level of inquiry for learners. His processes for reflection involved phases of thought, engaged in by the learner on an experience, including problematic lived experiences, interpretations, and defining or naming.

Dewey (1938) further added tasks of generating possible explanations and solutions, as well as the testing of hypotheses to determine value and worth of instructional teaching methods to his processes of reflection. Utilizing Dewey's practices, teachers design instructional activities for learners which increase students' knowing and learning in the classroom (Dewey, 1938). Through processes of inquiry and reflection, teachers and students alike gain knowledge for use in the classroom and beyond.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980). A contemporary of John Dewey was Jean Piaget, a biologist- psychologist-philosopher who studied the intellectual development of children. His interests and observations of learning began as he watched interactions among his own three children as he observed them in naturalistic settings (Austrian & Mandelbaum, 2008). Piaget (1977), like Dewey, was interested in how one develops and gains knowledge.

Piaget organized a structuralist theory of knowing that consisted of cognitive structures (Smith, 2002). From cognitive structures, Piaget (1977) believed that knowing developed in sequential stages, and further promulgated that children think differently than adults. According to Piaget, for children, development comes first, then learning. Shayer (1997) described the Piagetian acquisition of knowledge model as one of "ages and stages of cognitive development" (p. 37). In Piaget's model of cognitive development, knowledge is gained as a child performs actions on objects, and from actions on objects, children develop practical intelligence, representation knowledge, abstract understanding, and thinking.

Piaget's stages of development. Cognitive structures are foundational to Piaget's stages of development. Cognitive structures include patterns of physical or mental actions which underlie intelligence (Piaget, 1977; Smith, 2002). Schemas, organizations, or operations and accommodation make up cognitive structures.

Schemas are an individual's internal knowledge structures that make learning possible, while organizations and operations allow a learner to put schemas into patterns. Accommodation and assimilation allow learners to adapt or modify schemas based on new information or experiences (Austrian & Mandelbaum, 2008; Piaget, 1977). Utilizing the aforementioned cognitive processes, a child moves sequentially through various stages of development.

Piaget (1977) further identified four stages of development termed sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. The sensorimotor stage occurs from birth to two years old, while the preoperational stage may be observed from ages two to seven. The next phase of development for a child is the concrete operational

stage, ages seven to eleven, followed by the formal operational stage, ages eleven through adulthood (Piaget, 1977; Smith, 2002).

In the sensorimotor stage the child learns through motor and reflexive actions. In the preoperational stage the child uses language and applies symbols to represent objects. Next, in the concrete operational stage the child begins to think more abstractly and make rational judgments about observations. Finally, in the formal operational stage the child is able to make rational judgments without objects, thereby demonstrating hypothetical and deductive reasoning (Piaget, 1977; Smith, 2002).

Piaget's contributions to learning theory and cognitive development are evidenced across disciplines including education, psychology, sociology, and medicine. In education, Piaget's theories are used to design and implement instructional strategies and education curriculums appropriate for learners. While Piaget's and Dewey's theories of knowing and learning have influenced many disciplines, some authors offer criticisms of their work.

Dewey and Piaget: A criticism. Egan (2002) espoused that Dewey and Piaget built their theories of learning and development on tenets of progressivism based on the works of Herbert Spencer. Prior to views of progressivism, traditionalists held to formal concepts of teaching and learning. Traditionalists espoused that knowledge was imparted formally from the teacher to the student (Egan, 2002).

Spencer (1860) believed that information with no value was forced on students and he proposed, educators should draw on new scientific principles to make learning for students effective, efficient and pleasurable for students. He further demonstrated how learning and development followed similar universal laws and incorporated natural

teaching and learning processes, as well as teaching concepts from simple to complex described as natural type learning (Egan, 2002). Similarly, Piaget's philosophical tenets of development were premised on natural laws.

Egan (2002) criticized Spencer for promoting the thought "that children's minds have a preferred natural kind of learning and that if we can isolate and understand it we can make the educational process more efficient and effective" (p. 39). Egan further stated that the extreme evolutionary and developmental nature of Spencer's and Piaget's theories moved educational practices to an extremely developmental approach to teaching and learning. Measured by a standard of development theory, curriculum became judged useful or not based solely on developmental criteria. As a result, cognitive tools used for teaching and learning became overlooked (Egan, 2002). Egan asserted that we cannot truly know the nature of any child; however, effective educators focus ideas on knowing and teaching on both cultural and cognitive tools that contribute to learning.

Criticisms as mentioned above withstanding, another theorist, Vygotsky (1978), formed notions of thought, language and knowledge, studying cognitive and learning processes in children. From an educational background framed in Marxist philosophy, Vygotsky offered significant contributions to concepts of knowing and learning. Vygotsky's philosophies of knowing and learning significantly influenced education and teaching and learning constructs for students in schools.

Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934).

> *What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it.* (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 18)

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist held a law degree and was influenced by the Marxist philosophies and the teachings of Hegel. Hegel's theories of dialectics, the combining of two opposing elements in one entity, influenced Vygotsky's thinking and theorizing on learning and development (Wink & Putney, 2002). Vygotsky contributed to educational theory with ideas on thought and language related to knowledge.

Vygotsky's (1978) philosophical constructs of learning called for viewing teaching and learning through the lens of dialectics. While for Piaget development preceded learning, Vygotsky posited that learning prompted development (Wink & Putney, 2002). For Piaget, biology was important in development, for Vygotsky, the social environment was critical (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

Vygotsky (1986) based his theories on beliefs that knowing and learning resulted from social relations. Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006) discussed three themes surrounding Vygotsky's work. First, Vygotsky (1978) proposed a genetic or developmental method to knowing and learning. Second, Vygotsky claimed that thinking and learning begin through social processes. Finally, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that mental processes on the part of the individual are only understood when interpreted through a social lens.

As stated above, Hegel's (1874) work with dialectics influenced Vygotsky's constructs of knowing. Dialectics involves logic used to resolve disagreements through rational discussion which is persuasive in nature (Marietta, 1998). Using constructs of language and thought, coupled with dialectic methods, Vygotsky contrasted the conceptual works of others, including Piaget, and generated his own novel theories of thought, language, and speech (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Two major ideas in Vygotsky's (1978) theory included concepts of language and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). First, Vygotsky used the broadest conceptualization of language for his work including thought and speech amid culture, complete with history and sociocultural contexts (Wink & Putney, 2002). Secondly, through the use of the ZPD he constructed learning and development not as separate constructs, but interrelated processes (Vygotsky, 1978; Wink & Putney, 2002).

According to Vygotsky (1978), individuals use language, thinking, and speech to make meaning of self and others through experiences and posited that all one does as an individual is encompassed by social and cultural influences in a political environment (Wink & Putney, 2002). Vygotsky's ideas and concepts moved views of knowledge away from developmental models toward thought, learning, and social constructs which positioned knowledge and cognitive learning in a framework of social and cultural activities (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

Vygotsky (1978) further proposed that cognitive development, found in what he termed the ZPD, involves a child's engagement in social behavior and through social engagement different levels of development are attained. Vygotsky defined the ZPD as, "The distance between actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD encompassed constructs of what a child is coming to know and learn (Wink & Putney, 2002).

While there are similarities and differences between Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories, both theorists' notions on teaching, learning, and knowing have continued to

impact educational classrooms profoundly in the United States. Both theories are child-centered, aiming for an increased understanding of developmental and learning processes (Tzuo, 2007). Through understanding development, knowing, and learning, effective pedagogy practices are created continually. Differences between Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories involve how knowledge is constructed. For Piaget, knowledge resulted from developmental progression, for Vygotsky, from language and thinking in a social context (Tzuo, 2007).

Additional Learning Theories

Theoretical approaches to knowing and learning in education often center on learning theory models. Several learning theories that influenced knowing, teaching, and learning in education significantly are behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism (Schuman, 1996). This section of the literature review for this study is intended to explore concepts of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism related to education and learning.

Behaviorism. Behaviorism, according to John B. Watson (1930), proposed that behaviors can be measured, trained, and changed. Behaviorism in learning theory posits that instruction is achieved via observable, measurable, and controllable objectives set forth by teachers and met by learners. Components of a behaviorism approach to teaching and learning include the use of stimuli and responses. Behaviorism, based on the original works of Watson and subsequently B. F. Skinner, is positivistic in the nature of the approach toward behaviors and learning (Leonard, 2002).

Skinner's (1938) work with training mice to behave consistently influenced ideas about the use of behavioral training in teaching and learning and affected the field of

education. Behaviorism theorists in educational practices seek to design and implement control of the learning environment, stressing outcomes, and the external states of the learner (Leonard, 2002). Outcomes for learners associated with behaviorism include observable behaviors, as well as the demonstration of students' learning evidenced by artifacts or products.

As previously stated, behaviorism involves approaches to teaching and learning that are objective in nature and posit that knowledge exists outside the individual and can or must be transferred to the learner. This transference of knowledge occurs from teacher to student as students learn what they hear and read. The success of behavioral learning experiences is measured by whether or not the student can verbalize or write a response to what was taught (Arseneau & Rodenburg, 1998). In sum, behaviorism theorists in education, seek to "reduce the study of the mind to that which could be objectively measured and, thus, labeled as rational" (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. xxi).

Cognitivism. While behaviorism theorists emphasize external learner outcomes, the purpose of cognitivism is to seek to understand the internal mental states of the individual learner, understanding how one thinks involving learning theory that incorporates how the brain receives, internalizes, and recalls information (Leonard, 2002). Cognitivism is a major theory in the field of psychology. Cognitivist theorists seek to understand self-awareness, beliefs, influences, and aspects of environmental awareness related to thinking and learning (Leonard, 2002). Tenets of cognitivism are found in the works of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner.

Piaget's *Genetic Epistemology* and Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* are designed to examine internal states of learners. Piaget's (1977) search to understand

a child's thought processes, as well as his subsequent work to structure developmental stages further demonstrated constructs of cognitivism. Bruner's (1960) work linked to cognitivism involved concepts of discovery learning and cognition on the part of students. Both Piaget and Bruner placed emphasis on learners aligning their philosophies of learning with principles of cognitivism (Leonard, 2002).

Cognitivism, however, differs from constructivist theories or approaches to knowing and learning. Leonard (2002) offered that relativistic knowing in the process of teaching and learning generates conflict between approaches of cognitivism and constructivism. Knowing if the learning envisioned by the student and the teacher at the end of the lesson is both an actual and an absolute reality separates concepts of cognitivism and constructivism theories. Cognitivists focus on the means for transferring knowledge, while constructivists focus on the structures and opportunities for students for learning (Leonard, 2002).

Constructivist approaches for knowing and learning. As stated above, Piaget (1977) promulgated that learning and knowing for a child were focused on development in ages and stages, while Vygotsky (1978) posited that foundations of cognition and learning for a child were based on thinking, language and speech, and social interaction. Bruner (1960) focused his explorations related to knowing and learning on social and cultural aspects of discovery learning for a child. Both Vygotsky's and Bruner's philosophies demonstrate constructivist approaches to knowing and learning.

Constructivist philosophical or theoretical approaches to knowing and learning differ sharply from approaches of empirical or positivistic thought. Empirical, scientific frameworks posit an objective view of the world, one governed by natural laws,

principles of causality, and a world that is value-free (Pitman & Maxwell, 1992). In sharp contrast, Guba and Lincoln (1985) discussed concepts of constructivism and interpretivisim, positing that reality and knowing occurs in fact in one's group and surroundings. Guba and Lincoln further asserted that meaning is created by individuals and groups through their interactions with others.

Constructivism involves concepts of knowing that occurs in one's group and surroundings, as well as constructs of meaning making. Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner framed their works with tenets of constructivism. Piaget structured his theories on knowing and learning with constructivist principles asserting that "knowledge of the world is mediated in cognitive structures" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 31).

Piaget further expanded ideas of knowledge and cognitive structures in a constructivist paradigm positing, that during an interaction or experience, using schemes coupled with accommodation and assimilation principles, a learner employs existing cognitive processes to gain knowledge (Leonard, 2002; Piaget, 1977). Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978, 1986), through social development theory involving principles of constructivism, asserted that knowledge and learning occur when individuals develop language, thinking, and speech in social contexts and interactions. Piaget and Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of interactions and experiences, as well as individuals' experiences within groups or surroundings, thereby demonstrating principles of constructivism for knowing and learning (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Indeed, constructivist approaches help define learning experiences through the creation of meaning from experience (Bednar et al., 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Constructivism is designed to frame new knowledge and learning around prior

knowledge and within such contexts, the learner draws from prior knowledge and experience to increase and expand what is known (Leonard, 2002). From constructivist approaches, high-quality early learning experiences may provide foundational supports for later learning success by students (McWayne et al., 2004).

Social learning theory. A final theory for review in this study is social learning or social cognitive theory, originally termed observational learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963). Bandura (1986), through social learning theory, asserted that human learning is an ongoing process of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental components. Bandura (1977, 1986) discussed how children observe and imitate adult behaviors, as well as how violence portrayed in the media influences learning, stating that seeing violence influences the person watching the violence, and in turn, this influence might increase aggression on the part of the observer (Bandura, 1986; Grusec, 1992).

Bandura's theories have been explored in educational research on teaching and learning, as well as in areas of classroom management techniques. In social learning theory, seeing and doing influence knowing for the learner. Aptly named, social learning theory relates to the process of learning social behaviors through observations of other people and their actions (Bandura, 1986).

Within constructs of social learning theory, Bandura (1977) discussed additional theories including critical theory and emotional appraisal theory (Leonard, 2002). Followers of critical theory posit that learners internally assess and appraise models they observe and externally try to imitate models, while emotional appraisal theorists focus on the prediction of emotions within a learning experience that might inhibit or enhance learner outcomes (Leonard, 2002). Social learning theory involves learning as it occurs

from the simple process of observation and the observers' subsequent imitation of what was seen, while emotional appraisal theorists attempt to look at the emotional initiates or constraints an individual experiences prior to acting on what is seen (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Leonard, 2002). Bandura's critical and emotional theory constructs further the understanding and importance of relationships in learning.

Therefore, social learning theory is associated with basic themes. First, people learn vicariously by experience and observation. Secondly, people model behavior based on identification tenets including similarities and emotional attachments. Lastly, consequences influence whether a person will repeat a behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Grusec, 1992; Leonard, 2002).

Bandura (1997) later changed the name of social learning theory to social cognitive theory and focused on topics of self-efficacy of the individual and the effects of the individual's interaction with the environment. Individual's interactions are experiences including "exposure to models, verbal discussions, and discipline encounters" (Grusec, 1992, p. 781). In education, the child or learner observes and imitates a model and through observation, imitation, and modeling, learns information, and demonstrates an understanding of rules (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Social cognitive theory constructs have influenced the field of education significantly and facilitated understanding of the effects of the environment on student learning.

Importance of Learning Theories to Social Justice

The application of learning theories in educational contexts varies among teachers and schools, yet remains central to teaching and learning for all students. Understanding contributions of philosophies of education and theories of teaching and learning furthers

the understanding and implementation of teaching and learning activities designed to promote student achievement. Also, understanding learning theories influences teachers' abilities to observe and understand students' behaviors, as well as reflect on teachers' expectations for students' behavior and teachers' practices regarding referrals for students for special education services. Finally, it is important to review and discuss constructs of social justice and educational equity for students in education. From this exploration and understanding, educators may develop increased critical consciousness skills and practices for educational equity for students who traditionally have been marginalized in schooling in the United States.

Social justice and issues in special education. As previously mentioned in this literature review, education and particularly special education services in the United States changed with heightened awareness in Europe and the United States of differences among students with exceptionalities. Additionally, an awareness and focus on principles of social justice in education occurred with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the World Declaration on Education for All. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 it was declared that parents held the right to choose the kind of education for their children, while the World Declaration on Education for All, provided steps to equal access to education for every category of disabled persons as part of education (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2008). Social justice in education initiatives such as those discussed above has influenced regular education, as well special education involving identification, eligibility, and inclusion practices for students.

Attention in the United States to social justice and special education. As previously mentioned, concepts of social justice in education include beliefs that

individuals are entitled to equal rights and participation in all educational opportunities (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2008). The aims of social justice are first defined in the United States in the equal protection and due process guarantees of the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution. Procedural mandates for equal participation in education, as well as due process practices for students in special education are found in special education law included in IDEIA (2004).

Schools in the United States are educating greater numbers of students from varied racial, ethnic, and experiential backgrounds (Planty et al., 2008). Student achievement mandates and measures of accountability move schools to reexamine effective instructional practices (USDE, 2002). Sadly, in some schools students who are unable to meet criterion referenced indicators or benchmarks for a particular grade level, who are less proficient in English, ethnically diverse, experience lower status, or demonstrate atypical or challenging behaviors are referred quickly for special education services (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002).

While some referrals and placements may be appropriate, others may not be appropriate. Indeed, special education services may be sought and offered for some students who are not eligible per IDEIA mandates. Also, special education services may not be offered to other students who would qualify, however, because they do not demonstrate challenging behaviors that are disrupting in class, and as such manage to 'make it through somehow' in a regular classroom in the educational system (Artiles et al., 2001; Daugherty, 2001; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998).

Disparate opportunities. Despite legislative actions and procedural safeguards found in IDEIA, the history of special education services is replete with examples of

disparate educational opportunities that marginalize learning for students. Underrepresentation and overrepresentation of student populations in special education services can be found (Artiles et al., 2001; Daniels, 1998; Daugherty, 2001; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Kavale, 2005; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002). Additionally, the implementation of eligibility criteria mandated in IDEIA may be different among states across the United States (Kavale, 2005). States' implementation differences and incongruities in special education identification, eligibility, and services with federal and state mandates may result in disparate opportunities for students in schools in the United States.

Trends in the number of students requiring special education services. The United States Department of Education is responsible for compiling data on students served under IDEIA. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), located within the USDE, and the Institute of Education Services (IES) are responsible for collecting and analyzing data related to education and special education. Reports from the NCES and IES provide the basis for a quantitative understanding of students who receive special education services in schools in the United States.

Issues of underidentification and overidentification. Researchers study demographic data on students receiving special education services and from reviews of data on students receiving special education services patterned practices are identified. Both the underidentification and overidentification of minority students receiving special education services have been discussed in the literature (Artiles et al., 2001; Daniels, 1998; Daugherty, 2001; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Kauffman et al., 2007; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Ysseldyke &

Algozzine, 1982). Daniels reported the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs, while MacMillan and Reschly discussed the overrepresentation of minority students in special education classes.

Disproportionality exists when the proportion of different ethnic groups in any category or program is larger when compared to the proportion of the ethnic group within the total school population (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998). Disproportionality trends have been explored at local, state, and national levels and identified trends may indicate underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a student population receiving special education services under a specific disability category within a school (Artiles et al., 2001, 2004).

To measure proportionality or disproportionality MacMillan and Reschly (1998) recommended a two-pronged formula. First, calculate the number of children who represent an ethnic group within a particular disability category and calculate a simple measure of proportionality within the particular school. Second, calculate the number of students of a particular race or ethnicity who are in a specific special education category, divided by the total number of students of that particular race or ethnicity in the individual school site, school district, schools in a state, or total number of schools in the nation. Using this method, reviewers are provided a more in-depth look at student representation in special education services including patterns of individual schools, particular districts, or states regarding instances of underidentification or overidentification (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998).

Racial and ethnic distribution in schools in the United States. To underscore the need to understand and address issues of underrepresentation and overrepresentation

of students in special education services in schools in the United States, a review of the racial/ethnic distribution of students in public schools in the United States is needed. As previously stated schools in the United States are undergoing significant shifts in racial and ethnic distribution.

During the period from 1972 to 2006 the percentage of white students in schools in the United States decreased from 78% to 57%, while the percentage of students considered part of a minority group rose from 22% to 43%. Enrollment data for school year 2006 indicate a student population comprised of 16% Black, 20% Hispanic, 3.8% Asian, .2% Pacific Islander, 7% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 2.7% students of more than one race (Planty et al., 2008). Planty et al. reported that in school year 2006-2007, of those receiving special education services, 1% were American Indian/Alaska Native, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 17% Hispanic, 20% Black, and 59% White.

The numbers of students ages 3-21 receiving special education services in the United States rose steadily from 1976-1977 to 2004-2005 then declined in 2006-2007 (Planty et al., 2008). The percentage of students served under IDEIA from 1976 through 2005-2006 ranged from 8.3% (1976-1977) to 13.8% (2005-2006) of the total school population in the United States. The most current data reports available indicate that for school year 2006-2007, 13.5% of total school enrollments were served under IDEIA (Planty et al., 2008).

Poverty and disproportionality. While the disproportionality of students receiving special education services based on race/ethnicity has been discussed previously in the literature review for this study, other researchers offered alternate factors which contribute to disproportionality. Wagner (1995) attributed poverty over

ethnicity as the prime contributing factor to disproportionate student placements in special education services. Artiles et al. (2001) cited school wealth and training factors, student socioeconomic status, and biased assessment practices as contributing factors to the disproportionality of student populations receiving special education services. Despite the cause, issues contributing to misidentification and disproportionality in special education services continue to be of persistent and mounting concern and consequence to educators, parents, and students.

Oklahoma data on disproportionality. Staff members of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) compile an Annual Performance Report (APR) for the United States Department of Education (USDE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (Oklahoma State Department of Education [OSDE], 2008a). The objective of this report is to include descriptive data on students receiving special education services and further address issues for state practices for data collection. Per USDE-OSEP guidelines each state must draft a State Performance Plan (SPP) including indicators and strategies required to meet mandates specified in IDEIA legislation. Individual SPPs include plan targets and actual performance indicators for each specific goal area including disproportionality and discipline information (OSDE, 2008d).

Oklahoma's SPP drafted for 2005-2010 includes indicators for disproportionality, as well as areas of student suspension and expulsion. Regarding disproportionality measures, OSDE (OSDE, 2008d) indicated the use of risk-ratio method and multi-layer analysis for interpreting and reporting disproportionality data. First, risk-ratio method is used to measure the relative risk of identification for each race or ethnicity in a particular school district (OSDE, 2008d). Risk-ratio method is

> calculated by dividing the proportion of students who are of a specific race or ethnicity, receiving special education or related services (i.e., the risk of identification for that [particular] race/ethnicity) for each disability category by the proportion of students who are of all other races and ethnicities who are receiving special education and related services (i.e., the risk of identification for all other races/ethnicities) for the disability category. Thus, a relative risk ratio of 1.0 suggests perfectly proportionate representation of the racial or ethnic group of students receiving special education and related services for the disability category. The OSDE-SES has defined "disproportionate representation" as a risk ratio of less than or equal to 0.5 (underrepresentation) or 2.5 or greater (overrepresentation) for each race or ethnicity. (OSDE, 2008d, p. 28)

Second, multi-layer analysis is done to provide information to help district leaders determine if disproportionality numbers for a particular school district resulted from the inappropriate identification of students receiving special education services. Individual Oklahoma school districts flagged for high disproportionality rates based on their risk-ratio numbers must undergo multi-layer compliance measures set forth by the OSDE-SES including,

> Districts may be required to submit copies of any data on pre-referral, evaluation, and eligibility procedures not established by the OSDE-Special Education Services (SES) to the OSDE-SES. The OSDE-SES reviews the documents for appropriateness and compliance with IDEA. Following this review, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) who submit incomplete or inappropriate documentation will be asked to complete telephone interviews regarding the

> procedures. If compliance cannot be determined through documentation submitted by the LEA or telephone interviews with the LEA, the OSDE-SES will conduct an on-site investigation. For LEAS whose disproportionate representation is determined to be the result of inappropriate identification, the OSDE-SES may include in the corrective action plan a requirement of the LEA to reevaluate all students within the race/ethnicity. LEAs may also be required to establish appropriate referral, evaluation, and eligibility procedures. (OSDE, 2008d, p. 31)

While the Oklahoma SPP targets a 0% disproportionality rate for schools, actual data for Oklahoma school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, under Part B (IDEIA) for school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 respectively, indicated,

> [FY 2005-06] Five hundred thirty seven of 540 LEAs (99.44%) evidenced disproportionate representation by race/ethnicity. Thirty-four of the LEAs evidenced only underidentification (i.e., they were not disproportionate due to overidentification). The remaining 503 LEAs evidenced overidentification (and may also have evidenced underidentification). The multi-layer analysis found that none (0%) of the LEAs had disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that was the result of inappropriate identification (note: three LEAs were not included in the analysis because they are state facilities housing only special education students; thus, they do not participate in the identification of students as students with disabilities).
>
> [FY 2006-07] Three hundred fifty-eight of 540 LEAs (66.30%) evidenced disproportionate representation by race/ethnicity. Two hundred twenty-one of the

> LEAs evidenced only underidentification (i.e., they were not disproportionate due to overidentification). The remaining 137 LEAs evidenced overidentification (and may also have evidenced underidentification). The multi-layer analysis found that three of 540 (0.56%) of the LEAs had disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that was the result of inappropriate identification (note: three LEAs were not included in the analysis because they are state facilities housing only special education students; thus, they do not participate in the identification of students as students with disabilities). (OSDE, 2008d, p. 32)

Oklahoma SPP data on disproportionality. For 2005-2006, Oklahoma data indicated a 99.44% disproportion rate based on race/ethnicity of students receiving special education and related services and 0% disproportionality based on inappropriate identification procedures. For 2006-2007, a 66.30% disproportion rate based on race/ethnicity of students receiving special education and related services and 0.56% disproportionality rate based on inappropriate identification procedures (OSDE, 2008d). Regarding identification procedures it was further reported that districts in Oklahoma underidentified students reported as Asian in categories of Serious Emotional Disturbance, Other Health Impaired, Specific Learning Disabilities, and Mental Retardation, and Hispanic students in the categories of Serious Emotional Disturbance, Other Health Impaired, and Autism (OSDE, 2008d). While the above data indicate that disproportion rates based on race/ethnicity of students receiving special education and related services in schools in Oklahoma decreased from 99.44% in 2005-2006 to 66.30% in the 2006-2007 school years, disproportionality rates based on inappropriate

identification procedures increased from 0% in 2005-2006 to .056% in 2006-2007 (OSDE, 2008d).

While the target rate for LEAs for disproportionality based on inappropriate identification procedures is 0%, the OSDE-SES has defined "disproportionate representation" as a risk ratio of less than or equal to 0.5 (underrepresentation) or 2.5 or greater (overrepresentation) for each race or ethnicity (OSDE, 2008d, p. 28). Therefore, an increase from 0% in 2005-2006 to .056% in 2006-2007 may be considered significant.

District SPP Data Responses for an Oklahoma School

The SPP data for the Oklahoma LEA for this case study are examined. Under the category of "Disproportionality of Children with a Disability" the LEA responded "No" to the question, "Does the district have disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification?" The district authorities also responded "No" under the category of Disproportionality-Eligibility to the question, "Does the district have disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is a result of inappropriate identification?" (OSDE, 2008b, p. 29).

Concerns from the above data review include how leaders of individual districts respond to the target yes/ no questions on SPP documents, including what documentation for a yes or no response is required, and how districts are identified for multi-analysis procedures regarding disproportionality of the identification of students for special education services. Finally, information from reviews of the above-mentioned OSDE-SES SPP reports indicates that disproportionality of students receiving special education and related services exists in school districts in Oklahoma (OSDE, 2008d).

Eligibility criteria differences among states. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement (2004) legislation was designed to broadly frame states' responsibilities and procedures to ensure FAPE for all students. States participating and receiving federal funds must follow IDEIA mandates and guidelines which encompass practices for identification and eligibility procedures for students for special education services (IDEIA, 2004). Individual states in the United States, however, demonstrate differences in the adoption of practices for implementing special education services.

States receiving federal funds for special education services must provide services for students who demonstrate a disability and meet eligibility criteria as defined in IDEIA, however, states may or may not adopt similar disability categories, or eligibility criteria in response to the legislation (Reschly, 1996). Differences among states in the interpretation of special education laws make it possible for a student to quality for services in one state and not another. Other examples of the aforementioned differences include intelligence quotient (IQ) numbers needed for placement as well as uses of adaptive behavior scales or information (Reschly, 1996). Finally, states may differ regarding test selection for qualification and placement for special education services, extent of testing determined appropriate for an identification or placement decision, and each individual districts' discrepancy score numbers needed for placement (McLeskey & Waldron, 1991).

When the number or ratio of students receiving special education services is not appropriate, researchers disagree on causal factors for the inappropriate identification of students for special education and related services. In *Larry P. v. Riles, 793 F.2d 969 (9th Cir.) 1979*, the Court found that discriminatory intelligence tests were used to

identify and place black students in educable mentally retarded classes (EMR) (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982). Other scholars in the literature cited subjective natures of processes including referrals for special education services; teacher attempted interventions and modifications, and assessments, as well as decisions made by Individualized Educational Program (IEP) teams (McLeskey & Waldron, 1991; Pugach, 1985). Issues of classification, funding, eligibility interpretation, test selection and scoring, and cut-off scores further complicate consistencies of practices for special education services for students in the United States (McLeskey & Waldron, 1991).

McLeskey and Waldron (1991) discussed factors involved in inappropriate identification procedures for students for special education services among states in the United States. First, a lack of consistency in identification procedures may exist. Secondly, misidentifications may result from a lack of understanding or training on the part of administrators and teachers. Finally, inappropriate identification instances may stem from teachers' desires to make students eligible (knowing they do not meet identification or eligibility criteria) in an attempt to provide students with additional support. The result of the aforementioned differences in identification and eligibility practices among states may well be inappropriate overidentification of students needing special education services including those categorized as learning disabled (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002).

Referral decisions based on students' challenging behaviors. An additionally troubling premise is that students challenging behaviors, which are troubling to teachers, versus students' lagging academic achievement levels, may precipitate referrals and placements for students for special education services (McLeskey & Waldron, 1991).

Referrals for students for special education services based on students' challenging behaviors are particularly difficult. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) mandates eligibility criteria, however, once again there is variability in interpretation among school personnel in states and districts in the identification and services of students for special education services. A major area for differences among states is found in the area of identification and eligibility criteria for students for special education services under the category of Emotional Disturbance (ED) and behavioral disabilities.

Emotional disturbance (ED) and socially maladjusted (SM). The federal definition for Emotional Disturbance (ED) was based on the work and definitions of Eli Bower (1981) during the 1960s. Emotional Disturbance, as defined in IDEIA includes students exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time, to a marked degree, and the characteristics must adversely affect a child's educational performance:

1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(Additionally, ED includes schizophrenia. This term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined that they have an ED. (IDEIA, 2004, Sec.300.8 (c) (4) (i) (A))

Leaders of individual states use this definition to draft policies and procedures for individual school district adoption. Leaders of individual school districts follow the state policies and procedure. While the definition is the same for states and districts, differences in the interpretation of the definition present as problematic. Understanding differences between a "disability" and a medical diagnosis, influences of poor self-esteem, poor choices, or other issues confound educators. Also, confusing to teachers is the relatedness of Conduct Disorders (CD) such as Social Maladjustment (SM) and ED as qualifying categories for special education services for students which has been debated in the literature (Forness, Kavale, & Lopez, 1993; Kauffman et al., 2007; Merrell & Walker, 2004; Slenkovich, 1992).

Conduct disorders involve a diagnosis synonymous or associated with SM in children and by the early part of the 21st century has yet to be defined in federal law (Merrell & Walker, 2004). Social Maladjustment has been defined by court decisions in several states to include oppositional or defiant behavior (Slenkovich, 1992). While state courts have used this definition for SM, no universally accepted federal definition, such as the definition for ED, has been adopted (Merrell & Walker, 2004). Proponents of "no universal definition of SM" report that children who display antisocial, rule-breaking, and aggressive behaviors that impair their own functioning may be defined as unmanageable and meet the standards of what constitutes a conduct disorder (Forness et al., 1993, p. 101).

ED/SM classification issues for schools. In the early part of the 21st century, schools receiving funding from IDEIA (2004) are required to identify, qualify, and provide special education services and related services appropriately for students with emotional problems described in the above definition under the category of ED; however, schools are required to exclude students who demonstrate characteristics associated with SM from special education services. While this is mandated in IDEIA, debates on whether SM and ED can or should be differentiated bog down amid the aforementioned definitional differences, as well as among educators and schools' individual philosophies of practice (Kauffman et al., 2007; Merrell & Walker, 2004).

First, it is reported that instruments designed specifically to differentiate ED, SM, and CD are ineffective (Kauffman et al., 2007; Merrell & Walker, 2004). Secondly, it is proposed that, "A youngster cannot be socially maladjusted by any credible interpretation of the term, without exhibiting one or more of the five characteristics [of the definition of ED] to a marked degree and over a long period of time" (Merrell & Walker, 2004, p. 901). This statement underscores arguments that an ability to differentiate or distinguish between the characteristics of an emotional disturbance versus a conduct disorder such as SM may not be relevant or possible.

In opposition, Slenkovich (1992) argued that documented court decisions provide sufficient interpretations to clarify the definition of SM and distinguish SM from ED. Slenkovich offered *A.E. Evans v. Independent School District No. 25, 936 F.2d 472, 476 (10th Cir.1991)*; *Doe v. Board of Education, 530 U.S. 290 (2000);* and *Doe v. Sequoia Union High School District N.D. (Cal.1987),* as evidence of clarification. In the above court cases, cutting class, lots of sex, drugs, and abusive language are cited as evidence of

SM (Slenkovich, 1992). All students in the aforementioned cases were excluded ultimately from special education services for students under the category of ED.

Understanding issues of eligibility for ED and teachers' referral practices. Acknowledging difficulties among professionals regarding definition and eligibility issues surrounding the category of ED, as well as decisions involving students who may or may not qualify for special education and related services under the category of ED, educators face unique challenges when confronted with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. Researchers have reported in the literature that students' challenging behaviors may often be the sole initiating cause for referrals for special education services (Reschly, 1996; Ysseldyke, 2001). Therefore, teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors are important because they may serve to determine whether a teacher refers students for special education or related services based on challenging behaviors.

Shepard and Smith (1983) discovered significant numbers of students who were categorized as needing special education services because they displayed difficult behaviors in the classroom, not as a result of lowered academic achievement resulting from a learning disability. Oswald, Best, Coutinho, and Nagle (2003) posited that more boys than girls were referred for special education services based on teachers' responses to boys' challenging behaviors. Shepard and Smith (1983) speculated teachers who referred students who demonstrated challenging behaviors wanted the student to be removed from their classrooms. Such findings in earlier research prompt further discussion in the early part of the 21st century of the issues of overidentification or underidentification of students receiving special education services.

In contrast to researchers who have discussed the problems of overidentification of students needing special education services, other researchers found teachers under-referring students for special education services (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higardea, 2005; Daniels, 1998; De Valenzuela, Copeland, Huaqing Qi, & Park, 2006; Guiberson, 2009; Kauffman et al., 2007). Specifically, researchers have identified the underidentification of students who demonstrate the emotional and behavioral characteristics needed to meet the eligibility criteria under ED for special education placement and services (Fantuzzo et al., 1999; Kauffman, 2001). In the aforementioned instances, students who may demonstrate a need for special education services for school success are denied access for services.

Other possible causes for inappropriate special education referrals for students found in the literature include parent and teacher issues. Researchers assert that special education referrals for students may result from increased parental pressure for identification and placement of students for special education services (Warner, Schumaker, Alley, & Deshler, 1980). Additionally, some educators may refer students with intentions for "the removal of troublesome students from the mainstream educational environment" (Peterson & Skiba, 2000, p. 340).

As discussed above, McLeskey and Waldron (1991) reported that teachers may display limited understanding of the identification and eligibility criteria for special education services, and the researchers further discussed situations when a student was determined eligible for special education services with full knowledge on the part of the teacher and team that the student did not meet the mandated criteria for placement. In instances where student placement in special education services was not based

appropriately on eligibility criteria set forth by IDEIA, IEP teams reported they continued with special education identification and placement for services because they wanted additional assistance for students struggling with learning (McLeskey & Waldron, 1991; Shepard, 1983).

Additionally, researchers further suggest that teachers with lowered self-efficacy initiate more referrals for students for special education services (Meijer & Foster, 1988; Soodak & Podell, 1994). However, Egyed and Short (2006) found no relationship between teacher self-efficacy and subsequent special education referral practices. Finally, speculation and practices as those mentioned above highlight the need for additional studies on teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referral processes for students for special education services.

Because referral processes for special education services may begin with the intent of "refer-test-place" teachers may express great relief once a category or label and special education services have been assigned (Algozzine et al., 1982; Peterson & Skiba, 2001; Pugach, 1985). For teachers, the referral and assessments for a student for special education services may provide explanations as to why the students behave as they do, as well as why the teacher was unable to teach the students adequately. Teachers' referral processes often culminate for students in special education services eligibility, a modified curriculum, and a special class with another teacher (Algozzine et al., 1982; Egyed & Short, 2006; Pugach, 1985).

The importance of this study began with teachers' experiences with students' challenging behaviors, teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services for

students, the researchers' experiences with teachers, and the potential effects of referrals for special education placement and services on students' achievement. Exploring issues of teachers' perspectives of students' challenging behaviors and the reasons for teachers' referrals for special education services for students through the lens of social justice theory and educational equity was the focus of this study.

Conclusions

The objective of the literature review for the study was to examine issues of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for students for special education services through historical and contemporary contexts of exceptionality and special education services, as well as explore philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of education and teaching and learning theories. Additionally, the exploration of literature for this study included concepts of social justice and educational equity for students in education.

Furthermore, the rationale for the literature reviewed for this study involved issues of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for students for special education services, as well as social justice in education concerns for students in schools in the United States. The literature for the historical context of the literature review included the history of exceptionality and special education services for students in schools in the United States, while underscoring international and national movements for social justice in education. Focus of the contemporary contexts in the literature review was to highlight legislation mandates for special education services for students, as well as notions on current issues of diversity, critical consciousness, and education equity in schools which may impact teachers'

responses to students with challenging behaviors and teachers' referrals for special education services for students.

For this literature review, philosophical and theoretical underpinnings for teaching and learning were discussed through the examination of theorists whose works formed foundational thought for knowing, development, and learning such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Skinner, Watson, and Bandura. Additionally discussed for this review were constructs of learning theories including behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism which may affect teachers' beliefs and practices and subsequently affect social justice in education for students. With a philosophical and theoretical understanding of teaching and learning constructs, as well as heightened awareness and critical consciousnesses concerning principles of student diversity, social justice, and educational equity for students, educators may experience an increased understanding of the importance and need for democratic communities of learning for students who have been marginalized traditionally in schools in the United States.

Finally, in the literature review for the study, the marginalization of students in schools in the United States was explored through the lens of disparate educational opportunities for students and examples of differences among states regarding the implementation of special education legislation. Furthermore, literature in this review contained differences among states in the United States concerning referrals, identification, and eligibility for students for special education services. Finally, this literature review included state and district report data related to disproportionality in special education services for the school district identified as the case for the study.

Chapter 3: Method

Good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking (Stake, 1995, p. 19).

A case study is . . . an in-depth, multifaceted investigation . . . of a single social phenomenon (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991, p. 2).

The foundation of knowledge for the discipline of education stems from research and defines educational research "as the systematic collection and analysis of data in order to develop valid, generalizable descriptions, predictions, interventions, and explanations relating to various aspects of education" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative research, according to Creswell (1998), involves

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

Case study inquiry, a particular type of qualitative research, is described by Stake (1995) as, "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Stake (1995, 2008) further stated that case studies of interest in the fields of education and sociology include studies of people and programs. Case study inquiries are used to explore issues concerning both what does and does not constitute a case (Stake, 2008).

A case must represent specificity rather than generality, and it is by this distinction that a 'bounded case' or system exists (Stake, 2008, p. 121). This case study

contains both qualitative and quantitative components and the focus was to explore a case, a bounded group of teachers, administrators, and related service providers within a bounded system, a particular school district. The school district for this study is found in the mid-southwestern region of the United States and is considered among the largest independent school districts in the state. The goal of this case study was to examine teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services in this district during the 2004 to 2009 school years.

This chapter begins with a discussion of philosophical frameworks in qualitative research and case study inquiry. Next, the conceptualization of the research problem and questions, as well as types of case study research is offered. The research design section includes the purpose of this inquiry, the research questions, and the appropriateness of the design for this study. Methodologies used in the study are presented next, followed by the confidentiality measures that were used in the study. Finally, data analysis procedures including triangulation methods and constructs of trustworthiness for the study are presented.

Philosophical Frameworks and Case Study

Understanding the philosophical framework of research involves concepts of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology encompasses the nature of reality, and "is concerned with understanding the kinds of things that constitute the world" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 157). Epistemology involves the study of the "nature of knowledge and justification" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 71). Methodology concerns "a theory of how inquiry should proceed" and includes the "analysis of assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161).

Researchers often discuss the principles of ontology, epistemology, and methodology within a constructivist paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994) asserted that within the constructivist paradigm, "ontology involves realities that are multiple, social, and experientially based." Furthermore, the realities are "dependent . . . on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (p. 110). Epistemologically, a constructivist paradigm presents a "transactional and subjectivist" reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

In this reality, the researcher and the object of study are participating dually in the study, and through the rigor of methodology, multiple realities and meanings emerge, enhancing the understanding of the phenomenon. With respect to methodology, Guba and Lincoln (1989) reported that methodology is hermeneutical and dialectical. It is hermeneutical in the sense of analyzing and interpreting meaning and dialectal related to experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

This hermeneutical influence, from Hegel (1874) in dialectics, is "to study things in their own being and movement and thus to demonstrate the finitude of the partial categories of understanding" (p. § 81). Wolcott (1992) discussed the dialectics of the methodology of qualitative inquiry using the terms "experiencing, enquiring, and examining" (p. 10). Such studies involve observations and experiences that occur in natural contexts, among naturally occurring participants in everyday life (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2005, 2008).

Qualitative inquiry with quantitative components. Historical and contemporary debate exists concerning the extent to which quantitative techniques of data collection and analysis may be coupled with qualitative methods (Merriam, 1991).

Merriam (1991) discussed differences among researchers with regard to philosophical paradigms and methods in a study. When designing research studies, pragmatists subscribe to an instrumental relationship between the philosophical underpinnings chosen for the study and the methodology chosen for the study.

With this approach, pragmatists separate the philosophical underpinnings of a study from the methodology used in a study and call for an end of the quantitative-qualitative debate. Other researchers use combined methods without discussion of the philosophical debate. Guba (1987) recommended separating the philosophic paradigm from the chosen methods in a study, and affirmed the use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies for a study, however further stated that combining philosophical paradigms was not appropriate for research.

Contemporary decisions to employ either qualitative or quantitative research may also be influenced by legislative climates. Current implementation of NCLB, with increased emphasis on standards and accountability, as well as evidence-based instructional practices, has promoted an increased positivistic influence on research methodologies (Schwandt, 2005). This includes "a strong preference for experimental methods (i.e., random assignment, control group) over other empirically based designs (i.e., quasi-experimental and single subject designs) and approaches" (Mooney, Denny, & Gunter, 2004, p. 240).

Schwandt (2005) discussed the possible limiting effects of a "science-based only approach" by predicting a "devaluing of practical knowledge" on the part of educators resulting from the sole use of positivistic approaches to research (p. 296). From this, knowledge gained from a naturalistic paradigm of qualitative inquiry might be devalued

or unknown. In this study, exploring and understanding teachers' experiences qualitatively, while seeking further understanding with quantitative measures is emphasized.

Case studies may be qualitative or quantitative or contain elements of both (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995, 2008). For this case study, qualitative and quantitative elements of research are used. Utilizing a qualitative approach for this study provided rich insights for teachers, students, policymakers, and those in higher education, which may result from examining and exploring teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. For instance, exploring from a qualitative perspective how teachers responded to students' challenging behavior, as well as, why teachers have differing responses to students' challenging behaviors provided valuable insight. Also, understanding what occurs for students when teachers make special education referrals based on students' challenging behavior provided important information. This qualitative inquiry provided understanding that relates to the effects on student learner outcomes and issues of special education law. For the above mentioned reasons, this study employed a qualitative mode of inquiry. Processes of qualitative inquiry involving depth interviewing and surveys are often used to increase our ability to understand the essence of experiences. The qualitative component of this study employed interviews and narrative data from surveys to gain understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors.

This study also included a secondary quantitative component. Quantitative information was used to further explore and enhance the qualitative understanding of teachers' responses to students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their

subsequent use of special education referrals. The quantitative component of the study examined archival data and information data from surveys collected from teachers' practices of special education referrals. The use of the descriptive and inferential data added to the depth to the qualitative data of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors, as well as, further understanding of the experiences. Given this order of focus and understanding, the goal of this study was to examine and explore teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging referrals and their subsequent use of special education referrals to enhance understanding and add to the knowledge base of the discipline of education.

Therefore, for this study a particular type of research, known as case study inquiry, which studies the complexity of a single bounded case, was employed. To further explore teachers' experiences for understanding and meaning, the qualitative research design included quantitative components. This case study explored a case involving a bounded group of teachers, administrators, and related service providers within a bounded system of a particular school district. For this study, qualitative inquiry was employed as the primary research approach, while a collection of quantitative measures was utilized for the sole purposes of adding numerical data to expand the understanding and reveal complexities of the case.

Considering a case study inquiry. When a researcher considers or implements case study inquiry, the researcher seeks to describe the complexities of a single case (Stake, 1995, 2008). Furthermore, case study is used to explore a "program, a classroom or a committee" (Stake, 1995, p. 133). Within this study, the researcher explored the complexities of a single case in the lived experiences of teachers' responses to students'

challenging behaviors, and their subsequent use of special education referrals, in addition to the individual school district's referrals for special education services that are based on students' challenging behaviors.

Additionally, Yin (2003, 2009) wrote that case study is chosen appropriately when the investigator seeks to define the research problem in a broad versus narrow view or needs to cover more than isolated variables. In this study, the researcher explored different teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors, different teachers' responses, various issues surrounding social justice and education equity concerns, and finally, differences in teachers' practices concerning referrals for special education services. Consequently, a broad view was sought with this study.

Conceptualizing the research problem and research questions for this study. For this study, case study is used as a philosophical approach to research design. Stake (1995) employed "issues" as his conceptual framework and "issue questions" as foundations for his research problem and questions (pp. 16-18). In this process, Stake stated that issues are connected to political, social, historical, and personal contexts. Stake further clarified, that issue statements may appear to have a cause-effect relationship, be representative of a problem, or be evaluative in nature.

Stake (1995) also encouraged the researcher to think more deeply in terms of connectedness and pose a broader question for a research study. Processes of issue identification and connectedness were used in this study to organize the research problem and questions. An issue for exploration in this study included teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and how experiences of this type are connected to personal and social contexts for the teachers, the students, and the school.

Parameters and types of case study research. Researchers identify parameters for case study and further distinguish among types of case study research. Merriam (1991) described case study inquiry as appropriate when based on four parameters. Parameters for use in case study research have also been discussed by others (Stake, 1995, 2008; Yin, 1993, 2009).

Stake (1995, 2008), Yin (1993, 2009), and Merriam (1991) agreed on four assumptions needed or parameters for case study research. First, one must consider the nature of the research questions. Second, case study remains appropriate when no controlled variables are utilized in the study. Third, a case study approach to research is fitting when a predetermined end product is desired, prior to beginning the study. Fourth, a case study is appropriate when a bounded system for the case exists.

The four parameters discussed include the how and why nature of the research questions as found in this study. No controlled variables were present in this study, while a predetermined end product, further understanding of teachers' experiences in this particular setting, and exploring for meaning the experiences of teachers with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors were included in this study. A bounded system existed for this study which included teachers in an identified independent school district.

Finally, as Smith (1978) discussed the importance of freedom of access to a bounded system for study stating the researcher for this study gained access to any or all teachers and school locations in the district for the study from district officials. The program the study involved special education. The persons include the actors who are the teachers and students. Finally, the process includes referrals for special education services for students in the institution or social group, the school.

Case studies may vary in type according to analysis, data sources, or discipline. Merriam (1991) identified four types of case studies. Case studies may include ethnographic case studies for the analysis of a social group, or phenomenon and historical case studies using primary and secondary data sources. Ethnographic case studies originate from the discipline of anthropology and historical case studies from the fields of history and education.

Another type of case study, from the field of psychology, is psychological case study, which is used to observe and investigate the individual. Finally, from sociology Merriam (1991) defined sociological case studies. In this type of case study, issues of society such as demographics, social life, and social roles are investigated (Merriam, 1991). This case study was considered ethnographic with psychological and sociological qualities.

Yin (2003, 2009) distinguished between single-case and multiple-case studies. Simply put single-case case studies were used to focus on an individual or single-case. Multiple-case studies consist of two or more cases within the study. This study involved a single-case related to the examination of one single public school district and multiple-cases relative to the examination of several teachers' responses to students who demonstrate challenging behaviors.

Yin (2003) further distinguished the types of case study as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. Exploratory case study is aimed at defining the questions and hypothesis of a subsequent study (not necessarily a case study) or at determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures. A descriptive case study includes a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. An explanatory case study

contains data bearing on cause-effect relationships, explaining how events happened (Yin, 2003).

With descriptive studies the researcher begins with a theory. If the researcher does not begin with a theory, possibilities exist that problems may occur during the study (Yin, 2003). Causal studies are suited for explanatory case study and may be complex and multivariate cases (Yin, 2003). Finally, exploratory case studies involve fieldwork and data collection sometimes prior to defining the research question and hypotheses.

Pilot projects utilizing survey questions are also included in this approach (Yin, 1989). This case study was exploratory as it examined teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education utilizing interviews, surveys, and archival data. The exploration of teachers' experiences using the framework of theories of social justice and education equity was used to further explore for meaning and multiple realities.

Use of case study. Case study involves the process of inquiry (Schwandt, 2001), and while it has been a primary mode of inquiry in educational research, the beginnings of case study research can be traced to the fields of anthropology and sociology (Stake, 1995). Educational researchers recognize contributions resulting from the use of case study inquiry. The direct observations of educational situations and settings and the meanings derived from analysis of the experiences furthers the knowledge foundations of case materials (LeCompte, Millroy, & Priessle, 1992; Spindler and Spindler 1992)

Historically, the field of education has utilized case study inquiry and continues to place a contemporary value on case study through the continued use of this method of inquiry.

There are two distinct ways in which the discipline of education uses case study. First, it is used as an inquiry approach in research based on a philosophy as a framework of logic. Secondly, completed case studies are used as an instructional methodology in teaching and lecturing (Merriam, 1991).

Case study research is further described using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) case report framework for the structure of a case study as "the problem, the context, the issue, and the lessons learned" (p. 362). Creswell (2007b) discussed the essential elements of case study inquiry much like those discussed above, including the "case" for study and the "bounded system" (p. 244). The case and the bounded system, Creswell asserted, are defined by time or place, multiple sources of data collection and rich, thick contextual description of case particulars.

For this study, the researcher explored and examined teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services (the problem), within the class and the school district (the context), as well as resulting issues of social justice and educational equity (the issues). Therefore, exploration and understanding of teachers' experiences (the lessons learned) in a mid-southwestern public school district, through teacher interviews, surveys, and archival data review for school years 2004-2009 was furthered in this study.

Qualitative and quantitative components in case study research. Traditionally, Merriam (1991) asserted case study research involved qualitative data, however, as previously stated, for this study, both qualitative research and quantitative data will facilitate the exploration and examination of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of special education referrals. While qualitative

research is used to further the ability to understand the meaning of the experience versus the "examination of the component parts which become the variables of the study" (p. 16) in a quantitative framework (Merriam, 1991), the quantitative data were used along with the primary mode of inquiry involving the collection of qualitative data within the case to expand the understanding of the experience by informing the researcher about "how many, how much, and how it is distributed" (Merriam, 1991, p. 68).

Specifically, in this study, qualitative data was used to explore the teachers' experiences with students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services. Quantitative data was used to extend the understanding of teachers' experiences in terms of "how many, how much, and how it is distributed" (Merriam, 1991, p. 68). The quantitative data, for this study was not utilized as a primary mode of inquiry, but as a secondary mode of inquiry, a way to extend understanding of qualitative research. Within case study inquiry Merriam concurred,

> with few exceptions, discussions of case study are embedded in the growing body of literature on qualitative research and naturalistic inquiry. That is not to imply that qualitative research equals a case study or that one cannot use quantitative data in a case study. Rather, the logic of this type of research derives from the worldview of qualitative research. (p. 16)

Purpose of the Research

The objective of this case study was to explore issues of social justice in special education through teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom and their subsequent referrals of students for special education services. Such lived experiences by teachers may result in an increase in the number of referrals of

students for special education services based on students' challenging behaviors (Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, & Shwery, 2004). The purpose of this case study was three-fold. First, the focus of the study concerned social justice issues related to teachers' lived experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. Secondly, it explored teachers' subsequent use of referrals for special education services based on students' challenging behaviors. Lastly, the data in this study were used to examine the principles of social justice and educational equity for students relative to teachers' experiences with special education referrals.

Research Method and Design Appropriateness

Merriam (1991) argued that prior to defining the case; one must first conceptualize the research problem. A problem might be raised as to "what" happened and from this, questions related to the "how" or "why" something occurred leads to the need for inquiry and understanding. After the conceptualization of the research problem, the case is identified.

Following this, the researcher begins the examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, event, person, process, institution or social group. For this study, the problematic nature of teachers' roles in dealing with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors formed the concept of the research problem. Also in this study, the exploration of *what are teachers' experiences with students, who demonstrate challenging behaviors, how do teachers respond, and how do these experiences affect subsequent teachers' referrals for special education services for students?* was planned.

Yin (2003, 2009), prior to ever forming the research question, discussed the role of theory in case study design. Whether the study is exploratory, descriptive or

explanatory, a single-case or multiple-case, Yin (2009) stressed the use of theory as a guide to case study design. In a descriptive case study or explanatory studies, a "theory is not an expression of a cause-effect relationship. Rather, a descriptive theory covers the scope and depth of the object (case) being described" (Yin, 2003, p. 23). For this study, teachers' experiences and social justice in education concepts will be used to explore teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and, for this study, prompted notions of where to begin, how, and to what extent to cover aspects of the case.

In case study design, the amount of control perceived or implemented by the researcher over what was being observed was relevant to the appropriateness of design. Situations with less researcher control over the variables studied are more appropriate for case study frameworks (Yin, 1984, 2003, 2009). Differences in control over the variables in a study are due to the complex, holistic nature of the person, program or policy under investigation.

An example of this occurs when data collection methods and times are varied throughout a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this study, interviews, surveys, and archival data were used to explore teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent uses of referrals for special education services. Due to the nature of in-depth, open-ended interviews, researcher control over variables in this study was limited; therefore, case study is an appropriate choice of design.

Mode of Inquiry

Qualitatively, the research for this study involves interviews with open-ended

questions, surveys, and archival data. Quantitatively, this study utilized archival data, as well as likert scale information derived from the surveys. Mertens (2005) stated, "the purpose of data collection is to learn something about people or things" (p. 344). For this study, the qualitative data processes were used to explore and examine teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education.

The qualitative processes for data collection and analysis were inductive and descriptive. The questions designed for use in the interviews, as well as the data collected and analyzed from the interviews furthered the exploration, examination, and understanding of the research questions and provided rich, thick descriptions of what was observed in teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors, as well as teachers' subsequent use of special education referrals for students. The quantitative data processes for this study involved descriptive statistical measures.

Additionally, the collection and analysis of data from archival documents and surveys for this study furthered the construction of meaning for the study. Data sources and collection were triangulated and data analysis procedures were consistent. Data from the interviews, surveys, and archives were triangulated for meaning and credibility. To further credibility, strategies of repeated questioning of the data and critical subjectivity as proposed by Lincoln (1995) were used in the study.

Finally, Lincoln (1995) discussed the importance of commitment on the part of the researcher and participants. In this study, the researcher first proposed, then facilitated, and finally, employed research procedures and practices consistent with

trustworthy qualitative research. The participants committed to engagement, member checking, and any further discussion that emerged as necessary during the study.

Research Questions

When refining the research questions for a study, Yin (1984, 2003, 2009) proposed that "how" and "why" questions are fitting for case study research. To study teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors, and teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services, through the lens of social justice and educational equity, a case study design with appropriate research questions was used in this inquiry. Therefore, the research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors?
    a. How do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teaching and learning, as well as referrals for special education services?
    b. Why do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teachers' referrals for student for special education services?
2. What issues of social justice in education emerge for students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom?
    a. How do teachers' referrals for students for special education services affect issues of social justice in education for students?
    b. Why are teacher referrals for students for special education services and subsequent eligibility decisions affecting issues of social justice in education for students?

Sampling Frame

This study was completed in a mid-southwestern public school district located within a community with a military base. Profile data for the 2006-2007 school year report indicates that the district for this study offered early childhood through twelfth grades for 17,062 students in 28 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools. For the 2006-2007 calendar school year, the independent school district employed 960.5 regular classroom teachers, 166.4 special education teachers, 93.3 administrators, 53.3 counselors, and 72.4 designated as other certified professional staff (OSDE, 2008c).

Additionally, in this district, 8.2% of students were enrolled in gifted and talented programs and 17.1% received special education services. Of the 2862 students receiving special education services, 241 were ages 3-5, while 2621 were ages 6-21. District revenues for the school for this period were reported as 22.8% local and county, 60.1% state, and 17.2% federal funds (OSDE, 2008c).

The socioeconomic data for the district, based on fall enrollment data in 2006, indicated an ethnic makeup of 48% Caucasian, 32% Black, 2% Asian, 11% Hispanic, and 7% Native American. State averages for ethnic makeup indicated 59% Caucasian, 11% Black, 2% Asian, 9% Hispanic, and 19% Native American. District profile data, from the 2000 Census reports identified a population of 89,160 with a 16% poverty rate for the community (OSDE, 2008c).

For the study, the sample for the interview portion of the study included teachers who (a) have taught regular education classes, (b) have taught special education classes, or (c) taught both regular and special education classes for a minimum of three year.

Seven interview participants were included in the study. The sample for the surveys included regular and special education teachers from particular site-based schools within the district. The teachers surveyed within the individual site-based school locations had been employed by the district during the period 2004 through 2009 with a minimum of three years teaching experience within the district. Ten schools within the district comprised the survey portion of this study.

The sampling procedures for the study included nonrandom, convenience sampling. The researcher has access to regular and special education teachers within the school district used for this case study inquiry. As previously mentioned, teachers were asked to participate who had taught regular education, special education, or both, for a minimum of three years within district schools during school years 2004 to 2009.

Recruitment for this study included personal contacts, convenience sampling, and snowballing techniques. For the interview portion of this study, teacher referrals were identified through the archival data records, as well as referrals from teachers, administrators, and related service providers, and informed consent documents. Participants were approached personally by the researcher and asked to participate in the study.

Confidentiality

Participants were informed on all confidentiality measures used in the study. Participants' names, addresses, and email information were retained by the researcher with the written permission of the participants for the possible use of future investigations. None of the participants identifying information was included in any report. All records were retained in a professional setting with the research data that was

gathered throughout the course of the investigation for the study. The Institutional Review Board for the study approved that, with participant consent, records from the study are to be retained for a minimum of ten years. Social security or any other ID numbers were gathered from participants. Finally, a coding system which utilized an assigned sequence of numbers was used for participant responses and data analysis.

Method of Data Collection

Using case study inquiry for this study allowed the researcher to collect data from different sources for analysis, from which furthered the understanding of the bounded case and system related to teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and the subsequent use of special education referrals. Yin (2003, 2009) recommended a case study approach as appropriate when the investigator relies on multiple versus single sources of evidence for the study. Situations with contextual or multivariate conditions to study are also appropriate for a case study approach. For this study, the researcher collected data from interviews, surveys, and archived documents.

Furthermore, this inquiry consisted of a primary qualitative component with a secondary quantitative component. The qualitative component was used to collect narrative information concerning teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors, and provided a breadth of understanding of the experiences teachers have with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their resulting special education referral practices. The quantitative component to this study provided added descriptive information from teachers such as educational levels, years of teaching experience, grades and type of classes taught, numbers of special education referrals per year, rationales for special education referrals and degrees of conceptual understanding of

special education law and social justice for students in education. This information was collected and analyzed from archival documents, as well as, data collected from the surveys. All data collected was used to further the exploration and understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behavior.

Interviews. In-depth interviewing in a non-directive manner was utilized during the initial portion of the interviews to provide the participants ample time in which to relate their experiences without the constraints of a pre-determined framework. First, teachers were asked about their experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors in general terms and no time restraints will be used during the interviews. The interviews were conducted at each teacher's respective school. Each participant was given freedom of choice regarding the place and time for the interview.

Aspects of a semi-structured interview process were also used in this study. Participants were asked about their demographic data, experiences with students' problematic or challenging behaviors, teachers' use of interventions and modifications, pre-service teacher training experiences and understanding of educational equity and social justice. Malinowski (1989) discussed the differences and importance of unstructured and structured interviewing techniques including strategies for collecting and understanding data that are collected. With structured interviews the researcher may collect data that will be coded, and used to explore and explain observed behaviors within a categorical framework.

With unstructured interviewing techniques, a researcher may collect data, free from any preconceived notions and without any limitations to use for understanding (Malinowski, 1989). For the present study, the data from semi-structured interviews was

used to understand complex behaviors of members of society, free from any a priori categorization on the part of the researcher. Semi-structured interviewing in this study allowed for the collection of specific data that were coded and used to explore and categorize behaviors (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2008). Also for this study, semi-structured interview processes and procedures for data collection were used to collect data on teachers' experiences and responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of special education referrals.

Surveys. Within this study, surveys were used for both qualitative and quantitative components of the study to further the exploration and understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for students for special education services, as well as the effects of referrals concerning social justice issues in education for students. Gall et al. (2005) asserted that researchers who choose case study design may use surveys for the purpose of eliciting in-depth information stating, "Survey research is a form of descriptive research that involves collecting information about research participants' beliefs, attitudes, interests, or behavior through questionnaires, interviews, or paper-and-pencil tasks" (p. 180). Furthermore, Merriam and Simpson (2000) asserted that the use of surveys for research involves "a broad category of techniques that use questioning as a strategy to elicit information. Written forms of survey are referred to as questionnaires; surveys conducted orally are interviews" (p. 146).

For this study, pre-interview questionnaires (see Appendix B) were used qualitatively to gain information from participants in the interview portion of the study containing both open-ended and fixed responses. Prior to completing the interview

portion of the study, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire containing questions that would be asked during the semi-structured portion of the interviews. The intent of having participants complete the questionnaire prior to participating in the semi-structured interview was to provide information to the researcher that informed the development of the questions used in the interviews for the study, as well as provide quantitative data regarding teacher demographics, teachers' beliefs regarding students' behaviors, and teachers' referral practices for special education services for students. Also, using components of an open-ended qualitative questionnaire was intended to allow all interview participants time to express any ideas or experiences they thought relevant to the discussion of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors, and their subsequent special education referrals for students.

As stated above the use of the questionnaire allowed for preparation by the researcher for the actual semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires for the interview portion of the study were given to the participants prior to the interviews by the researcher, along with an Informed Consent form for review and were used to develop questions prior to the interview processes concerning the participants' experiences. Furthermore, the teachers' responses on the completed surveys were compared to the data transcribed from the semi-structured interviews. This allowed for an accurate representation of each participant's perspective and practice, for the purpose of enhancing credibility in this study (Mertens, 2005). The questionnaires were sent and interviews conducted during an ongoing calendar school year to facilitate best response rates from participants.

Narrative and numerical data collected from the surveys were used for the qualitative procedures discussed above, as well as the quantitative components of this study. For this study, the researcher approached individual principals of site-based schools within the district and requested time in a faculty meeting to explain and administer the surveys. The researcher attended four faculty meetings at individual site-based school locations to solicit teacher participation, gain consent, and administer the surveys to the teachers within the school who had taught within school years, 2004-2009 for the study. In the other six school locations, principals requested the surveys and preferred to give them out personally without the researcher attending a faculty meeting. These principals were subsequently given Informed Consent forms and an information sheet along with the surveys for distribution to teachers within their schools.

Quantitative data collected from this study included teacher data such as number of years each teacher has taught, specific grades taught, teaching regular or special education, training teachers received in teaching students with challenging behaviors, level of administrative support, and numerical data on specific teacher referrals for special education services as well as teachers' referrals for special education services based on students' challenging behaviors. Additionally, teachers' understanding of special education law and concepts of educational equity and social justice in education for students was sought. For this study, quantitative data was analyzed and reported using descriptive statistical measures, as well as inferential statistical measures that were identified during the study to further understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of special education referrals and issues of social justice and educational equity for students.

Archival data. The archival data explored in this study were collected from the Oklahoma State Department of Education Review of Existing Data Forms (see Appendix D) used by teachers and administrators to initiate referrals for students for special education services. The archival data documents were used to develop questions for the surveys for participants and the reviewed documents yielded quantitative information for the survey. This information included descriptive such as teacher settings and grade levels related to numbers and reasons for referrals, frequency of students' challenging behaviors as a reason for special education referrals, and finally indicators for academics, behaviors, and academics and behaviors as prompts for special education referrals. These quantitative data, when analyzed using descriptive statistical procedures, and inferential statistical procedures as indentified during the study, enhanced the understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and special education referrals, as well as teacher's perceptions of issues of social justice in education for students.

Order of data collection for the study. For the study, data collection began with a review of archival data, followed by concurrent data collection of interview questionnaires and interviews as well as, surveys of regular and special education teachers in site-based school locations within the district. Creswell (2003) discussed the order of qualitative and quantitative data collection for a single study stating, "the researchers collect both the quantitative and qualitative data in phases (sequentially) or that they gather it at the same time (concurrently)" (p. 211). For this study, qualitative data collection through the surveys and interviews was used to gain further understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their

subsequent referrals for special education services for students, as well as effects on issues of social justice in education for students. The survey data used for the quantitative component for the study provided an expanded understanding of the aforementioned experiences within ten schools within the district selected for this case study inquiry.

Qualitative data analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), data analysis consists of "three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 21). Reductionism in data analysis incorporates the notion, "that we can (and should) replace one vocabulary (set of concepts and theory) by a second (set of concepts and theory) that is more primary" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 259). Miles and Huberman cautioned, that data reduction is not a sole means of quantification, and expanded this notion saying, "Qualitative data can be reduced and transformed in many ways: through selection, through summary or paraphrase, through being subsumed in a larger pattern and so on" (p. 11). For this study, data reduction procedures consist of themeing, coding, and pattern seeking strategies to derive meaning from teachers' lived experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services.

Once data analysis was completed in this study, data assembly and display phases of research began. An important component to the data analysis process is conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Deciding what the data mean, incorporates such practices as coming slowly to firmly held conclusions and only then proceeding with a well planned, purposeful inductive strategy through the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As conclusions emerged from the data collected in the study, the data were then verified and analysis activities proceeded. Lastly, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), "The meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their confirmability – that is, their validity. Otherwise, we are left with interesting stories about what happened, of unknown truth and utility" (p. 11).

Assembling transformed qualitative data from the study in a display format is termed data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Early on, qualitative researchers used extended text as the "most frequent form of display" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). The sheer volume of text collected from a qualitative study, displayed via extended text, prompted researchers to seek other methods for display. Contemporary methods for displaying masses of textual data include the use of matrices, graphs, charts, and networks to organize data for information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data display for use in this study includes figures, tables, and charts.

Validity, Reliability, Consistency, and Triangulation in Qualitative Research

According to Merriam (1991), "All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 163). A study must be well constructed to ensure both internal and external validity. The internal validity of a study "deals with the question of how one's findings match reality" (Merriam, 1991, p. 166).

For the findings of a study to match reality, the researcher must be rigorous with procedures for methods and analysis. Matching reality addresses issues of trustworthiness and confirmability within the study. To plan for reality matching in a study, researchers identify possible threats to the study.

Campbell and Stanley (1963) wrote on threats that might affect the interpretation

of results for the study and how to control for threats in a research design. Merriam (1991) discussed six strategies used to ensure internal validity:

- Triangulation or the use of multiple investigators, sources, data, or methods.
- Member checking which takes data and interpretations back to the participants.
- Long-term or repeated observations at the research site.
- Peer examination, which includes asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge.
- Participatory modes of research including involving participants in all research phases including conceptualization and report writing.
- Researcher's biases, clarifying assumptions, worldviews and theoretical orientation at the beginning of the study. (pp. 169-170)

Focus of the external validity in a study is on addressing the generalization of effects observed under the study's experimental conditions to broader populations and contexts (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Eisenhart and Howe (1992) proposed that researchers address concerns with external validity in the study by including an investigation of variables limiting application of the findings for the study to other experiences. For further insight, Guba and Lincoln (1985) discussed "truth value" and "applicability" as qualitative correlates to both internal validity and external validity (pp. 650-651). For this case study, qualitative components of internal and external validity will be addressed through constructs of trustworthiness and applicability.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) paired concepts of credibility and validity for a study. Mertens added to the discussion stating a "correspondence (may exist) between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays

their viewpoints" (p. 358). Researchers may increase the credibility of a study by implementing strategies such as peer debriefing, negative case analysis, member checks and triangulation (Merriam, 1991).

Reliability involves an "epistemic criterion thought to be necessary but not sufficient for establishing the truth of an account of interpretation of a social phenomenon" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 226). This concept of reliability refers to the extent to which findings may be replicated (Merriam, 1991). Reliability involves a term associated traditionally with positivistic research. Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) "suggest thinking about the dependability or consistency of results obtained from the data" (p. 288) rather than reliability.

Merriam (1991) assembled techniques that an investigator might use to ensure the dependability of study results:

- The investigator's position should be clearly stated and include their assumptions, theory, and position.
- Triangulation in terms of using multiple data collection and analysis methods.
- Audit trails that clearly state to the reader how decisions and conclusions were made in the study. (p. 172)

The above-mentioned methods and approaches are employed to ensure the dependability and consistency that parallel traditional concepts of reliability (Merriam, 1991).

Finally, adding to this discussion, Yin (1994, 2009) presented tactics for use in tests of validity for qualitative research. Yin first identified and described construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. For each construct Yin suggested tactics and timing for their use in the research process. For construct validity,

Yin encouraged the use of multiple sources of evidence, establish chains of evidence, and have key informants review draft case reports during data collection and composition.

Next, for internal validity, Yin (1994, 2009) recommended employing pattern matching, explanation building, time series analysis, and logic models during the data analysis phases. To ensure external validity use rival theories within single-case studies. Finally, for reliability, using case study protocol and developing a case study database during the data collection phase of a study was recommended (Yin, 1994).

Triangulation includes checking information from data collected or analyzed from different sources and methods for inconsistencies or consistencies. Triangulation is discussed in the literature in relation to constructs of consistency and dependability. Triangulation is used, "To gain the needed confirmation, to increase credence in the interpretation, to demonstrate commonality of an assertion" in a study (Stake, 1995, p. 112). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) presented protocols for triangulation for a study including:

- Data source triangulation-checking to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances.
- Investigator triangulation-having other researchers take a look at the same scene or phenomenon.
- Theory triangulation-what occurs when we choose co-observers from alternative theoretical viewpoints.
- Methodological triangulation-using multiple methods and analysis. (pp. 214-215)

Based on the logic of triangulation, Miles and Huberman (1994) presented a list of strategies for "testing or confirming" conclusions which include

- Check for representativeness in the study.
- Check for researcher effects including reactivity.
- Triangulate and weigh the evidence (relying on more robust measures).
- Employ tactics for testing the viability of patterns (actively search for contrasts, comparison, outliers, and extreme attempts to rule out spurious conclusions.
- Replicate key findings.
- Check out rival explanations.
- Look for negative evidence.
- Utilize feedback from informants at any point in the cycle. (p. 263)

Merriam (1991) discussed triangulation from the literature and included, "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings in a study" (p. 169). Mathison (1988) proposed that using the aforementioned triangulation strategies in a study, in social science, "may produce data that are inconsistent or contradictory," and suggested "shifting the notion of triangulation away from a technological solution for ensuring validity, toward a reliance on holistic understanding of the situation to construct plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied" (p. 17).

Eisner (1991) further asserted, "it is especially important not only to use multiple types of data, but also to consider disconfirming evidence and contradictory interpretations or appraisals when one presents one's own conclusions" (p. 111). For this study, methodological triangulation of data sets including interviews, surveys, and

archival data, as well as the use of theory triangulation during the analysis phase of the study was used to explore the findings of the study for meaning and understanding. Peer examination, member checking, and repeated questioning for researchers' biases were used to ensure internal validity.

Trustworthiness

Constructivism and interpretivisim are used to frame qualitative research and were used to frame this study. For qualitative research, the use of triangulated theory and methodologies, enhance the trustworthiness of a study. Trustworthiness in a study consists of four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2006; Denzin, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2008; Gall et al., 2005).

For the purposes of this study, a construction of reality utilizing inductive and generative analysis addressed the issues of dependability of the study. It was purposed in this study, that the systematic procedures used in generating and analyzing the data were employed with the rigor of quality research, furthering the dependability and confirmability of this study (Creswell, 2003, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2008; Lincoln, 1990). Also, the researcher was concerned with the analytical process, and constructed meaning from the study, and as the researcher, was the primary instrument for the study (Merriam, 1991). Through the use of transferability, dependability, confirmability, and credibility, the essential criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research were purposed and conducted in this study.

Threats to trustworthiness. The primary threat to trustworthiness with this study involved the researchers' generalized use of meanings derived from the limited number participant experiences as with intention in case-case transfer (Creswell,1998). Another

possible threat to trustworthiness for this study included the potential for "under-analysis through taking sides" (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2003). The researcher of the study acknowledged this threat to trustworthiness for the study and bracketed experiences of the researcher for all stages of the study. This threat is relevant due to researcher experiences with teachers in the district when students who demonstrated challenging behaviors were referred for special education services solely based on the behaviors.

Minimizing threats to trustworthiness. In this study, interviews and surveys were used to facilitate a rich understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, surveys, and archival data, participants were free to explore their experiences for understanding. The interview questionnaires and interview experiences allowed the interview participants additional time to reflect upon, record, and relate their individual responses, while the surveys conducted at site-based school locations within the district allowed for an expanded understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services across the school district. All participants for this study were selected based on a minimum of three years teaching experience and must have taught in the district during the years 2004-2009 as those years will be reviewed in the archival data portion of the study.

Locating the researcher. As a speech-language pathologist, I have been privileged to work with many teachers in the district selected for the case study. Teachers have the monumental task of educating students who often demonstrate challenging behaviors. I have been contacted routinely to observe students who

demonstrate challenging behaviors and are often asked by teachers to begin a referral for special education services based solely on the students' challenging behaviors.

When I have asked, 'What is your major concern?' I have heard often, 'I know there is a class out there that would better meet this student's needs. The student is not a fit for my class and it's not fair to my other students' (Wheat, 2008, p. 8). When asked if the student is lagging in academic or developmental progress, the teacher says, 'No, her academic progress is okay, but I don't know what will happen next year when the demands are increased. I don't think she can make it' (Wheat, 2008, p.9).

Additionally, I hear from teachers and administrators, 'Our school doesn't refer prekindergarten or kindergarten students for any special services. They (administrators) tell us to give them (students) more time and then we'll see if a referral is needed' (Wheat, 2008, p.7). In many instances, the teacher has exhausted their *tool box* of strategies, and in a state of frustration, refers the student for a special education assessment. The teacher appears to be hoping that a name, a category, or a label is found to explain the root cause of the inappropriate behaviors.

For the purposes of locating the researcher and clarifying beliefs and biases on the part of the researcher for this study, the researcher's autobiographical experiences with teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent referrals for special education services was thoughtfully considered and bracketed in order to minimize bias on the part of the researcher. Teacher participants for the study represented both regular and special education and were comprised of teachers with whom the researcher has and has not worked directly so not to seek individuals who might validate any researcher bias regarding the subject matter. Merriam (1991) asserted,

"In a qualitative case study, the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data" (p. 36). For this study, care was taken on the part of the researcher to "bracket" the researcher's previous or personal experiences with teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' use of referrals for students for special education services free from any preconceived ideas or notions.

Through the use of participant selection and *bracketing* of the researcher, as well as, data collection and data analysis procedures, patterns and themes emerged surrounding teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and referrals for special education services, as well as issues of social justice in education for students. This information was used for exploration and enhanced understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. In this study, qualitative and quantitative data was used with triangulation strategies for data analysis and theory, such as thematic patterns, while theoretical constructs served as a means to discover further understanding and meaning through constructivism and an interpretive framework (Auerback & Silverstein, 2003). Additionally, in this study, descriptive quantitative data was analyzed for enhanced understanding of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and subsequent referrals for special education services.

Quantitative Component for the Study

As previously stated, the quantitative component for this study included data from demographic information from the interviews, surveys and archival documents. Quantitative data collected from the interviews, surveys and documents was examined using data analysis procedures and involved primarily descriptive statistical measures

used to describe the characteristics of the sample (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2005). Additionally, inferential statistical measures were used based on the emergent nature of the study. The descriptive and inferential quantitative measures used for this study were employed to enhance and further the understanding of the qualitative nature of this study involving teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services.

Quantitative data analysis. Data analysis for this study included descriptive statistical measures utilizing mean and standard deviation, and as stated above, inferential measures as appropriate. Descriptive statistics included gender, participant ethnicity, educational levels, teacher certifications, classes taught, referrals for special education services, rationales for referrals for special education services, perceptions regarding students' challenging behaviors, certainty of referrals, understanding special education laws, and understanding issues of educational equity and social justice in education for students. Inferential statistics may include differences between regular and special education teachers and teachers with varying years of experience.

Issues of interpretation involving the quantitative analysis of a study involve several factors. According to Mertens (2005), issues of interpretation in quantitative analysis include,

- The influence of (or lack of) randomization on statistical choices and interpretation of results.
- The analytic implications of using intact groups.
- The influence of sample size on achieving statistical significance.
- Statistical versus practical significance.

- Issue related to cultural bias.
- Variables related to generalizability. (p. 410)

Validity for the quantitative component of the study. The quantitative component of the research for this study was designed to further understanding of teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services in the case study. Within this study, concepts of construct validity were emphasized relating to decisions on data collection, as well as the role of the participants. Validity for quantitative component of this study referred to the degree to which the study reflected and assessed the concepts the researcher purposed to collect, measure, and analyze (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Construct validity, as emphasized in the secondary quantitative component of this study, "is the initial concept, notion, question or hypothesis that determines which data is to be gathered and how it is to be gathered" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 599). The research questions for this study indicated the appropriateness of data collection from surveys and archival documents, and based on the emergent nature of the study, data collected from the interviews.

Threats to construct validity for this study may include hypothesis guessing on the part of participants, evaluation apprehension, and experimenter expectancies similar to threats to validity for a study that have been identified and discussed in the literature (Cook & Campbell, 1979). As a result, the validity of the data collected may not in totality reflect participants' notions and beliefs. Finally, threats to the validity of the quantitative component of this study may include potential researcher subjectivity, as well as, recording and measurement errors on the part of the researcher. Threats to

construct validity, as well as validity of the data were identified during design and explored by the researcher at each step in the study ensuring maximum participant exploration of experiences and limited researcher subjectivity and error.

Minimizing threats to validity for the quantitative component of the study. Internal validity for this study concerned concepts of rigor related to how the study was conducted. For this case study the researcher provided participants with the title and purpose of the research study to minimize hypothesis guessing on the part of the participants. Additionally, the participants were informed of the value of their information and insights and that an expected response, understanding, or narrative was not sought or expected on the part of the researcher. Also, any bias on the part of the researcher was examined and presented in the construction of the study. The researcher attended to any personal verbal or non-verbal communication that might affect data collected from participants in the interview processes for use in data analysis for the study. Furthermore, the findings of the study accurately and without bias reported the participants' responses and data collected from interviews, surveys, and archives. Data were checked and rechecked for accuracy. Finally, issues of external validity were considered with the quantitative component of this study, however, the quantitative component of this study was designed to further enhance understanding of the qualitative focus of the case study and as such, generalizability of information from the data analysis portion of this study beyond this case is not intended.

Limitations for the quantitative component of the study. This study was limited by the honesty of the participants' responses during the interviews as well as the time available to conduct the study. The interview data and survey data while containing

experiences of teachers within the district regarding experiences and practices with students' challenging behaviors and subsequent referrals for special education services through school years 2004-2009 did not allow exact comparison for individual teacher interviews to identical teacher archival document completion to teacher survey completion. Also, generalizability among district practices was limited due to time constraints and scope of this portion of the designed study. Generalizability to other districts was not possible as one public school district was used in this case study. In addition, validity of this study was limited to the reliability of the instruments used. Other limitations included the lack of ability to control the speed of response to survey questions by participants, low response rates of teachers completing and returning surveys within the case, and a potential vulnerability of erred statistical analysis. In this study each of these possible limitations was considered and reviewed to ascertain if a particular limitation was present or emerged as the data were collected and analyzed.

Assumptions for the Study

Philosophically, constructivism, and interpretivisim was used to gain insight from this case study through the process of discovering meanings in the bounded case under exploration. The underlying methodological assumptions for this study involved methods used to gain data. Fitting research questions, appropriate data collection methods, and rigorous data analysis processes were designed in this case study.

An interpretive paradigm using data from interviews questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and archival data to explore teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services, as well as issues of social justice in education for students was planned. The study includes

qualitative and quantitative components. The *case '* was studied to promote greater understanding of the phenomena of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their resulting use of special education referrals, as well as issues of educational equity and social justice in education for students. Also, it is assumed the methods and analyses were triangulated to address issues of credibility and further trustworthiness in the study.

Summary

The researcher in this case study planned and conducted an exploration for understanding teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of special education referrals, as well as issues of educational equity and social justice in education for students. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) summarized the value of case study research saying, "The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case (p. 460). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further discussed the use of case study research stating:

> Criteria for conducting the kind of research that leads to valid generalization needs modifications to fit the search for effective particularization sought in case study research. The utility of case study research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience (p. 245).

Case study is a design from which to, "describe, explain, or evaluate particular social phenomenon" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 306). The foundation of knowledge for the field of education benefits greatly from the use of case study research. The purpose of this study was to understand further teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special

education services, as well as issues and concerns with educational equity and social justice. Finally, Lincoln (1995) asserted, "there is a value-driven view that good-quality social research should be committed to promoting social justice, community, diversity, civic discourse, and caring" (pp. 277-278). For this study, examining teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors through the lens of social justice and educational equity may allow for greater examination, exploration, and understanding of teachers' experiences that affect student learning and social justice in education.

Chapter 4: Results for the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore (a) teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom, (b) their subsequent referrals for special education, and (c) concerns for social justice and educational equity for students who undergo referrals for special education services in a mid-southwestern public school district located within a community with a military base. Pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys and archival data were used to explore the teachers' experiences. Chapter 4 contains findings from (a) data from pre-interview questionnaires and interviews of seven regular and special education teachers; (b) qualitative information obtained from 54 of 285 (18.9%) surveys of regular and special education teachers in ten site based school locations in the district; (c) quantitative information obtained from 54 of 285 (18.9%) surveys of regular and special education teachers in ten site based school locations in the district; and (d) data collected from 365 referral documents, 73 per school year included in the study and completed by regular and special education teachers for special education referrals for students during school years 2004 to 2009.

Themes identified from the interview portion were supported from findings of the surveys and archival data portions of the study and matrices were constructed for use in understanding and exploring the experiences of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors, subsequent referrals for special education services for students and concerns for social justice and educational equity for students. Finally, for each data group a matrix of findings on identified themes is presented.

Research Questions for the Study

The current study was designed to address two primary research questions, each with two sub questions. Research questions for this study were:

1. What are teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors?
    a. How do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teaching and learning, as well as referrals for special education services?
    b. Why do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teachers' referrals for student for special education services?
2. What issues of social justice in education emerge for students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom?
    a. How do teachers' referrals for students for special education services affect issues of social justice in education for students?
    b. Why are teacher referrals for students for special education services and subsequent eligibility decisions affecting issues of social justice in education for students?

To answer the research questions, participants completed pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, and a survey with 20 quantitative and 3 qualitative questions. For purposes of this study, data reduction procedures consisted of coding responses and seeking patterns to derive meaning from teachers' lived experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services. Themes were then created and analyzed for meaning and understanding. Triangulation of the qualitative interview and survey data, quantitative

responses from the survey, and archival data was then conducted to provide rigor and trustworthiness necessary for credibility for the study.

Pre-interview Questionnaires and Interviews

For this study, seven teachers participated in pre-interview questionnaires and open and semi-structured interviews (Appendix C) designed to explore teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their use of referrals for special education services. Each participant was asked to review and complete a pre-interview questionnaire that consisted of information that would be used in the open and semi-structured interview portion for the study. For the pre-interview questionnaires, Participant Lisa Johns chose to complete only the demographic information, Participant Sarah Baker completed all questions, Participant Jenna Lane completed all except question number 15, Participant 4, Janet Parker omitted question 23, Participant Paula Roades did not answer question 23, Participant Joe Sanders completed all except questions 19, 22, and 23, and Participant Edward Walker did not answer question number 23.

Information saturation became apparent after the seventh interview, when similar verbal expressions and common themes and patterns were most apparent. Following the seventh interview, the interview portion of the study was concluded. Narrative information from the pre-interview questionnaires and entire interviews were transcribed, coded, and themed. Themes were identified from information in the narratives and interview data and were constructed to present the findings from the interviews.

Table 1

Teaching Demographics of Teachers Interviewed

	Participant 1 Lisa Johns	Participant 2 Sarah Baker	Participant 3 Jenna Lane	Participant 4 Janet Parker	Participant 5 Paula Roades	Participant 6 Joe Sanders	Participant 7 Edward Walker
Years Taught	38	9	32	21	35	15	14
Years Taught Regular Education	37	9	32	21	35	15	14
Grade Levels Taught Regular Education	K-3	K, 1,2,3,6	1, 4, Middle School	K, 1, 2	2,3	1,2	3,4,5,6,7
Years Taught Special Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade Levels Taught Special Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Currently Teach	Regular Education	Regular Education	Regular Education	Regular Education	Regular Education	Regular Education	Regular Education
Years Taught Primary Grades	39	8.5	28	21	35	15	6
Years Taught Secondary Grades	0	.5	4	0	0	0	8
Academic Degrees	B.S, M.Ed	B.S.	B.S.	B.S.+	B.A.	B.S.	B.A., Masters of Leadership
Additional Certifications	Reading Specialist	Early Childhood	Minors: Language Arts, Sciences, Social Studies				Political Science, P.E.

Interview Participants

Teachers interviewed for the study answered questions regarding teaching demographics on the pre-interview questionnaire (see Table 1). All seven interview participants requested to remain anonymous and pseudonyms were used. Information reported for this study included erasure of any further identifiers in any descriptions. Interview participants were assigned pseudonyms and the list is reported in the order in which the interviews were conducted.

Participant # 1, Lisa Johns. Lisa Johns reported teaching for 38 years in the district examined in this study, 37 in regular education and one year as a Reading Specialist in a Title I program. Additionally, she taught grade levels kindergarten through third grade. She reported no experience teaching special education classes. Finally, she reported holding bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as certification for Reading Specialist. For the pre-interview questionnaire participant Lisa completed the demographic information, however she did not complete questions 11 through 23. Lisa participated in an interview session.

Participant #2, Sarah Baker. Sarah reported teaching for 9 years in the district examined in this study. During that period, Sarah reported teaching regular education classes that consisted of grade levels kindergarten, first, second, third, and sixth. She reported that she had taught primary students for eight and a half years and secondary students for half a year. Sarah also stated she holds a bachelor's degree and certification in Early Childhood. She fully completed the demographic and question portions of the pre-interview questionnaire and participated in an interview session.

Participant #3, Jenna Lane. Jenna Lane reported teaching for 32 years, all regular education classes. Jenna reported having taught first, fourth, and middle school-age students. No experience teaching special education was reported. She also reported teaching primary students for 28 years and secondary students for 4 years. Jenna holds a bachelor's degree with minors in language arts, sciences, and social studies. Additionally, she reported that she has a spouse who is a psychologist. Jenna completed all sections of the pre-interview questionnaire except question number 15 and participated in an interview session.

Participant #4, Janet Parker. Teacher Participant Janet Parker reported teaching regular education classes for 21 years in the district explored in the study. She reported teaching kindergarten, first and second grade classes, with no experience teaching secondary level students or teaching special education classes. Participant Janet Parker reported a bachelor's degree with no additional certifications. She fully completed all portions of the pre-interview questionnaire except question number 23. She also participated in an interview session.

Participant #5, Paula Roades. Teacher Participant Paula Roades reported teaching regular education classes for 35 years in the district explored in the study. She reported teaching second and third grade primary classes during her career. Paula also reported having earned a bachelor's degree and no additional teaching certifications. She fully completed the demographic and question portions of the pre-interview questionnaire except question number 23. Paula participated in an interview session.

Participant #6, Joe Sanders. Joe Sanders reported teaching in the district studied for 15 years. Mr. Sanders reported teaching first and second grade classes, all

primary. No experience teaching special education classes was reported. Additionally, he reported a bachelor's degree and no other teacher certifications. Joe stated to the examiner that he had recently enrolled in administrative classes for education. Mr. Sanders completed the demographic and question sections of the pre-interview questionnaire except for questions 19, 22 and 23. He also participated in an interview session.

Participant #7, Edward Walker. Edward Walker reported teaching 14 years in the district examined for the study. Grade levels taught were reported to include third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh. No experience teaching special education classes was reported by the participant. Six of the 14 years of experience reported were in sixth grade, while eight years were in secondary schools settings. Edward stated he holds a bachelor's degree with emphasis in political science, and physical education and a master's degree in Leadership studies. He completed all sections of the pre-interview questionnaire except question number 23 and participated in an interview session.

Survey Participants

Fifty four participants responded to the print survey. Similar to the seven who participated in the interviews, the majority of teachers surveyed were female (see Table 2). Participants ranged from their mid-thirties through their early 60s (see Table 2). The majority of the participants (77.8%) reported their ethnicity as White; the remaining reported various ethnicities (see Table 3). Nearly 69% of the respondents indicated they had a bachelor's degree (see Table 4). Approximately 33% of the respondents reported being certified to teach special education classes (see Table 5).

Table Data for Survey Participants

Table 2

Crosstabulation: Age by Gender

	Male	Female	Total
35-34	0	8	8
35-44	0	16	16
45-54	2	11	13
55-62	1	11	12
Total	3	46	49

Table 3

Participant Ethnicity

	N	Percent
African-American	2	3.7
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	3.7
Hispanic/Latino	2	3.7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1.9
Multiracial	1	1.9
Caucasian/White	42	77.8
Other	1	1.9
Total (reporting)	51	94.4
Missing	3	5.6
Total	54	100.0

Table 4

Participants' Education Level

	n	Percent
Bachelor's degree	37	68.5
One semester beyond a Bachelor's degree	1	1.9
At least one year beyond a Bachelor's degree	4	7.4
Master's degree	4	7.4
Ed. Specialist/Professional Diploma past Master's Degree	3	5.6
Doctoral degree	3	5.6
Total (reporting)	52	96.3
Missing	2	3.7
Total	54	100.0

Table 5

Teacher Certification

	n	Percent
I am certified to teach regulation education classes	34	63.0
I am certified to teach special education classes.	2	3.7
I am certified to teach regular and special education classes.	16	29.6
Total (reporting)	52	96.3
Missing	2	3.7
Total	54	100.0

The majority of participants (27) teach regular education classes PK through grade 5 (see Table 5). Only one participant reported being a counselor, and 12 participants teach secondary level regular education (see Table 6). Only four secondary level special education teachers responded to the survey (see Table 6).

Table 6

Participants' Current Position

	n	Percent
Counseling	1	1.9
Elementary level (PK-5) - regular education classes	27	50.0
Elementary level (PK-5) special education classes	9	16.7
Secondary level (6-12) regular education classes	12	22.2
Secondary level (6-12) special education classes	4	7.4
Total (Recording)	53	98.1
Missing	1	1.9
Total	54	100.0

Findings

Seven teachers participated in pre-interview questionnaires and interviews to examine teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors, along with 54 teachers who completed surveys for the study which included qualitative and quantitative data. Themes and sub themes emerged from the data collected in the pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, and narrative portions of the survey with issues central to the research questions. For discussion of the themes the interview participants are indentified with a participant pseudonym while survey participants are identified with an 'S' with a survey participant number, for example S1.

Teachers Base Referrals on Specific Criteria

All seven interview participants and survey participants indicated they made referrals for students based on specific criteria. Teachers in the study identified various criteria from which they make referrals for students for special education services which included academics, behaviors and a combination of academics and behaviors. One participant surveyed stated, "It is many times difficult to determine if academics are

driving the challenging behaviors or if the challenge of a child's behavior tends to lead to a decline in academic performance" (Participant S36). Another reported referring students:

> When a student has not demonstrated adequate progress despite modifications to the curriculum and an appropriate length of time has been given to him. Also, if the student begins to display signs of frustration and/or challenging behaviors to escape the lesson. (Participant S48)

Teachers evaluate and make referrals based on students' needs. Teachers in the study responded that they determined the need for referrals for students for special education services based on students' needs. While teachers answered that referrals are based on students' needs, answers varied among teachers in the study regarding a classification of students' needs for referral. Participants in the study discussed academic performance and behavior as prompts for special education referrals.

When participants discussed identifying academics as a prompt for referrals one participant stated that they refer for special education services when the student is "academically low" (Participant S42). Another described a student who would be referred as, "detached, has an inability to speak coherently, read, write, spell or I know that "something" is not quite right and then (after testing) they don't qualify because they are 'performing' to the best they can!" (Participant S51). "Students do not retain information given or are very low. You can tell them and work on the skill over and over many different ways and they still don't get it" (Participant S52). Two participants agreed on academics as the priority prompt for referrals as one teachers stated, "most of the time it's academics, for me here" (Participant Janet Parker), and another concurred

"more academics than behavior" (Participant Paula Roades). Survey results indicated that 29.6% of teachers surveyed frequently refer students for special education services based on academics only, while 22.2% never refer students based solely on academic difficulties (see Table 7). Additionally, 29.6% of teachers surveyed frequently refer students for services who demonstrate difficulties with academics and behaviors (see Table 8)

Table 7

Referred Students Who Have Difficulty with Academics Only

	n	Percent
Never	12	22.2
Rarely	8	14.8
Sometimes	8	14.8
Frequently	16	29.6
Often	1	1.9
Total (Reporting)	45	83.3
Missing	9	16.7
Total	54	100.0

Table 8

Referred Students Who Have Difficulty with Academics and Behaviors

	n	Percent
Never	9	16.7
Rarely	5	9.3
Sometimes	13	24.1
Frequently	16	29.6
Total (Reporting)	1	1.9
Missing	44	81.5
	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Another participant expressed:

> It is academically, it's socially. I want to know their social behaviors, how they relate with others, if it's good or bad relationships, and, you know, it is behavior, but I don't base it on one heavier than the other. It's just the holistic approach to it. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Participant Lisa Johns described her thought processes for decisions on initiating referrals for students for special education services in this manner:

> Other times, if it's a problem child that you just see it. It's like okay; I need to keep my eye on it. Is it – is there something going on or is it ADHD? Is it, you know, you just kind of have to follow your instincts.

When asked if they or other teachers refer based on behaviors one teacher reported, "Behavior? Not very often. And it's more so when they have trouble learning" (Participant Jenna Lane). A kindergarten teacher who participated in the interview portion of the study related:

> I, most of the time, especially with it being kindergarten, it's a wait-and-see attitude. Let's wait and see. Let's give them time to develop. Let's, let's give them time to work out the kinks. So at this age, it kind of, they, they're kind of hesitant. And like I said, if I think it's extreme enough that I want to do paperwork, and then if I press forward on that, then we'll go ahead and do that. And I'll be honest, sometimes I, I'm late on the paperwork because then their behaviors has taken so much energy. (Participant Paula Roades)

While students' academic performance was identified by some of the participants in the study as the priority prompt for teachers for initiating referrals for students for

special education services, another participant related that referrals are often made, "Probably based more on their (students') behavior, not the kid's academics" (Participant Joe Sanders). Other participants in the study indicated that students' behaviors make referral decisions for students for special education services difficult. "For certain students it can be difficult to find the right placement when behavior is the major issue" (Participant S40). While one participant talked about teachers who want the child (with challenging behaviors) removed from their class because of behaviors, "they just want the kid out of their room" (Participant Joe Sanders). Finally, one participant stated an observation of other teachers and their referral practices for students with challenging behaviors and appropriate academic performance saying "And I get that (confusion on when to refer students for services) from many teachers. If academics are okay and behavior is a problem, where to go from there" (Participant Jenna Lane).

Teachers were asked in the survey about referrals for special education services when behaviors are challenging and academics are age appropriate. Of teachers surveyed, 40.7% indicated they never refer students if behavior is the only concern. Thirteen percent indicated they sometimes make referrals for students with challenging behaviors and age appropriate academic skills (see Table 9). Conversely, 40.7% of teachers surveyed reported they never refer students for special education services because of challenging behaviors, while 59.3% stated they do refer based on students' behaviors (see Table 10). Finally, when asked if they were uncertain of when to refer students based on challenging behaviors 24.1% of teachers responding in the survey portion of the study indicated they were uncertain, while 75.9% remained certain of when to refer students based on behaviors (see Table 11).

Table 9

Referred Students Who Demonstrate Challenging Behaviors and Academics Are Age Appropriate

	n	Percent
Never	22	40.7
Rarely	11	20.4
Sometimes	7	13.0
Frequently	4	7.4
Total(Reporting)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Table 10

I Do Not Refer Students for Sp. Ed. Services Because of Challenging Behaviors

	n	Percent
Yes	22	40.7
No	32	59.3
Total	54	100.0

Table 11

I Am Often Uncertain of When to Refer Students for Sp. Ed. Services Because of Behavior

	n	Percent
Yes	13	24.1
No	41	75.9
Total	54	100.0

Teachers value the support from administrators, teachers, and teacher aides.

In the study participants related the importance of support from administrators, fellow teachers, and teachers' aides when making referral decisions based on students' needs and teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. One participant stated, "dialogue with other teachers in the school including music, physical education teachers and counselors is critical too" (Participant S30).

Administrators. An interview participant for the study identified on administrative support for teachers deciding on referrals for students for special education services, "Well we have good support here at this school because administrators will help us with it (Participant Paula Roades). "I've known principals that would look the other way and expect you to handle it all (students' behaviors) and I've had principals that would were supportive and helpful" (Participant Joe Sanders). When asked if administrators provided support on special education laws and practices for referrals Participant Joe Sanders stated, "they know about as much as we do (teachers) about the laws".

Teachers. Addressing the importance of discussion with fellow teachers when making referrals for students for special education services one participant stated:

> If I make a referral, then I think there's a problem. And what I usually do is before I refer somebody, is, I talk it over with a friend, someone on the phone, just to say is this normal, am I overreacting, have you ever had this situation, is there something I can do better. And then, if, you know, and some people, you know, (have concerns) then I take it from there. Is this something I'm able to do on my own, or do I really think they need help? And if I think they need help, then that's

where I'm going to go to the next stop and ask for the paperwork . “It is a huge, huge support to have somebody to support you, the administration, your colleagues. It just makes coming to work easier. It makes your job easier. If you have positive support instead of the dread or they don't want to hear about it, they just want you to take care of it, it, it makes a big difference having support. (Participant Sarah Baker)

Another related:

Before I go into a referral I am lucky, I will say. I know people in the district that I can say, ‘Will you come and watch’, first, before I start all the paperwork. That's good, because I want another pair of eyes. And I don't, maybe it's just me. If they can sit back and go no, I think you just got a young one there. Or I've had them come in, watch for a little bit, give me a thumbs up and walk out. Like, oh yes, start the paperwork. (Participant Janet Parker)

Another participant related seeking support from special education teachers, stated:

I've always sought special ed teachers if I feel like there's a problem with a kid, whether it's speech or, you know, whatever it could be. I ask them before I even consider doing paperwork, could you come by and observe this child for me. I understand I know you have a busy schedule, but I see these weaknesses that I'm not sure, positive if it needs to be addressed. I would like your advice before I even think about it, so I don't even really just go to the paperwork. First, I want somebody to come and give me an idea if I'm observing it wrong myself or if it's just a kid that just needs a little extra attention. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Teachers Aides. Interview Participant Janet Parker stressed the importance of teacher's aides in the classroom stating,

> I have [name of teacher's aide here], alias Mortimer. I do. I have a wonderful assistant. I believe every young grade should have two teacher's aides anyway. Not just one and 27 kids. That's just a problem waiting to happen. All of it (for behavior management and instruction), all of it. It's just another pair of eyes, another brain, another lifeguard on duty. When you, I mean, if you're in a big ocean you hope there's one more, you know, some extra help there. That's why I go back to the second person in the room, because we can do that. I can jump in, take that and the assistant who's been with me for so long, which makes a big difference, can click right in.

In the study interview and survey participants discussed teachers, administrators and teachers' aide's roles in teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services. Teachers' aides were valued for referrals and classroom management with students' behaviors. Administrators were observed to be helpful or not depending on the individual administrator. Finally, regular education teachers and special education teachers were identified as valuable resources in the decision making process for referrals for students for special education services.

Teachers express concern that the referral process is not implemented in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed. Teachers in the study stated concerns that the referral process for special education services is not implemented

soon enough by other teachers. One participant stated, "Well, one of the things to go under this first is by the time they get to fifth grade they *should* have been identified if there's a learning disability" (Participant Edward Walker). Another related, "By the time students are in the grade level I teach/taught (4-6) students who qualify for special educations services have *usually* been identified" (Participant S15). On issues of special education services and category for services that should have been identified one participant stated:

> It (need for special education services) should have been identified. But if it does come in (to play with the student) I look at their social aspects, do they, are they out, overly outspoken, are, are they, they know everything and they can speak it, they can tell me everything that they need to tell me and they get it correct but when it comes times for putting it on paper they can't put it on paper. I think here at our school we do a good job. I think we do a very good job here at this school. It's the new kids coming in from different states that we find problems with that they've not been identified. But we really can't justify saying that we do a good job because we're such a transient school we don't keep, we keep very, very few kids from kindergarten till fifth grade. (Participant Edward Walker)

Conversely, another participant discussed the internal talk that accompanies the decision to implement the referral for special services process stating:

> For autism or whatever we suspect, I would rather have somebody else right along with it, saying that they see it as well. I don't know. Would that change the paperwork? I don't know. But, and I don't like to say this I do have to really think hard and heavy, is this - Not is this kid worth me doing it, but it goes back to me,

> am I seeing this thing and does the kid need more time. And I don't know if that's right or wrong, but before I give you that DD [special education category] standing, let me give you another year. But then I have some people argue, well now you've wasted what he could have gotten back in September. Now he's not going to get it (referred and placed) until August, true and then, but the first-grade teacher's like what were you thinking? What did you do? Why didn't you do the referral? (Participant Janet Parker)

Another participant stated:

> Just like this year, I have kids that can't add and subtract but they're expected to do four-digit additional and subtraction just like everyone else. They're expected to learn multiplication facts and do everything everyone else has done when they haven't got that basis so that's the biggest problem for me is when they come from second, first and second and they haven't got that foundation. For me it's getting them identified early because teachers aren't wanting to do this, testing referrals so they just keep passing them up, passing them up. (Participant Paula Roades)

One teacher participant identified concerns for potential achievement gaps for students who should have been referred earlier stating:

> (If not referred earlier for services) Then somebody's not doing their job. Because that's when you know, they're doing their ABCs and their 1,2,3s and that's when you know. If there's a learning disability it's going to show there as well as it does when it gets more complex. But by the time he gets to fifth grade we've lost all these years. (Participant Edward Walker)

Still another teacher reported:

> Of course, yes (if students are referred early enough), they would have already gotten at least the services they needed to get them going, and they may not be as far behind by the time we get them. That's what I think. (Participant Lisa Johns)

Teachers indicate there is an extraordinary amount of paperwork associated with referrals. Teachers in the study indicated that the paperwork associated with the referral process is often a reason that students are not referred for special education services earlier. When asked by the interviewer, "Is it frustrating for you as a teacher if a student shows up in your room that maybe should have been referred earlier," a participant answered, "That's the part that gets me and nothing else. I can deal with anything else you give me, but if you, if you're too lazy to do this that's what frustrates me because it's your job" (Participant Lisa Johns). In this study teachers reported that some of the referrals not made earlier in a student's academic career may result from laziness or inaction on the part of other teachers' with whom they work. One teacher stated, "It shocks me how many children with speech problems get to my class and they're still having trouble with da and th and –No one referred. No one did the paperwork" (Participant Paula Roades). "And how often do you find that occurring at the beginning of your school years?" (Interviewer) "Oh every year there's at least three or four" (Participant Paula Roades). Still another participant added, "And it's they just don't want to fill out the paperwork" (Participant Lisa Johns).

Another participant identified pre-referral procedures and paperwork for referrals for students for special education services as potential reasons why referrals are not completed by some teachers. "The frustrations come when we have to document so

much before we can refer. We quite honestly cannot find time to do that when we need to be up teaching all day" (Participant S14). One teacher interviewed stated:

> It's just a thought of mine is the paperwork's a big turnoff. It is - We need to focus on teaching our students but when we come up and we have to do a 30-day or a 60-day evaluation on a student and we have to log all this stuff down and fill out all these, all this paperwork to get tested and then to find out that maybe this student doesn't quality then you have to quantify your time; do I really want to spend this much time doing it, and I think that is a very big deterrent for a lot of teachers and they say oh, you know, I'll just, I'll just turn them off and I won't pay attention and I'll just let the kid pass on through and let the next teacher deal with it. And, and that's what I feel like when the lower grades aren't catching it, if you don't catch it in primary. And one of the biggest things that I've heard people say is the paperwork is just sickening. And it's not just for us; it's also for the special education teachers as well. It is, it's a government entity, based thing so it's money. And if you don't have the documentation you're not going to get the finances you need to. (Participant Edward Walker)

When asked about the amount of paperwork and time invested in making a special education referral the participant added:

> That is more than I can do. Well I would say that the average, if you, if you're doing it right and not just trying to run through it, you're probably spending six hours. Collecting the information. Because you need to collect samples of the work, which is normal anyways, but then you have to put it all together, then you have to present it to the special education teacher. In the past, which I thought was

> really well but I think sometime it was over, it wasn't fair or, I'm not a special education teacher, I don't know what to really look for, well I kinda know what to look for, but I don't know what they're looking for and what they want by scientific method this, scientific that, they need to actually -I would like to see if we have a suspected child that we believe has a learning disability, just like with people with speech problems, you come in and observe that because that's your profession, you observe that student and you determine whether that student has a specific problem with speech, whereas in special education the teacher makes a recommendation, teacher does the paperwork, gives it to special education, they do the paperwork then the, they, the testers come in and do all the testing. (Participant Edward Walker)

Still another participant stated:

> Well sometimes -I mean, I have to really, really think, do I want to do the paperwork? Is this really - And I'll just be honest by saying that.
>
> I, most of the time, especially with it being kindergarten, it's a wait-and-see attitude. Let's wait and see. Let's give them time to develop. Let's, let's give them time to work out the kinks. So at this age, it kind of, they, they're kind of hesitant. And like I said, if I think it's extreme enough that I want to do paperwork, and then if I press forward on that, then we'll go ahead and do that. And I'll be honest, sometimes I, I'm late on the paperwork because then their behaviors have taken so much energy. (Participant Sarah Baker)

When asked in general terms about the paperwork demands another participant related:

> Overall, I think so. I mean some just don't want to do the paperwork (for referrals), for me doing the paperwork I would rather do the paperwork because I know it helps the student. For some they just won't do it. (Participant Jenna Lane)

When the above participant was asked if the paperwork was a stumbling block for some students to receive services, the participant responded, "yes" and added, "I feel like -I think I've got so much other I've gotta do (teaching the students) that I don't have the time to get to the paper" (Participant Jenna Lane). While another participant related:

> How ugly is it (paper)? A lot of it's redundant. I feel like you write the same thing over and over and then you just -I don't know. I really think it should be more -I do agree with the six weeks' intervention. There should be more before you jump right in to it. But there are times that I would like to have that second person to document it as well. Not just, this is what Ms. P. [teacher] or mom says, but I like it when one of you guys can come and just for five minutes or ten minutes, and see the same thing. 'Cause then I think, okay now I'm on the right track. Some kids I've referred - Most of mine are speech, speech or OT. I think I see more children that I think have problems today. We tend not to refer them a lot of times because it's a lot of work. It's a lot of paperwork and we tend to say oh, you know, they'll be okay or we'll get through it or we'll just put it off to see if they improve instead of getting it done right away. Well I just filled one out not long ago and I caught myself, you know, I'm so busy with 20 kids and trying to get it all done and I would say oh I forgot to do this piece and I forgot to document what she did and I can't remember did I give her a test as soon as we finished that or oh I

helped her with that and so, you know, I catch myself going why did I do that and I, I have trouble keeping track of the documentation. (Participant Paula Roades)

Finally, another participant posited an alternate rationale as to why some teachers do complete the necessary paperwork for referrals for students for special education services and impacts on student learning stating:

> I think we've got some teachers that just don't want to deal with anything, so it's easier to file paperwork for six months, or whatever the heck it is now [the regulation timelines for paperwork], to get the kid out of the way, but by the time they waste doing the paperwork, they could have spent that same time investing in that kid's life. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Teachers vary on the frequency of referrals. Teachers in the study reported varying practices related to referrals. When asked if, and how often teachers make referrals for special education services in the pre-interview questionnaires and surveys they reported different reasons and frequencies. On whether or not they refer, responses included, “yes” (Participant Edward Walker), and “. . . it's more so when they have trouble learning” (Participant Jenna Lane).

When asked how often teachers made referrals for students for special education services, teacher responses included, “Maybe one a year, not usually more than that” (Participant Paula Roades); “I do, and I’ve never had one denied, thank goodness” (Participant Lisa Johns); “Some, maybe one a year, not usually more than that” (Participant Paula Roades); and “not much anymore” (Participant Joe Sanders).

Table 12

Referrals by Years Teaching Regular and Special Education Classes

Estimated Annual Referrals		Years Teaching Regular Education	Years Teaching Special Education
0	*M*	15.53	5.47
	N	15	15
	SD	10.69	8.75
1	*M*	14.10	1.88
	N	10	8
	SD	12.01	2.75
2	*M*	10.30	4.35
	N	10	10
	SD	11.36	7.21
3	*M*	11.75	1.00
	N	8	8
	SD	6.88	2.83
6	*M*	9.00	.00
	N	1	1
	SD	.	.
10	*M*	.00	9.00
	N	2	2
	SD	.00	4.24
Total	*M*	12.61	3.78
	N	46	44
	SD	10.47	6.60

Table 12 reveals the estimated annual referrals of participants by their years of teaching regular education and special education. Participants reported having taught regular education classes an average of 12.16 years (including part time) and only 3.78 year teaching special education. In the survey data, regular education teachers with the most number of years teaching experience in the study reported zero estimated annual

referrals, while regular education teachers in the study with the least number of years teaching experience reported an estimated six referrals per year.

Teacher participants identified concerns that other teachers are not referring students for special education services in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed. Teachers in the study described uncertainties with when to refer and if giving students additional time for development prior to a referral is appropriate, as well as the comfort some teachers derive from having other teachers and professionals collaborate on the decision to initiate referrals for students for special education services. Finally, teachers in the study discussed concerns for potential achievement gaps for students who should have been referred earlier for special education services and were not referred.

Teachers Need Better Training to Support Students with Special Needs

The research revealed a second theme related to teacher training. A teacher who was interviewed was asked if more training was needed to support teachers with special needs referral practices or students with special needs and responded, “yes” (Participant Jenna Lane) while another participant stated, “I don't think I'm where I need to be, probably not where we (teachers) need to be because we need more” (Participant Jenna Lane). Another participant revealed, “I may know more than I think but just don't realize it . . .” (Participant Paula Roades). While another stated, “I've never had any training, I went to school so long ago. Half this stuff wasn't even diagnosed back in the day when I went to school” Participant (6JS).

Teachers need *more* training in relationship to students with special needs. In the study teachers reported limited or no training in relationship to students with

special needs and offered thoughts and ideas on what was needed for training. A male teacher voiced, “There was no training. No one, to this day, no one's taught me anything about these autistic kids and what to do” (Participant Joe Sanders). A participant voiced, “I don't think it's a difficult process “(Participant Edward Walker). Another stated, “I need time management skills. I need help dealing with problem children, discipline, dealing with parents, paperwork, things” (Participant Paula Roades). Another participant related:

> But if you're going to mainstream kids and you want me to effectively touch their lives, you need to teach me how to touch their lives. Otherwise, I'm wasting my time and, or they're wasting their time being with me. They need to go back to where the specialist is to train them. I personally would just like to know what the heck I'm supposed to do. I need to know what's best for that kid, too, if they have a list, often things that I can do to help the kid become a better student, outside of what I would normally do, I need to know that, but it's just like we're going to mainstream and you're going to like it, and too bad for you. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Another kindergarten teacher related, “You really don't have enough (training). It's like a get out on the field, you're learning a lot on your own” (Participant Jenna Lane). Another stated:

> Yes. I had half a semester of training for, I forgot what it's called, but I only had half a semester and so I don't really feel like I'm equipped for this. So whenever I get a new student, autistic, Asperser’s, you can’t always rely on the same thing. There are different levels of Asperger’s. There are different levels of autistic

> children. Some can write. Some can communicate. Some don't speak. So those are frustrating because I want to be the best teacher for them and I want everyone to be successful, but I'm frustrated 'cause I don't know how to help them. (Participant Sarah Baker)

Teachers require *better* training in relationship to students with special needs. The study revealed a Subtheme of better training for teachers in relationship to students with special needs. "Do you think that increased training with special education laws and practices would enable a teacher to make different decisions about referrals or to feel better about filling out that paperwork?" (Interviewer). One teacher responded, "I doubt it" (Participant Paula Roades), while another interview participant stated, "I think so. I think the majority. The majority of us want to understand it and know what's going on" (Participant Jenna Lane). Another teacher stated:

> Ideally most teachers would say don't send that special education child in my room because I don't want to deal with it, I don't want to know how to deal with it and I won't deal with it. But if you're going to mainstream kids and you want me to effectively touch their lives, you need to teach me how to touch their lives. Otherwise, I'm wasting my time and, or they're wasting their time being with me. They need to go back to where the specialist is to train them. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Of teachers responding to the survey questions 68.5% indicated they were not trained to teach students at a referral for special education services level and 9.3% indicated they rarely received training. Two teachers in the survey indicated they sometimes received training for work with students who demonstrate challenging

behaviors and may need referrals for special education services (12). Additionally, teachers responded they received limited training and 90.7% did not attribute students' receiving special education services with their level of training, while 9.3% responded students receive special education services because they are not trained to work with them (see Table 13). Teachers in the survey (14.8%) further responded that sometimes students are not a "fit" for their individual classrooms; while 51.9% never think students belong in other classrooms (see Table 14). Roughly, 18.5% of teachers surveyed indicated that students need more assistance than can be provided in their classrooms (see Table 15).

Table 13

I Was Not Trained to Teach Students at This Level

	n	Percent
Never	37	68.5
Rarely	5	9.3
Sometimes	2	3.7
Total(Recording)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100

Table 14

Students Who Demonstrated Challenging Behaviors Receive Sp. Ed. Services Because I Was Not Trained to Deal with That Type of Student

	n	Percent
Yes	5	9.3
No	49	90.7
Total	54	100.0

Table 15

Student Not a "Fit" With the Students in My Class

	n	Percent
Never	28	51.9
Rarely	7	13.0
Sometimes	8	14.8
Frequently	1	1.9
Total(Reporting)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Table 16

Student Needs More Assistance than Can be Given in My Classroom

	n	Percent
Never	15	27.8
Rarely	7	13.0
Sometimes	10	18.5
Frequently	10	18.5
Often	2	3.7
Total (Recording)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Teachers require training in relationship to special education laws. Pre-interview questionnaire responses and survey data revealed that teachers' knowledge of special education laws, educational equity and issues surrounding social justice is limited (see Table 16). When asked about their individual understanding of special education laws, one teacher replied that (teachers), "probably don't have a very good understanding at all. I'm not sure I could tell you anything other than they're entitled to an education" (Participant Paula Roades). Of teachers surveyed, 14.8% were rarely or never aware of

IDEA (see Table 17) and 18.6% rarely or never base their referrals for students for special education services on IDEIA (see Table 18).

Table 17

I Understand Special Education Laws and Practices

	n	Percent
Never	5	9.3
Rarely	4	7.4
Sometimes	20	37.0
Frequently	18	33.3
Total (Recording)	47	87.0
Missing	7	13.0
Total	54	100.0

Another teacher reported:

> Well, basically they all just told you the, things that were going to keep the school district from being sued. That was about the only thing that you got informed about. You know, don't get the school sued, just like the new one they added this year. Don't restrain a child a certain way. First of all, I'm not going to restrain a child unless it's absolutely necessary, and even if something was to happen where I, where I bruised the child, or something, it wasn't intentional. I'm just trying to keep him from hurting other kids, and I just think it's ridiculous. We have to clear all the other kids out of the classroom while Fred's over there throwing chairs and tearing up their classroom, but it's just, you know the rules. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Table 18

I Am Aware of IDEIA

	n	Percent
Never	4	7.4
Rarely	4	7.4
Sometimes	8	14.8
Frequently	33	61.1
Total (Recording)	49	90.7
Missing	5	9.3
Total	54	100.0

Table 19

I Base my Special Education Referrals on IDEIA

	n	Percent
Never	7	13.0
Rarely	3	5.6
Sometimes	12	22.2
Frequently	22	40.7
Total (Recording)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Teachers Must Address Problematic and Challenging Behaviors

Teachers in the study related difficulties with responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services. Teachers in the study described similarly students' challenging behaviors. Descriptors used by teachers in the study included problematic and challenging behaviors.

Some students demonstrate different behavior problems. Teachers reported issues associated with students' challenging behaviors, as well as concerns for students

with different behavior problems. Participants in the study spontaneously distinguished problematic versus challenging behaviors. One teacher stated:

> I think it's a real mix because it depends. To me, I put down like daily a child's daily outbursts. A lot of it I think kids that I have that are ADD or ADHD who parents will not put on meds and it's continual. (Participant Jenna Lane)

Another teacher reported:

> For me a problem, a problematic behavior is more of a behavior that like well it's… It's an ADD child that cannot control his situation or someone who is autistic that doesn't have that control that the average student has. When you compare that to the challenging behaviors for me that's more of an immature student that's coming in, they, that's something that they can change pretty quickly. Somebody that's just behind a little bit, somebody that has a challenge in reading or math or something that I can really have a definite effect on immediately. You know being a teacher. (Participant Joe Sanders)

Yet another teacher related:

> When you say challenging, it makes me think of more severe. Problem behaviors to me are the things that you see in every kid that you can fix. It's a problem now, but it can be fixed. Challenging means that I may or may not be able to fix it. (Participant Janet Parker)

While another participant reported, "To me challenging behaviors are ones they (students) do repeatedly" (Participant Paula Roades). A teacher participant related that, "the challenging one (behavior) is something that maybe I can't necessarily change as a

teacher but it, it may take medication and some other things to" (Participant Joe Sanders). Finally, another participant stated:

> I was thinking to me it's hard to distinguish between but I - my thinking like behavioral - problem behaviors being difficult to deal with on a continual basis and challenging to me is if you can find that niche or that fit for that child where you can help them with that problem that's - you know, it may be changing a lot of things, but a niche that helps them. (Participant Jenna Lane)

Some students' challenging behaviors are primarily physical. Teachers in the study related concerns for students' behaviors that are physical. One teacher described students with physical behavior concerns as students who, "physically harm others on a repeated basis" and identified, "the lack of available placements when a student needs an ED (emotional disturbance category or placement) environment" (Participant S2). Examples of physically challenging behaviors identified by teachers in the study included:

- ADHD behaviors (demonstrated by students) are most common these kids are too excitable and easily distractible (Participant S4)
- Anger issues-violence/Aggression towards teacher and/or students" (Participant S26)
- Hitting, biting, kicking, disrupting noises (Participant S16)
- Harming other students because of frustration (Participant S18)
- Students who endanger other students and keep my other students from receiving and education (Participant S21)

- Shutting down, age inappropriate behaviors, intense mood swings. (Participant S23)

Finally, one interview participant identified "Anger, saying they are stupid or dumb" (Participant S44) as a students' physical challenging behavior.

Some students challenging behaviors are disruptive in class. Teachers interviewed and surveyed for the study identified and described disruptive classroom behaviors and 29.6% stated students sometimes demonstrate behaviors that disrupt the class (see Table 20). One participant described challenging disruptions as "constant disruptions" (Participant S8). Another teacher stated disruptive challenging behaviors are characterized by behaviors that are "oppositionally defiant, extreme ADHD, (demonstrated by students who may need a) behavior disorder class" (Participant S31). Another participant described students' disruptive behaviors in class as, "out of control, constant disruptions of classroom" (Participant S41). Of teachers surveyed for the study, 11.1% stated they refer students who demonstrate challenging behaviors so as not to disrupt the reminder of the class (see Table 21).

Table 20

Students Demonstrate Behaviors that Disrupt the Class

	N	Percent
Never	11	20.4
Rarely	17	31.5
Sometimes	16	29.6
Frequently	1	1.9
Total (Reporting)	45	83.3
Missing	9	16.7
Total	54	100.0

Table 21

I Refer Students Who Demonstrate Challenging Behaviors for Special Education Services So as Not to Disrupt My Class

	n	Percent
Yes	6	11.1
No	48	88.9
Total	54	100.0

Some students with special needs have academic issues. Additionally, teachers in the study discussed "students struggle academically" (Participant S28). Academic concerns for students were identified in the study by participants as students who demonstrate, "huge reading difficulties" (Participant S24), students who are "unable to focus/ achieve academic progress after multiple attempts" (Participant S29), and who demonstrate an "inability to follow class routine, inability to communicate" (Participant S37). Another participant described students with academic issues as, "detached, (demonstrate the) inability to speak coherently, read, write, spell" (Participant S51).

Additionally, teachers were asked about issues of "fairness" for students who are asked to learn with other students who perform above them academically. Teachers in the survey (22.2%) indicated that it is sometimes unfair for students when this occurs (see Table 22); while 7.4% indicated it is sometimes difficult to move the entire class along including students who struggle (see Table 23). A significant number of teachers surveyed indicated, 61.1% indicated they did not need to move the class along quickly based on testing guidelines and requirements (see Table 24).

Table 22

It Is Not Fair for the Student to Have to Learn With Other Students Who Are Above Their Academic Level

	n	Percent
Never	24	44.4
Rarely	8	14.8
Sometimes	12	22.2
Total (Recording)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Table 23

The Whole Class Cannot Move Along Because All Students Are Not at the Same Level

	n	Percent
Never	30	55.6
Rarely	10	18.5
Sometimes	4	7.4
Total (Recording)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Table 24

I Need to Move the Class Along Quickly to Meet Testing Guidelines at This Grade Level

	n	Percent
Never	33	61.1
Rarely	6	11.1
Sometimes	4	7.4
Often	1	1.9
Total(Reporting)	44	81.5
Missing	10	18.5
Total	54	100.0

Teachers are Unsure of the Meaning of the Terms Educational Equity and Social Justice and Implications for Regular and Students with Special Needs.

For the study, teachers were asked in the pre-interview questionnaires and interview their understanding of concepts of educational equity and social justice in education for students. One participant verbalized "I know social justice for students," (Participant Edward Walker) however did not elaborate on conceptual underpinnings of the subject.

Another participant stated:

> I'm not sure if I really understood that (educational equity and social justice). I just know that there could be, there are social injustices [*sic*] and I try to keep it out of the room, but I know there is. And so I wasn't sure if that was going along with like the free and reduced lunch, if it goes along with, or if it's on the same lines as a parent's education, or if a parent, if their value of education. (Participant Sarah Baker)

Another interview participant commented, "Well, I read that (question on the pre-interview questionnaire about educational equity and social justice) and thought what?" (Janet Parker). A kindergarten teacher stated, "Now maybe if you rephrase that, I might could probably understand. But just the terms, no. And I know sometimes we names things, same things, different names" (Janet Parker). Another interview participant related, "Well I did look them up on the computer when I read them on your questions but no" (Joe Sanders). When asked about familiarity with concepts of equity and social justice another teacher commented, "Not really, I'm not sure what you're asking me" (Paula Roades). None of the seven teachers interviewed for this study demonstrated

understanding or expression for the concepts of educational equity or social justice in education for students.

Archival Data

To further answer the research questions, data were collected and analyzed from Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) special education referral documents (see Appendix D) completed by elementary and secondary teachers across the district during school years 2004 through 2009. A sample size of 365 documents derived from a possible 7500 documents was calculated for review. Per each calendar school year, 73 documents were reviewed for data collection for this study. The archival data consisted of (a) teacher settings (grade level and regular or special education classes); (b) the number of referrals per school year by grade level and type of class; (c) the number and type of concerns (academic, behavioral, or both); (d) the number of referrals per school year and teacher setting that were documented as academics satisfactory and behaviors a concern; and (e) the number of behavioral concerns (see Table 25).

Table 25

Archival Data from 2004-2005 through 2008-2009 School Years

School Year	Teacher Setting	# of Referrals per grade level	#s for Presenting Concern	# if Behavior was a factor and were Academics documented as Satisfactory (if SPED satisfactory in the SPED class)	Behavioral Concerns
2004-2005	(EC-RE)PK-2nd	39	A (10) B (9) AB (20)	14 of 29	Y (29) N (10)
	(EC-SE)PK-2nd	4	A (1) B (2) AB (1)	2 of 3	Y (3) N (1)
	(RE-P) 3rd – 5th	28	A (20) B (4) AB (4)	12 of 28	Y (8) N (20)
	(SE-P) 3rd – 5th	3	A (2) B (1)	2 of 3	Y (1) N (2)
	(RE-S) 6th – 12th	3	A (2) B (1)	1 of 3	Y (1) N (2)
	(SE-S) 6th-12th	0			
2005-2006	(EC-RE)PK-2nd	36	A (6) B (3) AB (27)	24 of 30	Y (30) N (6)
	(EC-SE)PK-2nd	6	A (2) B (2) AB (2)	3 of 4	Y (4) N (2)
	(RE-P) 3rd – 5th	35	A (25) B (5) AB (5)	3 of 10	Y (10) N (25)
	(SE-P) 3rd – 5th	2	A (1) B (0) AB (1)	1	Y (1) N (1)
	(RE-S) 6th – 12th	5	B (3) AB (2)	2 of 5	Y (5) N (0)
	(SE-S) 6th-12th	0			

Table 25 (*continued*)

2006-2007	(EC-RE)PK-2nd	33	A (10) B (8) AB (15)	17 of 23	Y (23) N (10)
	(EC-SE)PK-2nd	1	AB (1)	0 of 1	Y (1) N (0)
	(RE-P) 3rd – 5th	35	A (23) B (6) AB (6)	4 of 12	Y (12) N (23)
	(SE-P) 3rd – 5th	0			
	(RE-S) 6th – 12th	3	A (1) AB (2)	1 of 3	Y (2) N (1)
	(SE-S) 6th-12th	1	AB (1)	0 of 1	Y (1)
2007-2008	(EC-RE)PK-2nd	42	A (18) B (14) AB (10)	18 of 24	Y (24) N (18)
	(EC-SE)PK-2nd	2	AB (2)	1 of 2	Y (2) N (0)
	(RE-P) 3rd – 5th	27	A (15) B (6) AB (6)	5 of 12	Y (12) N (15)
	(SE-P) 3rd – 5th	0			
	(RE-S) 6th – 12th	2	A (2)		N (2)
	(SE-S) 6th-12th	0			
2008-2009	(EC-RE)PK-2nd	48	A (33) B (9) AB (6)	9 of 15	Y (15) N (33)
	(EC-SE)PK-2nd	4	A (1) B (3)	1 of 3	Y (3) N (1)
	(RE-P) 3rd – 5th	21	A (17) B (1) AB (3)	2 of 4	Y (4) N (17)
	(SE-P) 3rd – 5th	0			
	(RE-S) 6th – 12th	0			
	(SE-S) 6th-12th	0			

Note: EC-RE=Early childhood-Regular Education
EC-SP=Early childhood-Special Education
RE-P=Regular Education Primary Grades
SE-P=Special Education Primary Grades
RE-S=Regular Education Secondary Grades
SE-S=Special Education Secondary Grades
A = Academics only; B = Behavior only; AB = Academics & Behavior

Summary

Three types of data were collected for the study: (a) qualitative pre-interview and interview data from seven participants, (b) quantitative survey data from 54 participants, and (c) archival data from 2004-2009. Subsequent data analysis yielded themes and Subthemes related to the research questions for the study. From the data collected themes were discovered in the research that included: (1) teachers evaluate and make referrals based on student needs, (2) teachers need better training to support students with special needs, (3) teachers must address problematic and challenging behaviors, and (4) teachers are unsure of the meaning of the terms educational equity and social justice in education for students and implications for students with special needs. Finally, a matrix of findings and themes for the study and a matrix for triangulation of research questions and themes was designed.

Table 26

Matrix of Findings and Themes for the Study

Matrix of Findings and Themes for the Study	**1)Pre-Interview Questionnaire & Interviews**	**2)Surveys**	**3)Archival Data**
Theme: Teachers Base Referrals on Specific Criteria	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Teachers evaluate and make referrals based on students' needs.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Teachers value the support from administrators, teachers, and teachers aides.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers express concern that the referral process is not implemented in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers indicate there is an extraordinary amount of paperwork associated with referrals.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers vary on the frequency of referrals.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Theme: Teachers Need Better Training to Support Students with Special Needs	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers need more training in relationship to students with special needs.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers require better training in relationship to students with special needs.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Teachers require training in relationship to special education laws.	**X**	**X**	
Theme: Teachers Must Address Problematic and Challenging Behaviors	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Some students demonstrate multiple problems.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Some challenging behaviors are primarily physical.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Some students with special needs are disruptive in class.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Some students with special needs have academic issues.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Theme: Teachers are Unsure of the Meaning of the Terms Educational Equity and Social Justice and Implications for Students with Special Needs	**X**		

Notes: Document for #1=Appendix B & C
Document for #2=Appendix E
Document for #3=Appendix D

Table 27

Triangulation of Research Questions and Themes

Research Question	**Theme: Teachers Base Referrals on Specific Criteria**	**Theme: Teachers Need Better Training to Support Students with special needs**	**Theme: Teachers Must Address Problematic and Challenging Behaviors**	**Theme: Teachers are Unsure of the Meaning of the Terms Educational Equity and Social Justice and Implications for Students with Special Needs**
RQ1What are Teachers Experiences with Students' who Display Challenging	X	X	X	X
RQ1a.How do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teaching and learning, as well as referrals for special education services?	X		X	X
RQ1b.Why do teachers' experiences with students who display challenging behaviors affect teachers' referrals for students for special education services?	X	X	X	X
RQ2.What issues of social justice emerge for students who display challenging behaviors in the classroom?	X	X	X	X
RQ2a. How do teachers' referrals for students for special education services affect issues of social justice in education for students?	X	X	X	X
RQ2b.Why are teacher referrals for students for special education services and subsequent eligibility decisions affecting issues of social justice in education for students?	X	X		X

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Currently, language used to discuss and describe the roles and responsibilities of public schools for students in schools in the United States includes words such as access, resources, accountability and adequate yearly progress. Today, more socially diverse populations of students than ever before attend schools in the United States (Artiles, Trent & Palmer, 2004; Cymrot, 2002; Shields & Mohan, 2008). Amid the rhetoric of responsibilities for schools lies a burgeoning need for increased awareness and critical consciousness on the part of educators for all students' educational needs (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002).

States within the United States are required by law to educate all students, including those with special needs and to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Educational equity and social justice in education concerns for students with special needs includes legislative tenets found in special education laws. Furthermore, special education laws dictating processes and procedures mandate not only that student's gain access to the general curriculum, but that least restrictive placement settings must be employed (IDEA, 1990, 1997; IDEIA, 2004). Students referred and placed inappropriately based on challenging behaviors are at risk for academic marginalization including lessened complexity and richness of formal instruction, as well as suitable and equitable learning opportunities (Theoharris, 2007).

While teacher initiated referrals for students for special education services comprise most referrals made (Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1982; Egyed & Short, 2006: Pugach, 2001) and subsequently the majority of students referred by teachers are identified, made eligible, and placed in special education services

(Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1981; Pugach, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1983) the importance of teachers' lived experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent referral practices for students for special education services cannot be overemphasized. Teachers most often cite students' behavioral problems as the prompting concern for referrals for special education services (Podell & Tournake, 2007; Pugach, 1985; Soodak & Podell, 1994). This study examined teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for students for special education services triggered by students' challenging behaviors, as well as concerns for educational equity and social justice in education for students who demonstrate challenging behaviors.

The purpose of the research was to examine teachers' lived experiences with students who display challenging behaviors; teachers' subsequent use of referrals for special education services based on student's challenging behaviors, and educational equity and social justice in education issues for students. A case study was designed to examine and explore teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services in a mid-southwestern public school district located within a community with a military base. Teacher pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and archival data were conducted and data collected and analyzed to further understanding of teachers' experiences with students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services. While the study was primarily qualitative, quantitative components were collected and analyzed to further understanding of the teachers' experiences.

Limitations for the Study

The interview and survey data, while containing experiences of teachers within the district regarding experiences and practices with students' challenging behaviors and subsequent referrals for special education services through years 2004-2009 did not allow for exact comparisons of responses and practices by individual teacher interview participants to identical teacher archival documents completed by teachers. For the study, the return rate for surveys (18.9%) was low due to teachers' perceived burdens with paperwork demands. Also, generalizability among teachers and district practices regarding referrals was limited due to time constraints and scope of this portion of the designed study. Generalizability to other districts was not possible as one public school district was used in this case study. In addition, validity of this study was limited to the reliability of the instruments used.

Other limitations included the lack of ability to control the speed of response to survey questions by participants, low response rates of teachers completing and returning surveys within the case, and a potential vulnerability of erred statistical analysis. Additionally, only regular education teachers were interviewed for the study. For the study, each of the possible limitations was considered and reviewed to ascertain if a particular limitation was present or emerged as the data was collected and analyzed.

Triangulation of Study Data for Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study

Three types of data were collected in the current study: (a) qualitative pre-interview and interview data from seven participants, (b) qualitative and quantitative survey data from 54 participants, and (c) archival data from 2004 through 2009. The organization for this chapter includes triangulation of study data for conclusions and

recommendations related to the research questions for the study. The following section presents the themes from the qualitative interviews and includes examination of data from the surveys and archival data to determine if the themes are supported by all data sources (see Table 28). Additionally, conclusions and recommendations based on the themes and related to the research questions for the study are discussed.

Table 28

Triangulation of Study Data for Conclusions and Recommendations

Triangulation of Study Data for Conclusions and Recommendations	**1)Pre-Interview Questionnaires and Interviews**	**2)Surveys**	**3)Archival Data**
Theme: Teachers Base Referrals on Specific Criteria	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Teachers evaluate and make referrals based on students' needs.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Teachers value the support form administrators, teachers, and teacher aides.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers express concern that the referral process is not implemented in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers indicate there is an extraordinary amount of paperwork associated with referrals.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers vary on the frequency of referrals.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Theme: Teachers Need Better Training to Support Students with Special Needs	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers need more training in relationship to students with special needs.	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Teachers require better training in relationship to students with special needs.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Teachers require training in relationship to special education laws.	**X**	**X**	
Theme: Teachers Must Address Problematic and Challenging Behaviors	**X**	**X**	
Subtheme: Some students demonstrate multiple problems.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Some challenging behaviors are primarily physical.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Some students with special needs are disruptive in class.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Subtheme: Some students with special needs have academic issues.	**X**	**X**	**X**
Theme: Teachers are Unsure of the Meaning of the Terms Educational Equity and Social Justice and Implications for Students with Special Needs	**X**		

Notes: Document for #1=Appendix B & C
Document for #2=Appendix E
Document for #3=Appendix D

Conclusions of the Study

Teachers base referrals on specific criteria. The first theme indicated that teachers evaluate and make referrals based on student needs. The first theme was supported by five Subthemes:

1. Teachers evaluate and make referrals based on students' needs.
2. Teachers value the support from administrators, teachers, and teacher aides.
3. Teachers express concern that the referral process is not implemented in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed.
4. Teachers indicate there is an extraordinary amount of paperwork associated with referrals.
5. Teachers vary on the frequency of referrals.

Theme 1 revealed that teachers base referrals on specific criteria was supported by interviews, survey responses, and the archival data. All seven teachers (Lisa Johns, Sarah Baker, Jenna Lane, Janet Parker, Paula Roades, Joe Sanders, and Edward Walker) interviewed reported criteria on which they base referrals for students for special education services including academic performance only, behaviors only, or academic performance and behaviors; they related how difficult it is for teachers to decide why and when to refer students for special education services. Adding to teacher concerns of why and when to refer students for special education services are issues of students' needs, support or lack of support from administrators, teachers, and teachers' aides, whether referrals should be made early in a students' educational experience, extraordinary paperwork demands for the referral process, and variances in frequencies for teachers referrals for students for special education services (Pugach, 1985).

Teachers evaluate and make referrals based on students needs. Subtheme 1-1 was supported in pre-interview questionnaires, surveys, and archival data for the study. All seven teachers (Lisa Johns, Sarah Baker, Jenna Lane, Janet Parker, Paula Roades, Joe Sanders, and Edward Walker) interviewed and survey participants reported they base students' referrals for special education services on student's needs. Interview and survey participants were divided however on the reason to refer students for services. Participants used low academics (Participant S42), difficulty retaining newly learned information (Participant S51), and an inability to speak coherently, read, write, spell… (Participant S51) to describe academic reasons for initiating special education referrals for students. Alternately, Participant Joe Sanders related that he refers, "probably based more on their (students') behavior, not the kid's academics".

Similarly teachers who responded to surveys were divided on reasons for referrals for special education services for students. When asked when they make referrals based on difficulty with academics, only 22.2% (n = 12) responded they never refer students who have academic problems only, and 29.6% (n = 16) responded they frequently refer students who have academic problems only (see Table 7). Similarly, only 11 teachers reported on the survey they never refer students who demonstrate behaviors that disrupt the class, and 29.6% (n = 16) responded they frequently refer students who demonstrate behaviors that disrupt the class (see Table 20).

The number of teachers who never refer students who have difficulty with academics and behaviors dropped to 9 (16.7%). Teachers on the survey demonstrated a higher percentage of 40.7% who *never* make referrals for challenging behaviors or academics that were age-appropriate (see Table 10). Similarly, 51.9% of teachers

indicated they would never refer a student who simply "was not a 'fit' with students" in their class (see Table 15), while 27.8% (N = 15) indicated they would never refer a student who needs more assistance than could be given in their classroom (see Table 16). The archival data also revealed that teachers refer students (a) for academic reasons, (b) behavioral reasons, and (c) both academic and behavioral reasons, supporting Subtheme 1 regarding referrals based on students' needs.

The finding for Subtheme 1-1: Teachers evaluate and make referrals based on students' needs is important because basing decisions for referrals on individual students' needs is consistent with special education laws (IDEA, 1990, 1997; IDEIA, 2004). Furthermore, teachers demonstrating awareness and critical consciousness of students' academic or behavioral needs related to learning are necessary for appropriate teacher referrals for students for special education services (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004; Shields & Mohan, 2008).

However, it is clear from the teachers interviewed for this study that what constitutes students' needs for referrals for special education services varies among teachers and for the teachers in the study were not necessarily tied to understanding or practicing tenets of special education laws as expressed in the language used by teachers for referrals for students. Uncertainty regarding referral practices and voiced lack of training and understanding of special education laws related to students' needs was a finding in this study. Of concern are teachers in the study who never refer students for special education services. For example, roughly 28% (N=15) of teachers surveyed reported they would never refer a students for special education services because they needed more assistance than could be provided in their classroom. Students who may

need special services and are not referred are at risk for diminished educational equity and social justice in education and such practice is not consistent with special education laws (Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007).

Teachers in the study reported they based referrals on academic performance, behaviors, and academic performance and behaviors. Students are at risk for diminished educational equity or social justice in education when referrals are based inappropriately on behaviors alone (Theoharris, 2007) and not consistently and methodically based on the results of the implementation of evidenced based teaching practices prior to special education referrals, or when referrals are not based consistently on the accurate interpretation and intent of special education laws (Kavale, 2005) Teachers in the study indicated limited understanding of special education laws. Variances among teachers' practices for referrals for students for special education services in this study support literature findings that have identified teachers' limited understanding of special education laws as problematic for students (Egyed & Short, 2006; Oswald, Best, Coutinho, & Nagle, 2003; Pheiffer, 1982; Reschly, 1996; Sideridis, Antonious, & Padeliadu, 2008).

Teachers value the support from administrators, teachers, and teachers' aides. Subtheme 1-2 was supported by pre-interview questionnaires and surveys for the study. Interview participants (Sarah Baker, Janet Parker, Paula Roades, and Joe Sanders) related the importance of support from administrators, teachers, and teacher's aides when making decisions about referrals for students for special education services. Participant SP30 added that "dialogue with other teachers in the school including music, physical education teachers and counselors is critical too" when making referral decisions for

students. Participant Joe Sanders further related that he had experienced administrators that would look the other way and were not supportive of teachers in the process of students' challenging behaviors and special education referrals.

The finding for Subtheme 1-2: Teachers value the support from administrators, teachers, and teachers' aides is important because it supports findings from other research that reports that teacher's value collaborative interactions in schools when assessing students' progress or making referral decisions (Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade, 2002; Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006; Pfeiffer, 1982). The finding for Subtheme 1-2 indicates continued value for collaboration among teachers, administrators and teachers' aides and further indicates a need for increased collaboration among regular education teachers and special education teachers (Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, & Shwery, 2004).

Teachers express concern that the referral process is not implemented in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed. Subtheme 1-3 was supported in the study in pre-questionnaires, interviews, and survey data, however, the archival data revealed conflicting information regarding Subtheme 3, regarding the lack of referrals in earlier grades when the problem behaviors are first observed. The archival data revealed that the highest number of referrals occurred in PK-2nd every year except 2006-2007, when 33 occurred during PK-2 and 35 occurred during 3rd through 5th grade. The archival data further revealed the fewest referrals (between zero and three) occurred from 6th through 12th grade (see Table 25).

Teachers (Lisa Johns, Paula Roades, Edward Walker, Participant S15), in the study reported that often referrals should be made earlier for students and posited that they are not made earlier based in part on teachers wanting to afford the student

additional time for development and skill growth (Janet Parker), or teachers who refuse to fill out the paperwork for referrals (Paula Roades). The finding for Subtheme 1-3 is important because it identifies that teachers in the study understand the need for early identification of at risk students and referrals for special education services (Fantuzzo, et al., 1999; Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade, 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2005) however it also implies a disconnect among grade levels of teachers within a building concerning referral practices and poses threats to students' timely referrals for special education services or overall academic achievement. Further, the question of timeliness or consistency of timeliness for referrals for students for special education services may indicate limited student data collection and data dissemination among teachers within a school building or the district, again posing threats to students' achievement. This finding is consistent with research that stresses the need for early identification and eligibility for students with special needs (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocia, Gresham, & MacMillan, 2005; Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006; McWayne, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2004).

Teachers indicate there is an extraordinary amount of paperwork associated with referrals. The finding for Subtheme 1-4 was supported in the pre-interview questionnaires and interviews. All seven teachers (Lisa Johns, Sarah Baker, Jenna Lane, Janet Parker, Paula Roades, Joe Sanders, and Edward Walker) interviewed reported frustrations with the amount and complexity of the paperwork necessary for referrals for students for special education services. Participant Edward Walker stated, "It's just a thought of mine is the paperwork's a big turnoff." Another teacher reported,

“That’s the part that gets me and nothing else. I can deal with anything else you give me, but if you, if you’re too lazy to do this (paperwork for referrals) that’s what frustrates me because it’s your job” (Lisa Johns). Finally, Joe Sanders posited:

> I think we've got some teachers that just don't want to deal with anything, so it's easier to file paperwork for six months, or whatever the heck it is now [the regulation timelines for paperwork], to get the kid out of the way, but by the time they waste doing the paperwork, they could have spent that same time investing in that kid's life.

The finding for Subtheme 1-4: Teachers in regular education classrooms in the study indicate there is an extraordinary amount of paperwork associated with referrals. This finding is important because it indicates issues of policy and practice within schools that may negatively impact student performance. There is little documented in the literature regarding the impact of paperwork demands for regular education teachers for referrals for students for special education services. In fact, the literature is written as if special education teachers and paperwork for referrals are synonymous. Teachers in regular education classrooms responsible for initiating referrals for students for special education services may experience frustration due to limited training regarding referral forms for special education, limited interactions or collaboration among regular education teachers and special education teachers, and paperwork that is too cumbersome to be effective (Jennings, 2002; Laprairie, Johnson, Rice, Adams, & Higgins, 2010). Special education paperwork mandated by federal laws and added to at state and district levels to ensure that schools are in compliance with the laws has become burdensome and as expressed by teachers in this study, a possible reason why teachers may not refer students

for special education services, compromising educational equity and social justice in education for students.

The finding for Subtheme 1-4 suggests that existing theory concerning paperwork demands for referrals for students for special education services should be examined and possibly modified for efficiency and effectiveness for students. Close examination of federal intent and state and district interpretation of paper and process may be indicated. Finally, while there is much documentation in the literature about paperwork demands on special education teachers, there is little written on the paperwork demands for general education teachers who initiate referrals for students for special education services. A significant factor concerning educational equity and social justice in education for students may be the paperwork demands on teachers who teach regular or special education classes (Jennings, 2002).

Teachers vary on the frequency of referrals. The finding for Subtheme 1-5 was supported in pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, survey data, and archival data. In the interviews, teachers (Lisa Johns, Paula Roades) reported making one referral per year, while Joe Sanders stated, "not much anymore." In survey data, regular education teachers with more years experience referred fewer students for special education services than teachers with fewer years teaching experience who referred more students for special education services (see Table 12).

The finding for Subtheme 1-5 that teachers in the study varied in frequencies for referrals for students for special education services is important because varying frequencies and practices may indicate inconsistencies regarding policies and practices among teachers in a district concerning referrals for students (Pheiffer, 1982). This

finding may indicate that teachers with more years experience make fewer referrals because they have developed strategies for learning that are successful for students with special needs over time. Conversely, it may indicate that teachers who have experienced frustration with paperwork demands are no longer willing to refer students with special needs for special education services, thus compromising social justice in education for students with special needs.

The finding may also indicate a lack of specific knowledge and training for referral processes for special education services, a lack of overall knowledge and training on special education laws, and differences among teachers in a school district regarding the implementation of evidenced based teaching practices that promote increased student achievement prior to referrals for special education services (Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007). Additionally, the finding that extreme variances in referral rates exists among teachers may indicate issues of limited collaboration or as documented in the literature, resistance on the part of teachers to work with other educators (Gonzalez, Nelson, & Shwery, 2004). Issues of educational equity for students, as well as possible compromises for social justice in education for students are indicated in the finding that teachers vary on frequencies for referrals for students for special education services.

Teachers Indicate They Need Better Training to Support Students with Special Needs

The second theme indicated teachers need better training to support students with special needs. The second theme had three Subthemes:

1. Teachers need *more* training in relationship to students with special needs.
2. Teachers require *better* training in relationship to students with special needs.

3. Teachers require training in relationship to special education laws.

Theme 2 for the study was supported by data collected from the pre-interview questionnaires and surveys. Teachers reported a need for more and better training to make decisions regarding referrals for students for special education services and regarding instructional practices for student with special needs. Teachers reported, "I've never had any training, I went to school so long ago. Half this stuff wasn't diagnosed back in the day when I went to school" (Joe Sanders) and "I don't think I'm where I need to be, probably not where we (teachers) need to be because we need more" (Jenna Lane).

Teachers need more training in relationship to students with special needs.

The need for more training for teachers in relationship to students with special needs was supported by data from the pre-interview questionnaires and interviews and is consistent with literature that documents additional training needs for teachers. Teachers in the study reported limited or no training in relationship to students with special needs. Paula Roades stated, "I may know more than I think but just don't realize it…" The finding for teachers need more training in relationship to students with special needs is important because it is an identified need by teachers themselves in the field. In fact, as demonstrated by teachers in the study, voiced concerns about thinking you may know more than you know or being unable to access information from others or use information gained is indicative of the need for more training (Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007; Meijer & Foster, 1988). Student achievement may be compromised based on teachers' needs for more training in relationship to students with special needs (Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2002; Shields & Mohan, 2008).

Teachers in the surveys were asked questions regarding their training. Twenty teachers (37%) indicated students sometimes or frequently require more assistance than can be given in their classroom (see Table 16). Nearly 69% of the teachers responding to the survey revealed they have never received training to teach students "at this level", and 5 (9.3%) revealed they rarely received training (see Table 13). Concerns regarding limited teacher raining were consisted among participants.

Teachers require better training in relationship to students with special needs. Teachers require better training in relationship to students with special needs was supported in the study through pre-interview questionnaire and survey data. Participant Jenna Lane was characteristic of teachers in the study as she reported, "I think so (regarding better training). I think the majority of us want to understand it and know what's going on." Another participant stated, "I don't know how to deal with it (student with special needs)" (Joe Sanders).

The finding that teachers require better training in relationship to students with special needs is important because academic achievement for students with special needs is dependent on teacher knowledge and training (Egyed & Short, 2006; Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, & Shwery, 2004; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007). Educational inequities including achievement gaps for students with special needs will not be minimized or eliminated without knowledgeable teachers who implement best practices in their classrooms (Cymrot, 2002; Shields & Mohan, 2008). Additionally, regular education teachers' commonly report minimal training and exposure to special education methodologies (Podell & Tournaki, 2007). However, shared responsibility between regular education and special education teachers for learning for students with

special needs is necessary for increased academic achievement and minimizing inequities. Social justice for students with special needs may be compromised when taught or referred for services by teachers who need better training or often times simply don't know what to do as evidenced by teachers in the study.

Teachers require better training in relationship to special education laws. Teachers require better training in relationship to special education laws was supported in the study with pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, and surveys. Teachers reported limited knowledge and training regarding special education laws. Participant Joe Sanders discussed the position of the school as one that informed teachers on how to keep the school from being sued however did not inform or train teachers on teaching strategies needed to ensure academic success for students with special needs.

The finding that teachers require better training in relationship to special education laws is important because teaching and learning strategies for students with special needs may vary from those employed with typical regular education students. A thorough understanding of special education laws, as well as familiarity with special education teaching methodologies allows regular and special education teachers opportunities to conceptualize issues related to educational equity and social justice for students and learning versus a protectionist mentality of merely defending one's self or one's school against legal actions. Students' identities and learning may be marginalized or lost (Theoharris, 2007) without a total conceptualization of educational rights for all students in schools in the United States (Fattura & Topinka, 2006; Freire, 2005; Gonzalez, Cambron-McCabe, & Scheurich, 2008).

Teachers Must Address Problematic and Challenging Behaviors

The third theme revealed teachers must address problematic and challenging behaviors. The third theme had four Subthemes:

1. Some students demonstrate multiple problems.
2. Some challenging behaviors are primarily physical.
3. Some students with special needs are disruptive in class.
4. Some students with special needs have academic issues.

Theme 3 for the study was supported by pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys and archival documents data. Teachers in the study identified and discussed problematic and challenging behaviors, students with multiple problems, physical behaviors, disruptive behaviors and students with special needs who have academic issues. Findings for Theme 3 that teachers must address problematic and challenging behaviors is important because teachers report that they refer students for special education services based on behaviors and literature reports that teacher initiated referrals most often end with eligibility and placement for students in special education services (Podell & Tournake, 2007; Pugach, 1985; Soodak & Podell, 1994).

Some students demonstrate multiple problems. The findings for Subtheme 3-1 were supported in the study in pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys and archival data. Participants in the study related examples of problematic versus challenging behaviors; however definitions and characteristics of each varied among teachers in the study. Teachers in the study also differed on whether referrals should be made based on academic performance, behaviors, or academic performance and behaviors (Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade, 2002; Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007; Lane,

Wehby, & Cooley, 2006). Additionally, teachers in the study reported uncertainty on when to refer specifically based on students' behaviors alone. Interview participants seemed to differentiate behaviors as problematic versus challenging based on their individual abilities to address the behavioral issues presented by the student, as well as whether a medical diagnosis was attached to the behaviors.

The findings that some students demonstrate multiple problems is important because it affects teachers' perceptions of students' challenging behaviors and subsequent teaching methods and strategies, as well as referrals for special education services for students. If teachers fail to focus on the students' skills sets and abilities and their individual teaching methods to improve academic performance versus a 'set' medical diagnosis or label or a special education category assigned to a medical diagnosis or label, expectations for students' learning and strategies for teaching and learning may be compromised resulting in decreased student learning and achievement. Issues of educational inequity and compromised social justice for students in education may result (Abidin & Robinson, 2002; Theoharris, 2007).

As previously mentioned, archival data from the study revealed (see Table 25) that approximately 24% of teachers are uncertain when to refer students for special education services because of behavior. Consistent with theme 1, asked when they make referrals based on difficulty with academics, only 22.2% (n = 12) responded they never refer students who have academic problems only, and 29.6% (n = 16) responded they frequently refer students who have academic problems only (see Table 20). Similarly, only 11 teachers on the survey reported they never refer students who demonstrate

behaviors that disrupt the class, and 29.6% (n = 16) responded they frequently refer students who demonstrate behaviors that disrupt the class (see Table 20).

The archival data revealed that teachers refer students (a) for academic reasons, (b) behavioral reasons, and (c) both academic and behavioral reasons, supporting theme 3, that teachers must address problematic and challenging behaviors. The archival data (see Table 25) also revealed that teachers refer students for special education services behavior when academics were satisfactory.

Some challenging behaviors are primarily physical in nature. The findings for Subtheme 3-2 were supported in the study in the pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and archival data. Teachers in the interview and survey portions of the study reported examples of physical behaviors which included:

- ADHD behaviors (demonstrated by students) are most common these kids are too excitable and easily distractible (Participant S4)
- Anger issues-violence/Aggression towards teacher and/or students" (Participant S26)
- Hitting, biting, kicking, disrupting noises (Participant S16)
- Harming other students because of frustration (Participant S18)
- Students who endanger other students and keep my other students from receiving and education (Participant S21)
- Shutting down, age inappropriate behaviors, intense mood swings. (Participant S23)

Examples of behaviors were also found in the archival data. Archival data indentified behaviors as prompts for referrals for special education services (see Table 25).

The findings of the study that teachers must address behaviors and that some students' behaviors are primarily physical is important related to other findings in the study that teachers are uncertain or never refer students for special education services based on behaviors (Beebe-Frankenberger, Lane, Bocia, Gresham & MacMillan, 2005; Hosterman, DuPaul, & Jitendra, 2008; Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007). Concerns, such as reported by Participant S2 that "the lack of available placements when a student needs an ED (emotional disturbance) environment" exists prompts reflection on issues of safety for the student with special needs, as well as other students in classes. Issues of social justice in education for students in class as well as students with special needs are involved in the importance of the finding for the study (Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Kauffman, Mock, & Simpson, 2007).

Some students with special needs are disruptive in class. Findings for Subtheme 3-3 were supported in the study in pre-interview questionnaires, surveys, and archival data. Disruptive behaviors were described in the study by participants as "constant" (Participant S8), "oppositionally defiant" (Participant S31), and "out of control, constant disruptions of classroom" (Participant S41). Archival data documents revealed similar descriptions of disruptive behaviors as initiating prompts for special education referrals for students.

The findings for the study related to students with special needs are disruptive in class are important because teachers initiate most referrals for students for special education services (Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1982; Egyed & Short, 2006: Pugach, 2001) and referrals may be prompted by disruptive or challenging behaviors. As discussed previously, teacher initiated referrals most often result in eligibility and

placement for students in special education services (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1981; Pugach, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1983). Furthermore teachers reported uncertainty as to when to refer students based on behavior or reported they never refer based on behaviors. Issues of social justice in education for students in class as well as students with special needs are involved in the importance of the finding for the study.

Some students with special needs have academic issues. The findings for Subtheme 3-4 that some students with special needs have academic issues was supported in the study in pre-interview questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and archival data. Interview participants discussed referrals for students for special education services based on less than satisfactory academic performance levels of students. Specific academic difficulties reported by teachers in the survey portion of the study included, "huge reading difficulties" (Participant S24), students who are unable to "focus/achieve academic progress after multiple attempts" (Participant S29), and students who are, "detached, (demonstrate the) inability to speak coherently, read, write, spell" (Participant S51).

Findings for the study related to some students with special needs have academic issues are important because teachers often refer students for special education services based on academic performance levels and students referred are often placed for special education services (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1981; Pugach, 2001; Shepard & Smith, 1983). Several concerns from the study were identified related to some students with special needs have academic concerns including: (a) why are academic performance levels for students are diminished; (b) do expectations of diminished academic levels exist for students with may be identified as special needs; (c) are

appropriate referrals made early enough in a students' academic career for successful academic intervention and prior to achievement gaps; (d) do regular education teaching practices influence the narrowing or widening of academic achievement gaps thereby creating discrepancies in students' performance that allow special education eligibility and placement under federal guidelines; and finally, (e) do special education teaching practices narrow the academic achievement gap for students with special needs who are identified and made eligible for services and who demonstrate academic deficits.

Concerns identified in the study are consistent with findings from previous research indicating that teacher expectations influence learning for students (Abidin & Robinson, 2002), teaching and learning methods influence achievement outcomes (Gunter, Coutinho, & Cade, 2002; Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006; Podell & Tournaki, 2007).

Teachers are Unsure of the Meaning of the Terms Educational Equity and Social Justice and Implications for Students with Special Needs

The fourth theme revealed teachers are unsure of the meaning of the terms educational equity and social justice in education for students and implications for students with special needs. Findings for this theme were supported in the study in pre-interview questionnaires and interviews as no questions were asked on the survey instrument and no archival data existed regarding teachers' perceptions of educational equity and social justice in education for students.

In this study, all seven interview participants were unable to define, describe, or discuss concepts related to tenets of educational equity or constructs of social justice in education for students. One participant, Paula Roades, said she, "tried to look it up

before the interview", while another participant, Sarah Baker asked if it had anything to do with "free lunch or something like that". The findings for teachers are unsure of the meaning of the terms educational equity and social justice for students in education are important because without awareness or understanding, what Friere (2005) refers to as "critical consciousness" students are at risk for oppression and marginalization. Additionally, Skrla et al. (2004) stated, "administrators and teachers we work with overwhelmingly do not have a clear, accurate, or useful understanding of the degree of inequity present in their own schools and school districts" (p.141). Also in jeopardy for students is social justice resulting in educational inequities and marginalization of students (Theoharris, 2007).

Reflection on the Findings for the Study

Legislation mandating policies and procedures for students who demonstrate deficits in academics, behavior, or academics and behaviors may be perceived by administrators and teachers as an assurance of regulatory practices in education for educational equity and social justice in education for students in schools in the United States. Teachers interviewed and surveyed for this study indicated that laws may not assure educational equity or social justice in education for students. While this case study explored teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors in a mid-southwestern school district in Oklahoma, points to consider for reflection arose including:

- Understanding and demonstrating the appropriate intentionality of special education laws by teachers in the study for students with special needs.

- Perceived effective communications among regular and special education teachers regarding students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers referrals for special education services.
- Job roles and responsibilities for regular education and special education teachers for students who demonstrate special needs related to issues of educational equity and social justice in education for students.
- Teachers' understanding and ability to discuss issues of social justice and educational equity for students who demonstrate challenging behaviors.

Regular education teachers in the study referred students who demonstrate challenging behaviors based on academics, behaviors, and academics and behaviors. Additionally, consistent definitions and understandings of which behaviors are problematic or challenging and whether either or both behavior types constitutes referrals for students for special education services were not found among the participants. Difficulties with inconsistent definitions and practices may indicate compromised communication among regular education and special education teachers, as well as school administrators. With compromised communication practices regular and special education teachers may view their job roles as distinctly different, leading to fractured instructional styles and methods for use with typical students, as well as students with special needs. Fractured instructional practices may lead to marginalization and diminished educational equity and social justice in education for typical student and students with special needs.

Additionally, the regular education teachers who participated in the study strongly voiced concerns related to burgeoning paperwork demands on teachers who refer

students for special education services. The low return rate for surveys was indicative of teachers who may be inundated with paperwork demands and as a result, refused to fill out another form that might be perceived or associated with special education services. Frustration with paperwork demands may lead inappropriate referrals or no referrals for students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and need special education services for educational equity and social justice in education.

Regular education teachers in the study identified limited knowledge of training and teaching techniques that are used by special education teachers and passionately discussed the need for additional pre-service training and professional development to address students' educational needs. The voices of teachers seeking knowledge indicates administration that may be disconnected from teachers' needs or may be unable to themselves understand, demonstrate, or facilitate educational equity or social justice in education for students. Without understanding, administrators may be unable to identify or offer appropriate training and professional development for teachers who experience students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and must make decisions regarding special education referrals. Finally, without understanding administrators may be unable to facilitate collegiality and collaboration among regular and special education teachers necessary for educational equity and social justice in education for all students.

Further, teachers in the study were unable to define or describe social justice constructs related to basic terminology or applied to education for students. The complexities involved in social justice and educational equity concepts for teachers for typical students as well as students with special needs were missing. Additionally, teachers in the study demonstrated limited understanding of special education laws and

practices at a basic level. With deficits in understanding social justice constructs and special education laws, teachers may be unable to make appropriate referrals or to refrain from making inappropriate referrals for students who demonstrate challenging behaviors.

What appears evident from the study is a need for teachers' tools for use for students for educational equity and social justice in education. The notion that special education laws alone ensure best practices or educational equity and social justice for students is inadequate. A bureaucracy of policy and paper, without foundational understanding and agreement of terminology and without community among educators on what constructs of social justice and educational equity will be for students in schools threatens to marginalized education for typical students and students with special needs in schools in the United States.

Recommendations of the Study

The findings and analysis of the study revealed teachers' experiences with students' who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services is dynamic and complex. Teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors are further complicated by decisions and procedures for referrals for special education services for students and are influenced by teachers' training experiences. Teachers' experiences include students who demonstrate problematic and challenging behaviors which influence teachers' experiences and practices with referrals for students for special education services affecting who teaches students, where students are taught, and learning experienced or lost by students.

Furthermore, findings and analysis for the study indicated that teachers in the interview portion of the study did not understand and were unable to express concepts

related to educational equity and social justice in education for students. The inability to know or understand concepts of educational equity or social justice in education for students puts students at risk for marginalization of self, learning, and achievement. In this section recommendations are included based on findings from the study and are presented by themes identified from the study. While generalization to schools outside the case chosen for this study is inappropriate, the following recommendations are based on findings from the study relative to the case chosen for the study.

Recommendations for Theme: Teachers Base Referrals on Specific Criteria

1. Provide regular education teachers with more information regarding referral criteria for special education services, particularly distinctions made among academics, behaviors, and academics and behavior as rationales for referrals.
2. Build professional learning communities in schools that do not delineate regular and special education, which risk marginalization and compromised social justice in education for students but work in tandem for student achievement.
3. Within the professional learning community of the school, foster knowledge of special education procedures and practices aimed at student achievement versus merely protection from legal action for the school.
4. Collect and publish data that accurately reflects referrals practices among teachers and grade levels for understanding and for student achievement.
5. Research ways to diminish paperwork demands, i.e., understand and teach what components of paperwork relate to federal mandates, state additions to mandates, and district additions to mandates. Diminish or simply paperwork and process where opportunities exist. Encourage dialogue and interaction among special

education administrators and regular education administrators to brainstorm ways to diminish paper and streamline process for teachers.

6. Examine referral practices by teachers in the district and explore reasons why some refer and others never refer, including why teachers with more years experience referred students for special education services less often.
7. Educate teachers and administrators on concepts of educational equity and social justice in education for students to diminish risks of achievement gaps and diminished access to services and education for students.
8. Discuss and teach the concepts of risks and benefits for students related to teacher referrals for students for special education services when referrals are made inappropriately. Also, educate teachers about the risks to educational equity and social justice for students when referrals are not initiated for students for special education services when in fact they should be made to garner maximum educational supports and services for student achievement.

Recommendations for Theme: Teachers Need Better Training to Support Students with Special Needs

1. Schedule professional learning and training experiences on topics of evidence based teaching practices for students with special needs for regular education teachers.
2. Schedule professional learning and training experiences on topics of federal, state, and district mandates regarding special education laws and practices for regular and special education teachers.

3. Foster experiences among regular and special education teachers that bolster shared ownership for students' learning and achievement, as well as shared knowledge on instructional practices that improve students' achievement.

Recommendations for Theme: Teachers Must Address Problematic and Challenging Behaviors

1. Consider within the school community activities that brainstorm shared terminology of constructs like problematic versus challenging behaviors to facilitate meaningful discussions among teachers for student needs and academic performance.
2. From the shared definitions and descriptions of students' challenging behaviors within a school community, identify, define, and construct evidence based practices for working with students' challenging behaviors designed to be used by all educators in the school to facilitate increased learning for all students in the school regardless of distinctions and labels including regular education or special education.
3. Distinguish as a school learning community among students' challenging behaviors for improved success with managing and teaching students' who demonstrate challenging behaviors versus a one dimensional definition of challenging behaviors. Teachers in the study were experiencing differences among students' behaviors, but were unable to differentiate the differences necessary to appropriately design teaching strategies and responses to the behaviors for students' learning or to make appropriate referrals for special education services for students.

4. Encourage collaboration among stakeholders in the educational and medical communities for commonality of terms and strategies for educational success for students.

Recommendations for Theme: Teachers are Unsure of the Meaning of the Terms Educational Equity and Social Justice in Education for Students and Implications for Students with Special Needs

1. Education for teachers in the school district explored for this study that includes concepts and practices of educational equity and social justice in education for students with special needs as well as other students is indicated.
2. Concepts and practices by teachers and administrators in the school including inequities in educational experiences, marginalization, disproportionality of marginalized students in special education settings, as well as the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for all students in the school should be explored.

Recommendations for Future Research

While researching teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for students for special education services through the lens of social justice theory in education, it is possible to locate literature rich in ideas and concepts concerning issues of educational equity and social justice in education for students and educators (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Gonzalez, Cambron-McCabe, & Scheurich, 2008; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Theoharris, 2007). Lacking in the literature is a broader exploration of similarities and differences between regular and special educators 'experiences with students who

demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for special education services and one which identifies ways to establish shared knowledge and responsibilities for students' learning in schools. While this study proposed to examine teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors through the lens of social justice theory, regular education teachers who participated in this study were unable to define or discuss issues of educational equity and social justice in education for students for lack of knowledge or experience. Because special education teachers were not interviewed in this focus for the study it is not possible to identify similarities and differences in teaching and learning practices related to knowledge and issues of educational equity or social justice concerns within this school district. Future studies might examine the depth and breadth of regular and special education teachers' perceptions of educational equity and concepts of social justice for students in education.

Additionally, authors in the literature, at great length, discuss creating equitable schools for students and define schools in terms of equity of access, equity of participation, and equity of outcomes, including the use of equitable accountability measures (Jenlink, 2009), however it is difficult to discover in the literature discussions of the aforementioned topics that include equity and social justice for all students simultaneously throughout an article or text. What one finds are concepts of equity and social justice for students with special needs that are addressed in separate and distinct chapters in a text or discussion and are most often discussed with reference to students' categories of special needs or diagnostic labels. One may posit that the literature reflects or mirrors the separate nature of regular and special education, even in discussions of educational equity and social justice for students in education.

Slee (2011) asserts that labels and distinctions have marginalized students with special needs and categories for special education services and labels continue to perpetuate differences of access for resources and opportunities for achievement for students with and without special needs. Accepting that labels may have marginalized or disenfranchised students with special needs, it becomes disadvantageous for students that regular and special educators continue to view their work with students in different arenas, with different philosophies for student achievement, understanding little about what the other educators offer or fail to offer students for academic achievement. All the while, students may be in either regular education or special education classes or both.

Slee (2011) further discussed such instances of separate but together teaching attempts labeled inclusion as those designed, "to fabricate inclusive education by grafting special education onto the regular school", and stated, "those attempts have produced little more that a bifurcated system of sponsored and marginal pupils" (p. 160). What appears to be the single defining point of intersection between regular and special education teachers occurs when accountability measures for testing for all students are implemented and regular education and special education teachers are asked to respond and document student achievement levels for all students from testing results with statements or evidence based instructional methodologies rationalizing teaching strategies and approaches used for instruction in their classrooms. In fact, in many states merit raises or value added assessments are linked to all students' performance on testing. Recommendations for further research therefore include exploring regular and special education teachers' understandings and processes for assuring educational equity and social justice in education for all students in classrooms in schools. With educational

equity and social justice for students in education a priority, teachers, unlike those interviewed and surveyed for this study will be able to define, describe, and demonstrate tenets of access and achievement for all students including students with special needs who demonstrate challenging behaviors.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form for Research Being Conducted

701-A-1

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: A Case Study of Teachers' Responses to Students' Challenging Behaviors
Principal Investigator: Kathy J. Wheat
Department: University of Oklahoma/Educational Leadership & Policy Studies (ELPS)/Educational Administration, Curriculum & Supervision (EACS)

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. This study is being conducted at the University of Oklahoma, Norman Oklahoma. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a certified regular or special education teacher with Lawton Public Schools, Lawton Oklahoma, and have taught for 3 years within calendar school years 2004-2009.

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and teachers' subsequent use of referrals for students for special education services.

Number of Participants

This study will include up to 50 interview participants and up to 500 survey participants who will take part in the interview and/or survey portions of this study. Participants must be 25 years of age or older to participate in this study.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do one or both of the following:

1) Participate in an interview designed to last for approximately an hour. You may be asked to complete an interview questionnaire containing questions that will be asked during the interview. During the interview you will be asked about your experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and your use of subsequent referrals for special education services. While the interview may consist of specific questions you will be allowed to determine the experiences you discuss and the length and scope of the interview.

2) Participate in completing a survey designed to explore your experiences as a teacher with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and your experiences or practices with subsequent referrals for students for special

confidential and no identifying information will be linked to you as a participant at any time before, during, or after the study.

Length of Participation

Interview participation will include time to review the study information and consent to participation (roughly 30 minutes or to be determined by each individual participant) and time to complete an interview questionnaire and participate in a semi-structured interview session (approximately 1- 11/2 hours).

Survey participation will include time to review the study information and consent to participation (roughly 30 minutes or to be determined by each individual participant) and time needed to complete the survey of approximately 30 minutes.

Participant's participation may be terminated at any time by the individual participant for any reason.

This study has the following risks:

There are no anticipated or foreseeable risks to participants in this study. As a participant you are free to select the content of conversations regarding your individual experiences with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors and your practices regarding subsequent referrals for special education services. All information will be coded and no identifiable information for you as a participant will exist for public review re, during, or after the study. Furthermore, your responses on the surveys will be coded and no identifiable information for you as a participant will exist for public review before, during, or after the study. Any identifiable information will be known only by the primary investigator and will be scanned from a private, personal, password protected computer to an external hard drive which will be locked in a secure place from public view. As a participant you are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason.

Benefits of being in the study are:

The benefits to participation in this study may include an opportunity for teachers to reflect upon their individual experiences with students' who demonstrate challenging behaviors and their subsequent referrals for students for special education services. Teachers may develop increased awareness and understanding of their individual practices and may further identify strategies which may increase student academic success in their individual classrooms with or without a referral for special education services. Participation in this study may also prompt teachers to reflect on practices observed from other teachers with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors, giving teachers a broader understanding and perspective of these experiences.

Confidentiality

In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the faculty sponsor, Gregg A. Garn, Ph.D. and the OU Institutional Review Board.

APPROVED
NOV 30 2010
OU NC IRB

APPROVAL
NOV 29 2011
EXPIRES

Compensation

You will not be reimbursed for you time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time.

Waivers of Elements of Confidentiality

Your name will not be linked with your responses unless you asked and you specifically agree to be identified. Please select one of the following options

_____ I consent to being quoted directly.

_____ I do not consent to being quoted directly.

APPROVED
NOV 30 2010
OU NC IRB

APPROVAL
NOV 29 2011
EXPIRES

Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of participant responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording. ___ Yes ___ No

Elements of Identifying Information

_____ I consent to allow the researcher for this study to keep my identifying information for up to ten years for purposes outside this study including further research.

_____ I do not consent to allow the researcher for this study to keep my identifying information for up to ten years for purposes outside this study including further research.

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at

Kathy J. Wheat
580-467-1768
kwheat@ou.edu
Gregg A. Garn, Ph.D.
405-325-2228
garn@ou.edu

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

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NOV 29 2011
EXPIRES

701-A-1

Interview Participant Statement of Consent

_____ I agree to participate in the interview questionnaire and interview portion of the study.

_____ I do not agree to participate in the interview questionnaire and interview portion of the study.

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the interview aspect of the study.

Signature Date

Survey Participant Statement of Consent

_____ I agree to participate in the survey portion of the study.

_____ I do not agree to participate in the survey portion of the study.

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the survey aspect of the study.

Signature Date

Participant Contact Information

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____

Email: _____

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NOV 29 2011
EXPIRES

Appendix B: Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

1) Total years taught? (include part-time)	
2) Total years taught regular education?	
3) What grade levels taught in regular education?	
4) Total years taught special education?	
5) What grade levels taught in special education?	
6) This year teach regular education or special education?	
7) Number of years taught primary students (PK-5th)?	
8) Number of years taught secondary students (6th-12th)?	
9) List all academic degrees?	
10) List any other certifications you hold.	

11) How, and in what way would you define or describe students' problem behaviors in class versus challenging behaviors in class.

12) What types of student behaviors in class are problematic?

13) What types of student behaviors in class are challenging?

14) Do you make special education referrals for students for special education services?

15) How often do you make referrals for students for special education services?

16) What are the reasons you make referrals for students for special education services?

17) How would you describe your understanding of special education laws and policies and procedures?

18) How, and in what way do you employ interventions, modifications, or different teaching strategies prior to referring a student for special education services?

19) What interventions, modification, or different strategies do you employ prior to referring a student for special education services?

20) How, and in what way do you feel as though your effort s to refer students with disabilities are supported by other teachers in your building?

21) Do you feel that you have been properly trained for your teaching position?

22) What understanding do you have of issues of social justice in education or educational equity in education for students?

23) How, and in what way is social justice in education or educational equity experienced by students in your class?

Appendix C: Interview Instrument

Statement of the Problem:

The problem this research explores concerns teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services, as well as the potential effects of diminished social justice and educational equity for students who undergo inappropriate eligibility and placement for special education services. One concern involves students' challenging behaviors as a proper trigger for special education referrals. A second concern involves teacher referrals for special education services for students with challenging behaviors and the degree to which the referrals are aligned with the purposes and intents of special education legislation. A third concern includes the ways in which teachers respond and deal with issues of students' challenging behaviors and special education referrals.

Interview Instrument:

1. Counting this school year, how many years (including part-time) have you taught in a public school system?
2. How many years have you taught regular education?
3. What grade levels of regular education have you taught?
4. How many years have you taught special education?
5. What grade levels of special education have you taught?
6. Are you teaching regular or special education classes this year?
7. How many years have you taught primary grade students (prekindergarten through fifth grade?

8. How many years have you taught secondary grade students (sixth through twelfth grade)?
9. What academic degrees do you hold?
10. What additional certification areas do you possess?
11. How, and in what way would you define or describe problem behaviors in class versus challenging behaviors in class?
12. What types of student behaviors in class are problematic?
13. What types of student behaviors in class are challenging?
14. Do you make referrals for students for special education services?
15. How often do you make referrals for students for special education services?
16. What are the reasons you make referrals for students for special education services?
17. How would you describe your understanding of special education laws and policies and procedures?
18. How, and in what way do you employ interventions, modifications or different teaching strategies prior to referring a student for special education services?
19. What interventions, modifications or different teaching strategies do you employ prior to referring a student for special education services?
20. How, and in what way do you feel as though your efforts to refer students with disabilities are supported by other teachers in your building?
21. Do you feel that you have been properly trained for your teaching position? If not, why, and with what type of students?

22. What understanding do you have of issues of social justice in education or educational equity in education for students?
23. How, and in what way is social justice in education or educational equity experienced by students in your class.

Appendix D: Oklahoma State Department of Education Review of Existing Data Form

REVIEW OF EXISTING DATA (RED)

NAME OF CHILD: _____ STUDENT ID: _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

BIRTHDATE: _____ GRADE: _____ AGE: _____ DATE: _____
MONTH/DAY/YEAR MONTH/DAY/YEAR

PARENT(S): _____

PHONE: (WORK) _____ (HOME) _____ (OTHER) _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____ DISTRICT/AGENCY: _____
STREET ADDRESS/P.O. BOX CITY STATE ZIP

Review by a group of qualified professionals and parents does not require a meeting (34 CFR § 300.305).
If existing records, assessments, or information must be obtained from other sources, utilize OSDE Forms 10, 11, 12, or 13 as appropriate.
Parental consent is only required for OSDE Form 11. **Include RED/MEEGS Form to document evaluation data.**

SIGNATURES: (Must be reviewed by all group/team members. Dates may vary.)

Regular Education Teacher _____ Date _____
Special Education Teacher _____ Date _____
Administrative Representative _____ Date _____
Other/Qualified Professional _____ Date _____
Parent(s) _____ Date _____

SPECIFY PRESENTING CONCERN(S):	**DATA REVIEW** (Check reasons)
	☐ Consideration for Initial Evaluation ☐ Consideration for Reevaluation ☐ Other (Explain) _____

Building/Site Level Review of Existing School Information:
Present Levels of Educational Performance (or Age Appropriate Activities for Preschool Children) _____

Grades/Progress Reports _____ Work Habits _____
Work Samples _____
Assessments of Achievement _____

Attendance History _____ Number of Days Absent This Year _____
Behavior Concerns or Discipline Reports _____

Observations in Classroom or in Age Appropriate Settings _____

Describe Interventions, Instructional Strategies, and Child-Centered Data Collected (e.g., Response to Intervention [RtI], reduced homework assignment, bilingual interpreter) _____

RED

NAME OF CHILD: _____ STUDENT ID: _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

Background Information:

Native Language/Mode of Communication _____ Primary Language of Home _____

List Schools Previously Attended _____

List Grade(s) Repeated _____ Remedial/Other School Services _____

_____

Previous Individualized Evaluation(s)/Date(s) _____

Special Education Services ☐ None ☐ Previous Disability Category _____

Student Received SoonerStart or Other Early Intervention Services: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, Describe _____

Pertinent Medical or Health Information _____

List Medication Taken Regularly _____ Reason _____

Describe Physical Limitations or Motor Impairments _____

Medicaid Eligibility ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know If Yes, note Medicaid Number _____

Physician(s) _____ Insurance/HMO _____

SoonerCare Health Coverage _____

Services Provided By Outside Professionals/Agencies ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Previously ☐ Currently

Describe Services _____

Screening Information:

Date of Last Visual Test/Screening _____ Results _____

Describe Vision Problems _____ Aids/Devices _____

Date of Last Hearing Test/Screening _____ Results _____

Describe Hearing Problems _____ Aids/Devices _____

Date of Last Speech/Language Test/Screening _____ Results _____

Describe Speech/Language Problems _____ Aids/Devices _____

Developmental Screening _____ Results _____

Describe Developmental Problems _____

Other Screening _____ Results _____

Team/Group Recommended Action:

☐ Consultation Services _____

☐ Additional Assessments for Initial Evaluation _____

☐ Additional Assessments for Reevaluation _____

☐ No Additional Assessments Needed

	Initial	Agree	Disagree
Parent(s)	_____	☐	☐
Regular Education Teacher	_____	☐	☐
Special Education Teacher	_____	☐	☐
Administrative Representative	_____	☐	☐

RED/MEEGS – Evaluation Procedures and Results

NAME OF CHILD: _____ STUDENT ID: _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

AREA	EVALUATION PROCEDURES	PERSON/AGENCY QUALIFICATIONS	DATE (of information)	COMMENTS, FINDINGS, EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
ACADEMIC: LISTENING COMPREHENSION ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
ORAL EXPRESSION ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
BASIC READING SKILLS ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
READING COMPREHENSION ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
READING FLUENCY ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
WRITTEN EXPRESSION ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
MATHEMATICS CALCULATION ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				
MATHEMATICS PROBLEM SOLVING ☐ Existing				
☐ New Information				

RED/MEEGS – Evaluation Procedures and Results

NAME OF CHILD: _____ STUDENT ID: _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

AREA	EVALUATION PROCEDURES	PERSON/AGENCY QUALIFICATIONS	DATE (of information)	COMMENTS, FINDINGS, EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
PERCEPTUAL/PROCESSING ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
INTELLECTUAL/COGNITIVE ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
VOCATIONAL ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
OBSERVATION IN CLASSROOM OR OTHER ENVIRONMENT ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				
OTHER ☐ Existing ☐ New Information				

Appendix E: Survey Information Form and Survey Document

Appendix Teacher Survey

1. Anonymous/Confidential Survey Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration, Curriculum, and Supervision at the University of Oklahoma. I invite you to participate in a research study being conducted under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus, titled, "A Case Study of Teachers'Responses to Students' Challenging Behaviors." The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of teachers' responses to students' challenging behavior and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services.

Your participation in this study involves filling out a survey that should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your involvement in this study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The results of this research may be published, however you name or any identifying information will never be used. The published results of this survey will be reported in summary form only and all information that you provide will remain strictly confidential. Because your information is being collected during a faculty meeting, I will not be able to individually link your survey with you at any time.

The findings from this study will provide further understanding of teachers' responses to students' challenging behaviors and their subsequent use of referrals for special education services. There is no cost to you other than the time needed to complete the survey. If you begin the survey today and need additional time to complete all questions, you are encouraged to finish the survey at your leisure. Upon completion, contact me at (580)467-1768 or kwheat@ou.edu and I will pick up your completed survey.

If you have additional questions about this research project, please free to contact me at (580)467-1768 or send an email to kwheat@ou.edu. You may also contact my Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Gregg Garn, at (405)325-2228 or garn@ou.edu. Questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns about this study should be directed to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus at (405)325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kathy Wheat

Appendix Teacher Survey

2. Demographic Information

1. Gender

- [ ] Male (1)
- [ ] Female (2)

2. Age

- [ ] 25-34
- [ ] 35-44
- [ ] 45-54
- [ ] 55-62

3. Race and/or Ethnicity (please check all that apply)

- [ ] African American/Black (1)
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native (2)
- [ ] Asian (3)
- [ ] Hispanic/Latino (4)
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- [ ] Multiracial and/or Multiethnic (6)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

4. Educational Level (circle all that apply)

- [ ] Bachelor's Degree in Education/Teaching (1)
- [ ] Bachelor's Degree in another field (2)
- [ ] One semester graduate work beyond a Bachelor's Degree (3)
- [ ] At least one year beyond a Bachelor's degree no Master's (4)
- [ ] Master's Degree in Education/Teaching (5)
- [ ] Ed. Specialist/Professional Diploma past Master's Degree (6)
- [ ] Doctoral degree (7)
- [ ] Nationally Board Certified Teacher (8)

5. Which statement best describes your teacher certification information (choose all that apply)

- [ ] I am certified to teach regular education classes (1)
- [ ] I am certified to teach special education classes (2)
- [ ] I taught regular education classes & completed coursework at a college or university for my special education certification (3)
- [ ] I taught regular education classes, took the certification test for special education certification, & now teach special education classes (4)
- [ ] I completed coursework in another field, have alternate certification for teaching, & teach regular education classes (5)
- [ ] I completed coursework in another field, have alternate certification, completed the special education certification test, & am teaching special education classes (6)
- [ ] I am certified to teach special education classes, however I choose to teach regular education classes (7)

6. Counting this year, how many years in total (including part-time) have you taught regular education classes?

7. Counting this year, how many years in total (including part-time) have you taught special education classes?

8. Are you teaching special education classes this year?

- [ ] Yes (1)
- [ ] No (2)

9. Are you teaching regular education classes this year?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

10. Of the last 3 years, how many years have you taught special education classes?

11. Of the last 3 years, how many years have you taught regular education classes?

12. Of the last 3 years, how many years have you taught at the elementary level?

13. Of the last 3 years, how many years have you taught at the secondary level?

14. What is your current teaching assignment and grade level?

- [ ] Elementary level (PK-5)-regular education classes (1)
- [ ] Elementary level (PK-5)-special education classes (2)
- [ ] Secondary level (6-12)-regular education classes (3)
- [ ] Secondary level (6-12)-special education classes (4)

15. What grade levels have you taught?

- [ ] PK
- [ ] K
- [ ] 1st
- [ ] 2nd
- [ ] 3rd
- [ ] 4th
- [ ] 5th
- [ ] 6th
- [ ] 7th
- [ ] 8th
- [ ] 9th
- [ ] 10th
- [ ] 11th
- [ ] 12th

16. If you teach special education, which of the following best describes your teaching assignment(s) within the last three years?

- ☐ Resource room (1)
- ☐ Co-teaching (2)
- ☐ Self-contained class (3)
- ☐ Home-based teacher (4)
- ☐ Consultant/Monitor for special education services (5)

17. If you teach regular education classes,do you have previous experience co-teaching or do you currently co-teach with a special education teacher for any portion of the day?

	Previously taught with a special education teacher	Currently teach with a special education teacher
Previous experience (1)	☐	☐
Current experience (2)	☐	☐

18. Estimate the number of referrals for students for special education services you typically make in a year (for assessments or change in placements)?

19. On average, estimate the number of referrals for special education services for student that you make during the year?

	During 1st weeks of school starting	After 6 weeks of school starting	At the end of first progress report period	At the end of the first semester	Near the end of the school year	Never
0	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Over 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. When I make referrals for special education services for students I make referrals for special education services when:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Often
a) Student has difficulty with academics only (reading, writing, math).	○	○	○	○	○
b) Student demonstrates challenging behaviors that disrupt the class.	○	○	○	○	○
c) Student has difficulty with academics and behavior.	○	○	○	○	○
d) Student demonstrates challenging behavior and academics are age appropriate.	○	○	○	○	○
e) Student seems to not be a "fit" with the environment in my class.	○	○	○	○	○
f) Student might learn better from another teacher with different training than me (ex.	○	○	○	○	○
g) Student needs more assistance than can be given in my classroom.	○	○	○	○	○
h) It is not fair for the student to be retained/go to school with other students who are far below their individual academic level.	○	○	○	○	○
i) I am unable to move the whole class along because all students are not at the same academic level.	○	○	○	○	○
j) I need to move my class along quickly to meet testing guidelines at this grade level.	○	○	○	○	○
k) When I would learned to teach students at this level of learning.	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

21. When it comes to referring students who demonstrate challenging behaviors for special education services;

- ☐ I prefer students who demonstrate challenging behaviors receive special education services so as not to disrupt my class.
- ☐ I prefer that students who demonstrate challenging behaviors receive special education services because I was not trained to deal with that type student.
- ☐ I do not refer students for special education services because of challenging behaviors.
- ☐ I am often uncertain of when to refer students for special education services because of behavior.

22. Regarding The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) legislation which governs policies and procedures surrounding special education referrals and services

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I am aware of IDEIA	○	○	○	○
I base my special education referrals on IDEIA	○	○	○	○
I understand special education laws and practices	○	○	○	○

23. List or describe the types of students' challenging behaviors which prompt you to make referrals for special education services?

24. Identify and/or discuss any frustrations you might have regarding students who demonstrate challenging behaviors in your class and referrals for special education services.

25. What intervention methods or teaching strategies do you employ prior to referring a student with challenging behaviors for special education services?