For Scarlett, Rory and their newborn baby brother –
Each drop of water, a world contained.
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There was a point in the writing of this dissertation when I couldn’t for the life of me see how I would finish it. Everything seemed to need hours, even days, of my time, energy and attention. I seemed to have lost my way. Chapter 2 was a collection of vague and unconnected ideas; chapter 3 needed something every time I visited it; chapter 4 seemed insurmountable; and as for chapter 5, the grounded theory stubbornly refused to coalesce as Strauss and Corbin promised.

Then there came a point when I just . . . decided. I decided I had to write it anyway. That moment constituted a singular act of courage: to face the empty page and cover it with unformed thoughts and incoherent inklings, trusting that I could somehow shape them into an argument. I wrote without a clear idea of how I was going to make sense of it all, which was bewildering for
me. “Plan before you write” was my credo. Writing without a detailed and logically developed plan was something I had never done before. But I had to. I had nothing. So I just wrote. Until there the dissertation finally lay: in pieces rough and incomplete, my thoughts naked and shivering on the page, demanding every last ounce of stamina, intellect and creativity that was in me.

And then I felt like Dorothy must have when Glinda said, “My dear, you’ve always had the power.” It somehow seemed to me I had been writing my dissertation all along, that I had always had the ideas I finally came to be able to write down. I had always known how to do this, but I had to learn it for myself.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON TEACHERS’ BELIEFS RELATED TO TEACHING INCLUDED STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Literature on Teachers’ Beliefs and Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Literature Search</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Teacher Beliefs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Teacher Practice</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinds of Beliefs Related to Teachers’ Practice Relative to Supporting Students with Disabilities who are Included in General Education Classes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Beliefs about Themselves as Teachers</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about the Subject Area or Discipline</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Students with Disabilities and Ability/Disability</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Inclusion</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Research Questions</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 RESEARCH DESIGN</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Perspective</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Subjectivity</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Data Sources: Interviews</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Data Sources</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Maps</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICES .................................................................96

The School .................................................................................................................98
Maggie .........................................................................................................................100
  Maggie’s Classroom .................................................................................................100
  My Class ...................................................................................................................101
  Influences on My Class ............................................................................................103
  Students with Disabilities and My Class .................................................................104
  I Believe ....................................................................................................................108
Analysis of Maggie’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities ..........110
  Procedural supports for learning ..............................................................................110
  Behavioral supports .................................................................................................112
  Affective and psychological supports ......................................................................113
  Academic supports ..................................................................................................116

Nora ..............................................................................................................................120
  Nora’s Classroom ......................................................................................................120
  My Class ...................................................................................................................120
  Influences on My Class ............................................................................................123
  Students with Disabilities and My Class .................................................................124
  I Believe ....................................................................................................................126
Analysis of Nora’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities .............127
  Procedural supports .................................................................................................127
  Behavioral supports .................................................................................................129
  Affective and psychological supports ......................................................................130
  Academic supports ..................................................................................................131

Dan .................................................................................................................................135
  Dan’s Classroom ......................................................................................................135
  My Class ...................................................................................................................137
  Influences on My Class ............................................................................................139
  Students with Disabilities and My Class .................................................................140
  I Believe ....................................................................................................................143
Analysis of Dan’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities ...............145
  Procedural supports .................................................................................................145
  Behavioral supports .................................................................................................147
  Affective and psychological supports ......................................................................148
  Academic supports ..................................................................................................150

Monica ..........................................................................................................................155
  Monica’s Classroom .................................................................................................155
  My Class ...................................................................................................................157
Influences on My Class ............................................................................................................161
Students with Disabilities and My Class .............................................................................162
I Believe ..................................................................................................................................170
Analysis of Monica’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities ..........171
   Procedural supports ............................................................................................................171
   Behavioral supports ..........................................................................................................175
   Affective and psychological supports ..............................................................................178
   Academic supports ...........................................................................................................179
Summary ..................................................................................................................................183

5  THE GROUNDED THEORY ..................................................................................................189

Overview of the Grounded Theory ......................................................................................190
   The Causal Condition .........................................................................................................193
   The Core Phenomenon: Negotiating Support through Trial and Error .........................195
   Context ..................................................................................................................................195
   Intervening Conditions: Teacher Beliefs ..........................................................................196
      Teachers’ beliefs about themselves .............................................................................199
      Teachers’ beliefs about the subject area ..................................................................201
      Teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities ....................................................202
   Action/Interaction Strategies: Supports for Students with Disabilities ......................203
   Consequences ....................................................................................................................206
Propositions ..........................................................................................................................210
   Proposition 1: The Nature of Teachers’ Subject Matter Beliefs Influenced the Kinds of Supports They Provided for Students with Disabilities ..............................................210
   Proposition 2: The Nature, Strength, Specificity and Connectedness of Teachers’ Beliefs about Students with Disabilities were Related to the Properties .............................214
   Proposition 3: Teachers’ Beliefs about the Needs of Students with Disabilities were Related to the Kinds of Supports Provided .................................................................217
   Proposition 4: Teachers’ Beliefs about their Roles and Responsibilities (Beliefs about Self) were Related to the Overall Amount of Support Provided ......................................220
   Proposition 5: The Nature of Teachers’ Epistemological Beliefs about Whether Knowledge is Transmitted or Constructed was Related to ..............................................223
Summary ..................................................................................................................................225

6  DISCUSSION .........................................................................................................................243

Discussion .............................................................................................................................245
Limitations ..............................................................................................................................248
Implications ............................................................................................................................250

APPENDIX

A  RECRUITMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT FORMS ..................................................253

B  INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS ..................................................................................................260
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>Number of Students with Disabilities in Teachers’ Classes</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>Teacher Data</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>Data Collection Timetable, 2009-10 School Year</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Data Summary Table</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>Open Codes from Maggie Interview One Pages 1-4 Organized into Categories and Subcategories during Axial Coding</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Grounded Theory Categories and Dimensions Summary of Core Phenomenon: Negotiating Support for Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7</td>
<td>Properties of Selected Dimensions of Core Phenomenon: Negotiating Support for Students with Disabilities in Secondary General Education Classes</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>Descriptive Beliefs Inventory</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>Practices to Support Included Students with Disabilities Inventory</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>Photo of set of index cards of identified supports prepared for one participant.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>Photo of emergent theory presented to one participant in Interview Four.既存の理論の提示</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>Field notes example.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Open codes from pages 1-4 of Maggie’s Interview One.</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>Axial Coding categories and colored flags used to code interviews.</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7</td>
<td>Outline of grounded theory axial coding.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Concept Map: Maggie.</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>Concept Map: Nora.</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Concept Map: Dan.</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>Concept Map: Monica.</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>Diagram of grounded theory of negotiating support for included students with disabilities.</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>Photo of chart “Properties of Teachers’ Beliefs.”</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3</td>
<td>Properties of Teachers’ Practices to Support Included Students with Disabilities.</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICES FOR INCLUDED STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

By

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Chair: Mary Brownell
Major: Special Education

General education teachers support the inclusion of students with disabilities, but researchers have found supports for students with disabilities in general education settings to be less than adequate. How teachers make decisions about supporting the learning of included students with disabilities is not well understood and may well be driven by teachers’ own beliefs. A better understanding of the relationship between secondary teachers’ beliefs and their practices for supporting students with disabilities is critical for efforts to help teachers improve their practice. Four secondary level general education language arts teachers were interviewed and observed 4 times to investigate how their beliefs were related to practices to support students with disabilities. Data were analyzed according to guidelines for grounded theory; the grounded theory was expressed as a series of proposition statements related to the core phenomenon of negotiating support for included students with disabilities. The propositions delineated relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices found in this dataset (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Teachers’ beliefs about the content area, the needs of students with disabilities and their own roles and responsibilities influenced their practices for providing support for their included students with disabilities. The results have implications for researchers, teacher educators,
professional development providers and administrators seeking to influence teachers’ practice in the area of supporting students with disabilities within general education classes.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The defining characteristic of education in the United States throughout the last 50 years is a relentless press for reform to improve educational outcomes for all students. For students with disabilities, the most dramatic aspect of reform concerned where they received their education. Today, most students with disabilities spend the majority of the school day in general education classrooms and are taught mainly by general education teachers (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). The greater part of the responsibility for the education of students with disabilities within the prevailing service delivery model in today’s public schools resides with general education teachers. How willing and able general education teachers are to provide support for students with disabilities, therefore, is an important influence on the success of students with disabilities.

The largest numbers of students with disabilities included in general education classrooms are those that have been identified as having specific learning disabilities; students with learning disabilities comprise 39% of students with disabilities, and are the single largest disability group. In the fall of 2006, the most recent year for which data is available, 59% of students with specific learning disabilities ages 6-21 received all or most of their instruction in the general education classroom, that is, they were outside the regular school class less than 21% of the time (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). In the 2007-08 school year, students with specific learning disabilities made up 5.2% of all students enrolled in public K-12 schools (U. S. Department of Education) so that, in today’s classrooms, chances are good that a general education teacher will have at least one student with specific learning disabilities.

At the middle and secondary school levels, a general education teacher’s chances of encountering a student with a learning disability within the general education classroom are even greater than an elementary teacher’s, for two reasons. In secondary school grades, classes are
larger, increasing the probability that a student with a learning disability will be among the students in a general education class. The structure of the school day in secondary schools also increases the likelihood that a general education teacher will be providing instruction for students with learning disabilities. Usually, teachers specialize in one or two content areas and see several groups of students per day. The sheer number of students they encounter increases the likelihood they will be responsible for the instruction of students with learning disabilities. Unfortunately, this structure also decreases the time a teacher is able to devote to any individual student and presents challenges for supporting students with learning disabilities in several other ways.

Schumaker and Deshler (2001) described three main barriers to success for students with learning disabilities in the secondary setting. First, as the gap between students’ skill levels and the tasks they are expected to be able to do gets wider, the difficulty of closing that gap is intensified by the increasing complexity of the skills students need to master to perform well. Second, the time to provide intensive skill and strategy instruction is not available within the fast-paced, goal driven curricula of many secondary classrooms (Schumaker & Deshler). Finally, the organizational structures of secondary schools mitigate against the likelihood that teachers can provide much student-centered learning, sufficient instructional attention, or integrated support for a student across all of his or her classes (Schumaker & Deshler).

For students with disabilities to succeed within such a structure, secondary general education teachers must be knowledgeable of how to support students with disabilities in achieving academic outcomes, and willing both to seek out such knowledge and apply it in their classrooms. As the complexity and amount of work increases in the upper grades, students with learning disabilities continue to need specific kinds of support to be successful in mastering content. In addition, students with learning disabilities often need to learn new strategies to deal
with teachers’ expectations of increased autonomy and the organizational challenges that come with having multiple teachers in multiple locations. Teachers ideally would be knowledgeable of students’ needs and expert in helping them meet the challenges of secondary school, as well as favorably disposed towards including students with disabilities in their classes.

General education teachers, overall, indicate that they support the concept of inclusion, and most are willing to include students with disabilities in their own classes. In an analysis of 28 studies conducted across a time span of almost 40 years, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that 65% of teachers supported the concept of mainstreaming/inclusion of students with disabilities, particularly if the students had less severe disabilities and if students did not have behavior problems. Teachers’ willingness to include, however, although a prerequisite for successful inclusion, has not been enough in itself to guarantee a high quality education for inclusive students in the eyes of many special education researchers.

Several researchers have found that teachers were not in favor of taking on extra responsibilities associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reported that teacher willingness to include students with disabilities decreased as additional responsibilities increased. Studies of secondary inclusion seem to indicate that general education teachers are concerned with content coverage and are not willing to invest the time and effort in implementing inclusive strategies (Crockett, 2004). In a study of 12 teachers across grade levels, Schumm, et al., (1995) found that teachers overall did little planning for students with disabilities in their classes, and that secondary teachers did less planning to meet the needs of students with disabilities than elementary teachers did.

Baker & Zigmond (1995) observed 10 students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms in six elementary schools in five states and concluded that although teachers seemed
genuinely in favor of including students with disabilities and did provide students with
disabilities some supports for learning, teachers nevertheless did little that could be considered
special education. Schumm & Vaughn (1995) reported five reasons general education teachers
did not make accommodations for students with disabilities. Using data from several studies
conducted in inclusive classrooms, Schumm & Vaughn found that teachers had concerns that
accommodations would have a negative impact on their instruction, planning time, and the
students themselves. Teachers indicated that accommodations: took too much time to plan and
prepare, interfered with management of the larger class, diluted and slowed the content
instruction, placed unwanted attention on students with disabilities, and did not encourage
students to be independent (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995).

It is puzzling that teachers seem mostly willing to include students with disabilities, and
yet unwilling to undertake the implementation of strategies that might help students achieve
greater success. The explanation for why general education teachers do not do more to support
the learning of included students with disabilities, at least in part, may be related not only to the
scarcity of time and organizational challenges posed by providing increased levels of support as
discussed above, but also to general education teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with
disabilities. Teachers’ “attitudes and beliefs drive classroom actions” (Richardson, 1996, p. 102),
and as such, a consideration of teacher beliefs is critically important to any attempt to understand
teachers’ practice.

People’s beliefs predispose them to select information for attention that supports theories
and beliefs they already hold, and so teachers may discount any evidence or practices that
contradict deeply rooted beliefs, even if the opposing evidence is valid and reliable. “The totality
of a person’s beliefs serves as the informational base that ultimately determines his attitudes,
intentions, and behaviors” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). General education teachers, working with students with disabilities, likely hold a variety of beliefs that are not always easily identified that may affect how and to what extent they provide support for students with disabilities. These beliefs include beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities relative to becoming proficient in a content area and how best to support the progress of students with disabilities towards instructional goals.

General education teachers’ beliefs about what is important for students to learn and how knowledge is developed within a particular domain may be at odds with the views of special education researchers, and may be deeply rooted in their understandings of their discipline, especially at the secondary level. The school subject itself is an important context and influence on the beliefs and practices of secondary school teachers (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). In an analysis of comparative studies that looked at the subject matter beliefs of secondary teachers in various disciplines, Grossman and Stodolsky concluded that the subject matter context affected teachers’ work in several ways: a.) the perceived status of the specific subject can help or hinder competition for scarce resources at the school level, b.) the various subjects are thought by teachers to have different degrees of coherence and sequentiality and thus, more or less freedom for teachers in terms of choosing what topics to include and exclude, and c.) the department structure reinforces the subject area subcultures and norms. They concluded that “high school teachers work in somewhat separate arenas, defined by the subject matter they teach,” (Grossman & Stodolsky, p. 8). It seems therefore, that in any study of secondary level teachers’ beliefs and practices, researchers should be aware that the teachers are operating within a subculture defined by the particular subject matter that may be exerting a strong influence on teachers’ ideas and behaviors. Researchers have not looked at how what general education
teachers do in terms of providing support for students with disabilities included in their classes may be consistent with the teachers’ beliefs about how knowledge is acquired within the subject area domain and consistent with teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities relative to their understanding of their content area.

**Problem**

Research that attempts to paint a richer and more nuanced portrait of teacher beliefs about the students that they teach and how those beliefs are borne out in practice has been called for by researchers for decades (e.g., Brophy & Good, 1974; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Richardson, 1996). Researchers have demonstrated that teachers’ beliefs have a strong influence on their practice (Munby, 1982; Pajares, 1992), yet there is little research about general education teachers’ beliefs in relation to how they support students with disabilities despite the prevalence of inclusionary instructional models in schools today.

A number of studies focused on general educators’ attitudes and beliefs about the inclusion of students with disabilities found that teachers were mostly favorably disposed towards including students with learning disabilities (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Researchers that looked at how general education teachers’ beliefs were related to their practices, however, found that although teachers were not against including students with disabilities, teachers did not plan specific supports for students with disabilities and were reluctant to provide extra support that other students in the class did not get (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Schumm & Vaughn, 1992).

Jordan and Stanovich (2003) found that teachers’ beliefs played a strong role in how general education teachers supported the instruction of students with disabilities included in their classrooms. Jordan and Stanovich used a narrative interview to place teachers’ beliefs on a continuum from Pathognomic to Interventionist. Teachers who had Pathognomic beliefs about students with disabilities believed that disability resides in the student and that intervention is
best undertaken by specialists; teachers who had Interventionist beliefs believed they could help students make progress through instructional accommodations and that it was their responsibility to do so. Differences in these beliefs were related to differences in the teachers’ practice. Teachers with Pathognomic beliefs interacted less with students with learning difficulties, and their dialog contained less academically focused talk than teachers with more Interventionist beliefs (Jordan & Stanovich).

At the secondary level, teachers’ beliefs about how students with disabilities can best be supported in gaining knowledge within the subject area may be strongly influenced by teachers’ own understandings of what is important for students to know about that subject area and how students learn in the subject area. Within the secondary subject area of English/Language Arts in particular, studies of general education teachers’ beliefs about their subject areas have shown that English/Language Arts teachers believe they have a great deal of individual freedom to determine curricular content and specific learning goals (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). These kinds of beliefs could have important implications for how supports for students with disabilities are conceived and implemented, especially in domains such as secondary English/Language Arts in which the content is complex and less hierarchical than in other subject areas.

There is almost no research on secondary general education Language Arts teachers’ beliefs about student with disabilities included in their classes. In a study focused on secondary general education teachers’ understandings of writing instruction for students with disabilities, teachers’ beliefs emerged as one of five main domains of those understandings; the other four were knowledge of content, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of students and context (Kiely, 2008). Teachers in the study believed that writing was a vitally important skill for students to master, that students with disabilities can make progress in writing and that they were able to
help students make progress. They spoke of scaffolding instruction so that students could make progress toward smaller, articulated goals, repeating tasks until skills were mastered, and building student motivation and task commitment. This study, however, was not focused on beliefs, and did not investigate how teachers’ beliefs about students’ needs were connected to the supports provided by the teachers in practice.

General educators’ beliefs about students with disabilities may or may not support the most effective kinds of instruction for students with disabilities. There is little research on general education teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities or how those beliefs are translated into practice, particularly at the secondary level. This study fills gaps in the literature in several ways. First, few studies considered teachers in the high school context where arguably the challenges for students with disabilities increase given the increasing rigor of the required work and the increased autonomy of students within the high school context. Second, although there are studies of secondary general education math and science teachers’ beliefs about teaching those subjects, few studies addressed Language Arts. The omission leaves a large gap in the research as Language Arts teachers in the high school assume most of the responsibility to impart foundational literacy skills that are essential for students’ success across the curriculum. Finally, there have been few studies that make explicit, elaborated connections between teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities and the practices teachers employ to support student learning. More research then is needed that looks at the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices, especially in terms of instruction for students with disabilities included in secondary level general education Language Arts classes.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between secondary Language Arts teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with learning disabilities included in their
classes and the supports they provide for those students. Through interviews and observations with participant teachers I was able to explore teachers’ beliefs about supporting students with disabilities in meeting the challenges of secondary level general education Language Arts classes, and how those beliefs were related to the ways they help students with disabilities make progress towards instructional goals.

Research questions included:

How are secondary general education Language Arts teachers’ beliefs related to the supports for learning they provide for students with disabilities included in their classes?

What are the supports for learning secondary general education Language Arts teachers provide for students with learning disabilities included in their classes?

What kinds of beliefs are related to teacher practice in the area of providing support for included students with disabilities?

Are there discernible patterns in the relationships among teachers’ beliefs and practices?
Definition of Terms

Beliefs. There is no one universally accepted definition of beliefs in the literature of special education, general education, or educational psychology and indeed it may be impossible to disentangle beliefs from knowledge and actions in reality. Following Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, and Cuthbert (1988), who derived this definition from the field of cognitive anthropology, in this study a belief is “a proposition, a statement of relation among things accepted as true;” furthermore, beliefs are organized into coherent systems that enable individuals to organize their experience, make decisions, and predict outcomes (p. 53).

Disabilities. This study is focused on teacher supports for students with high incidence learning disabilities who were included in general education language arts classes. All references to disabilities, as in students with disabilities, refer to specific learning disabilities. The teachers I observed did not teach students with severe disabilities or developmental disabilities.

Practices. In this study, teacher practice includes all thought and action relevant to supporting students with disabilities in general education classrooms, whenever and wherever they occur.
CHAPTER 2
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON TEACHERS’ BELIEFS RELATED TO TEACHING INCLUDED STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Overview of the Literature on Teachers’ Beliefs and Students with Disabilities

Teachers’ beliefs exert a powerful influence on all aspects of their practice, from teachers’ conceptualizations of their goals to in-the-moment decision-making to reflection and planning (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). A large body of research on teachers’ beliefs has emerged in the last 40 years, including comprehensive reviews that emphasized the need to study teachers’ beliefs in order to fully understand teaching (e.g., Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Studies that focus specifically on general education teachers’ beliefs related to teaching included students with disabilities, however, have not been reviewed. It seems critical to look at such studies as a group now, for several reasons.

The majority of students with disabilities spend most of their school days in general education classrooms (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Teachers in general education classrooms typically serve relatively large numbers of students in a demanding high-stakes context and must answer to several constituencies including students, parents, school and district administrators, and federal and state officials. In this complex and multidimensional domain beliefs play an important role in determining teacher actions (Calderhead, 1996). Students with disabilities may require more and different kinds of support than other students; whether or not they get this support often depends on the individual teacher, and likely the teacher’s beliefs.

Considerable research in general education demonstrates that teachers’ actions in the classroom are related to their beliefs about content, curriculum, and student learning (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Calderhead, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Richardson, 1996). The interrelationship between beliefs and instructional practice is especially relevant to the education of students with disabilities, as a number of researchers have shown that what teachers believe about students
with disabilities included in general education classrooms is likely to affect their ability to provide effective instruction for these students. Teachers’ beliefs are related to choices about curriculum and instructional practices (Kang and Wallace, 2004), how teachers know if students are learning (Brickhouse, 1990), and how teachers support students who struggle (Jordan & Stanovich, 2010). These kinds of choices on the part of the individual teacher may have a critical impact on whether or not a student with a disability is able to progress successfully.

**The Literature Search**

The literature reviewed in this chapter includes all available published research papers on general education teachers’ beliefs as they relate to working with students with disabilities. Specifically, studies that were focused on examining the relationship between general education teachers’ beliefs and their instructional actions were selected for inclusion in the review. Previous researchers of teacher cognition, which includes teacher beliefs, characterized teacher behavior as instinctive and intuitive rather than reflective and rational (e.g., Clark & Peterson, 1986). In the dynamic, complicated domain of teaching, in the absence of reflective and rational decision-making, it seems possible that teachers’ practice may be driven largely by teachers’ beliefs (e.g., Munby, 1982). Thus, it is important for understanding teacher practice to understand the role teachers’ beliefs play in their practices.

Research studies were identified through: a.) consulting handbooks such as The Handbook of Research in Teacher Education; b.) searching conference proceedings books published within the last five years for AERA, CEC, and TED; c.) hand searching the table of contents of the following journals: Journal of Special Education, Exceptional Children, Learning Disabilities Quarterly, Journal of Teacher Education, Teacher Education and Special Education, and Remedial and Special Education; d.) searching publications on the websites of pertinent centers, including NCRTL, NCRTE, COPSSE, SII, and CALDER, e.) searching databases and search
engines, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Web of Knowledge, and the University of Florida Library Catalog using a matrix of search terms that included: teacher, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, students with disabilities, special education, and exceptionalities.

Electronic search results were pursued until items returned seemed only tangentially related to the original search terms, in most cases no more than 400 items. Relevant literature was further narrowed through reading abstracts. I discarded those that were not empirical studies focused on: teachers’ beliefs as a psychological construct and how teachers’ beliefs were linked to their practice. I further narrowed the group of studies to focus on students with high incidence disabilities because it seemed to me that although the issues surrounding the inclusion of students with low incidence disabilities and physical disabilities certainly overlapped with those of students with high incidence disabilities, many of the issues and concerns were different.

Finally, studies were identified through ancestral and progeny searches of selected studies by consulting reference lists and using Google Scholar to identify papers that cited the selected studies. Studies were also found in informal ways, including conversations with other researchers. Studies that consisted of empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals were included.

The review includes three main sections. In the first, teacher beliefs are briefly defined. The second is a summary of the kinds of beliefs that have been found to be related to teachers’ practice with regard to educating students with disabilities. The last section is the discussion. Where possible, studies selected for review concerned secondary teachers.

**Defining Teacher Beliefs**

In this study a belief is “a proposition, a statement of relation among things accepted as true;” furthermore, beliefs are considered to be organized into coherent systems that enable individuals to organize their experience, make decisions, and predict outcomes (Eisenhart,
Beliefs are deeply felt, closely held notions of relationships among phenomena; beliefs may be unexamined or even partially or wholly unknown to the holder. Beliefs may conflict with one another and influence thought and action variably; they may be generalizable or context-specific (Eisenhart, et al., Schommer, 1993). This variability may be attributable to how deeply or strongly held some beliefs are as opposed to others: some beliefs seem to be core beliefs, deeply held and strongly interconnected with other beliefs whereas other beliefs seem to be more peripheral (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis & Purdie, 2001; Kagan, 1992; Rokeach, 1968).

The difficulty of defining teachers’ beliefs has presented challenges for researchers for decades. Although Clark and Peterson’s (1986) landmark review of teacher’s thought processes identified teachers’ theories and beliefs as a major category of research, little progress was made in terms of unifying researchers’ conceptions of beliefs until Pajares (1992) differentiated between beliefs and knowledge in existing research in education. Pajares also synthesized thinking on beliefs in cognitive psychology research (e.g., Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968) with the education research and produced a list of 16 assumptions about teachers’ beliefs. In brief, Pajares argued beliefs are: difficult to change, intertwined with knowledge, organized into systems, subordinated to substructures such as attitudes and values, and able to affect people’s learning, perceptions of events, and actions. Pajares concluded his review by calling for research that “provide[s] insights into the relationship between beliefs, on the one hand, and teacher practices, teacher knowledge, and student outcomes on the other” (p. 327). A great deal of research on teacher beliefs has been performed in the last 20 years, but research that investigates how teachers’ beliefs are linked to teacher practice still is scarce.
Defining Teacher Practice

Teacher practice happens on several levels; at once, it includes what the teacher does habitually and what the teacher does at any given moment. Practice includes thinking as well as actions. It can include actions inside and outside the classroom, as well as before, during and after instruction. Teachers’ practice includes interactions with their students as well as other adults, such as: parents, cooperating teachers, support staff, colleagues, and professional development providers. In this review, teacher practice includes all thought and action relevant to supporting students with disabilities in general education classrooms, whenever and wherever they occur.

Kinds of Beliefs Related to Teachers’ Practice Relative to Supporting Students with Disabilities who are Included in General Education Classes

A great deal of literature has focused on defining beliefs, developing measures of beliefs and clarifying relationships among beliefs. Researchers only recently have focused on figuring out how teachers’ beliefs are linked to practice. Linking beliefs to practice is important because beliefs underpin teachers’ decision-making and so are an essential consideration for efforts to improve teacher practice (Clark & Yinger, 1987). How beliefs are related to teachers’ practices for supporting students with disabilities included in general education classrooms, however, has not been well researched. Investigating the links between beliefs and practice is important because it is what teachers do in the classroom that affects student learning; teachers’ knowledge and beliefs affect student learning through practice, not directly. Among the kinds of beliefs researchers have linked to teachers’ practices relative to students with disabilities included in general education classrooms are: teachers’ beliefs about themselves as teachers, beliefs about the subject area or discipline, beliefs about teaching and learning, beliefs about students with disabilities, and beliefs about inclusion.
Teachers’ Beliefs about Themselves as Teachers

Teacher efficacy is one of the most studied constructs in the area of teachers’ beliefs about themselves. There are several kinds of teacher efficacy, but two main constructs underlie much of the research: a.) general teaching efficacy, the extent to which a teacher believes that student learning is influenced by teachers rather than other aspects of the environment; and b.) personal teaching efficacy, the extent to which the individual teacher believes that she personally is able to influence student learning. In Gibson and Dembo’s (1984) landmark study on the construct of teacher efficacy in a general education context, the authors found the practices of highly efficacious teachers were different from the practices of less efficacious teachers, suggesting a link between efficacy beliefs and practice. After analyzing observations of the practices of 8 elementary teachers, Gibson and Dembo found highly efficacious teachers spent less time in small group instruction, provided more opportunities for students to get a correct answer, and did not criticize students’ responses.

The link between efficacy beliefs and practice also was found in some studies focused on teachers in inclusive classrooms. Bender, Vail and Scott’s (1995) surveyed 127 first through eighth grade teachers in mainstream classes about their efficacy and about the use of effective practices for instructing included students with disabilities. They found teachers with higher personal efficacy reported that they used effective instructional practices for mainstreaming more frequently (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995). In a study of 188 first through twelfth grade teachers, teachers with higher efficacy recommended regular classroom placements for students with disabilities more often than teachers with lower efficacy (Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998). In a study of 220 first through third grade teachers’ adaptations for struggling writers, however, Graham, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa and MacArthur (2003) found that neither teachers’ personal
teaching efficacy for teaching writing nor general teaching efficacy for teaching writing predicted the number of adaptations they made for struggling writers.

There are several possible reasons for the different findings in these studies. The influence of the school setting is so strong that it may not be valid to compare teacher efficacy across different types of settings (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Differences in the contexts of the participants may have contributed to the uneven results. Also, participant samples were recruited and designed differently. Bender et al. (1995) surveyed 127 teachers in 11 schools in 3 districts; they did not report data on school location or type. Soodak et al. (1998) were the only researchers to include both general and special education teachers, a difference not only in participant characteristics from the other studies, but also possibly in the teaching context. To recruit participants, they distributed surveys to teachers enrolled in classes at 3 universities, asked those teachers to distribute surveys at their schools, and distributed surveys to schools. Of the 188 participants, 80.9% of the teachers taught in urban settings and 85.6% taught in public schools. Only 35.6% of the teachers reported having students with special needs in their current classes (Soodak et al.). In contrast, among Graham et al.’s participants, 35% taught in urban settings, and 74% taught in public schools. They did not report the percentage of teachers with students with special needs or in special education, but stated that 11% of the teachers’ students were receiving special education services. These differences in contextual variables, especially the large discrepancy in the percentages of teachers working in urban settings, may have had an impact on the results.

Graham et al. (2003) surveyed a national stratified random sample of 153 first through third grade teachers and performed a nonhierarchical regression analysis on their outcome measure, number of teaching adaptations, and the following contextual variables: school location
(urban, suburban or rural), public vs. private school, class size, percentage of students receiving special education services included in the class, amount of time students spent writing and writing program in use as well as teacher demographic variables. Contextual variables that accounted for variance in the number of teaching adaptations were the percentage of students receiving special education services included in the class ($p = .007$) and the amount of time students spent writing ($p = .026$). The percentage of students receiving special education services accounted for 6% of the variance; taken together, the context variables accounted for 16% of the variance in teacher adaptations provided, lending strong support to the importance of considering school contexts when linking teacher efficacy to practice.

In addition, even though the studies described above are similar in that the researchers investigated links between teacher efficacy and practice, the practice outcomes in these studies differ greatly. Soodak et al. (1998) considered placement practices, that is, how likely a teacher was to refer a student for services provided outside of the inclusive classroom. Bender et al. (1995) examined effective instructional practices for mainstreaming. These differed substantially from each other as well as from the adaptations for struggling writers described in the Graham et al. (2003) study.

Finally, teachers at the upper grade levels may have less self-efficacy for teaching students with disabilities included in their classes (Bender et al., 1995). Participant samples in the three studies differ greatly in terms of the grade levels taught by the participants: Bender et al., first through eighth; Graham et al., first through third; and Soodak et al., first through twelfth grades. The mixing of elementary, middle, and high school teachers variously in the studies makes it difficult to tell whether differences in outcomes are related to differences in the samples’ construction or not.
A less studied area of teachers’ beliefs about their teaching ability that seems related to how teachers support included students with disabilities is teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities. General education teachers vary in the degree to which they accept responsibility for the learning of included students with disabilities and in terms of their ideas about what kinds of support provision is and is not part of what they believe their role as a teacher to be. For instance, Schumm, Vaughn, Haager, McDowell, Rothlein and Saumell (1995) interviewed, observed and surveyed 12 general education teachers across grade levels in a study focused on how general education teachers planned for included students with disabilities. They found elementary and some middle school teachers “believed that it was their responsibility to provide a strong support system to promote learning for students with learning disabilities.” High school teachers, in contrast, believed it was the students’ responsibility to ask for assistance and it was not the teachers’ responsibility to provide anything different for students with disabilities; secondary teachers were focused on preparing students for independence in adult life (p. 349). This study, however, was not focused on the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Teachers’ beliefs were mentioned briefly in the report and were present in the qualitative analysis as one of the influences on teachers’ planning practices. The study is included in the review because the findings suggest teachers’ beliefs about their own roles and responsibilities may be a vital area to investigate.

Beliefs about the Subject Area or Discipline

A great deal of the research on teachers’ beliefs concerns epistemological beliefs despite the different terms used by researchers. Questions about teaching orientations, personal practical knowledge, attitudes, beliefs about knowing, teacher thinking, and teachers’ theories or philosophies are often related to teachers’ epistemological beliefs. Epistemological beliefs are beliefs about the nature of knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 2002) and how it is attained or
constructed (Schommer-Aikens, 2002). Epistemological beliefs include beliefs about the subject domain, such as what it contains and how it is organized and what are legitimate sources of knowledge. Epistemological beliefs are related to teacher practice: teaching involves the organizing of knowledge and grappling with questions concerning how best to ensure students gain knowledge. How teachers define that knowledge is fundamentally related to what they choose to teach and how they teach.

In 1986, Shulman called for research that recognized the subject area as an important context for teaching. There are, however, few empirical studies that investigate subject matter considerations, especially at the secondary school level and none were found that focused on instruction for students with disabilities in general education classrooms. The lack of studies examining relationships between general education teachers’ beliefs about different secondary level subject areas and instruction for students with disabilities is a major omission given the strong role that these beliefs play in classroom practice suggested by studies in general education.

Studies focused on general education students in secondary environments demonstrate that the way teachers conceptualize the subject area or domain they are working in is related to their instructional practices (e.g., Konopak, Wilson & Readance, 1994; Stipek, Givvin, Salmon & MacGyvers, 2001; Yerrick, Park & Nugent, 1997). Teachers’ beliefs about a) what form knowledge takes in a subject area, and b) what expertise in the subject is, influence the topics they select, the tasks they assign, and the ways they assess progress. The most studied subject areas in this literature are science and math and representative studies from each will be discussed; there are only a few studies in other areas: social studies (Konopak, Wilson &
Readance, 1994), art (Bullock, 1992), English as a second language (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2005); music (Burnard, 2008) and foreign languages (Shanahan, 1997).

Kang and Wallace (2004) investigated the relationship between three experienced high school science teachers’ epistemological beliefs about science and their teaching actions, specifically lab activities. Teachers participated in an initial interview during which they responded to questions about lab use and to two “critical incidents” (Nott & Wellington, 1995, p.1) that required teachers to decide on spontaneous actions that revealed their beliefs. Teachers participated in 7-10 interviews each and were observed 7-10 times; interview and observation data were transcribed. Data were analyzed in two phases. In the first phase, researchers developed descriptive codes and the following categories using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990): teaching goals for labs, beliefs about students, teaching strategies, beliefs about science, beliefs about learning, and beliefs about inquiry. In the second phase, researchers investigated links between teaching actions and beliefs or goals. Teachers’ epistemological beliefs were sorted as to: a) ontological, that is, related to whether one views knowledge as “one certain truth or uncertain multiple truths;” and b) relational, whether one views one’s self as a receiver of knowledge or as a meaning maker involved in the construction of knowledge (Kang & Wallace, p. 142). Teachers were found to have varying levels of sophistication in terms of their epistemological beliefs and the more sophisticated their epistemologies were, the less obvious the links between their beliefs and their practices were. The specific context for teaching also influenced teacher’s actions. Teachers’ actions were related not only to their beliefs, but also to demands created by mandated assessments, curricula and the needs of students.
Kang and Wallace (2004) concluded that ontological beliefs seemed related to teachers’ instructional goals and relational beliefs to teachers’ actions. One teacher believed she and her students were receivers of factual information and that her primary goal was delivering information, consistent with her decision to replace all lab activities with demonstrations. Another teacher seemed to have a dual epistemology in place, “as if he operates in two different worlds” (p. 160). He viewed his students as passive receivers of knowledge, but also engaged students in activities that required problem-solving and had multiple possible answers. The last teachers’ epistemological beliefs were context specific. He believed science as a high school subject was different from science as a field and had different epistemological beliefs for each. Overall, the authors concluded that teachers’ epistemological beliefs and goals can partly explain teaching actions, but that the more sophisticated a teacher’s epistemological beliefs are, the harder it is to link them to actual practice. They further asserted that there are many influences on teachers’ actions other than their beliefs such as mandated curricula, a graduation test, and the needs of students (Kang & Wallace, 2004).

The results of this study, however, must be interpreted with caution as the findings about epistemological beliefs might be confounded by context. Two of the teachers in this study were in technical prep schools for low-achieving students and the third teacher was in a college prep school for high-achieving students. The striking difference between the school contexts of these three teachers may have played a stronger role in their classroom practice than their beliefs about their subject and discipline. Also, the puzzling results for the teacher that seemed to be in two worlds might indicate that an adequate understanding of the teacher’s beliefs was not achieved using the author’s procedures, or the relationship between beliefs and practices needs to be specified differently. Finally, one teacher was found to have a dual view of science: science in
the world was different from science in school, and different epistemologies applied. Based on the data provided, it seems possible that this duality could have been interpreted as an influence of the context. It is worrisome that the authors were not able to explain the data for 2 of the 3 participants satisfactorily. It is possible that what the authors describe as the difficulty of connecting sophisticated epistemological beliefs to teachers’ practice may be attributable to a somewhat insensitive or superficial analysis of the data or related to the contextual differences in the schools.

Brickhouse (1990) included both experienced and inexperienced teachers in her study. She observed and interviewed three secondary science teachers and concluded that the two more experienced teachers’ beliefs were more consistent with their practice than the one second-year teacher. Additionally, the experienced teachers’ beliefs differed greatly from each other in ways that were clearly reflected in their practice. One experienced teacher believed theories were tools to solve problems, that observation and experimentation were theory-driven processes, that knowledge in science changed as scientists made new observations or reinterpreted previous observations, and that learning new concepts required an understanding of fundamental concepts. In practice, she often asked students to predict the results of experiments based on theory and to analyze why they had or had not gotten the results they expected. The second experienced teacher believed “theories were truths, and the goal of the instruction was for students to find and learn the truth” (Brickhouse). Furthermore, he believed that following procedures leads to discovery of the truth. In practice, his instruction was activity focused and he attributed difficulty or errors to failure to follow directions. He believed that knowledge was gained by accumulating facts. The second-year teacher also saw knowledge growth as a process of accumulating facts and this was demonstrated in his questioning techniques. Most of the second-year teachers’
discussion questions focused on asking students to recall facts. His instruction, however, was more often inconsistent with his expressed beliefs due to several contextual constraints described only as “many obstacles” (Brickhouse, p. 60).

The inclusion of a second-year teacher in a study of the relationship between teachers’ subject matter beliefs and their practice was inadvisable given that teachers with only one year of experience are still in an early stage of development in terms of establishing their practice. Thus, the difficulties that the author reported interpreting the practice of the second year teacher is not surprising and for the reader, the confusion is exacerbated by the lack of information about the contextual constraints mentioned but not described. Furthermore, Brickhouse’s conclusions should be interpreted with caution given that data seemed to be summarized rather than analyzed. Although the author briefly described data collected and spent a great deal of time (35 hours per teacher) in the field, the methodology section includes no data analysis procedures and features only a description of the participants, an explanation of how they were recruited, and a description of how the member check was performed. The data reported, however, anecdotally point to the existence of a relationship between teachers’ subject matter beliefs and their practice.

Researchers in the subject area of mathematics also reported that teachers’ beliefs about subject matter influenced their practice. Thompson (1984) observed three junior high school mathematics teachers with more than three years of experience daily for four weeks and interviewed them after the lessons in the last two weeks. Teachers also completed six written responses to questions about the goals of their instruction and their relative importance, reasons students may struggle, and their own teaching effectiveness. Data were reviewed daily and hypotheses and inferences formed influenced subsequent interview questions. The three teachers had different beliefs about mathematics, and their beliefs were reflected in their practice. The
most marked differences among the teachers were in: conceptions of mathematics and teaching,
the degree of “integratedness” of their conceptions, and in reflectiveness (p. 119).

For example, one teacher believed mathematics is composed of facts and has exact answers
that can be found by following correct procedures with little opportunity to be creative
(Thompson, 1984). She believed the teaching of mathematics to entail the transfer of information
from the teacher to the students who learn by observing correct demonstrations of procedures.
She believed it was important to encourage students to ask questions and to relate mathematics to
real life, but the last two beliefs were not evident in her practice which consisted mainly of
lecture, demonstration, and seatwork and allowed little interaction with students. She said she
spent little time in planning and did not reflect on her practice. The second teacher saw
mathematics as a tool, something people use to achieve a particular purpose. She also believed
mathematics was constantly changing and incorporating new advances into the field. To teach
mathematics, she believed students should be encouraged to use logic to solve problems, that the
teacher should support them, and that the teacher should look for student misconceptions that
prevent students from understanding an idea. During class, she often encouraged students to
solve problems on their own, and emphasized the importance of reasoning in problem-solving to
learning mathematics. She reflected often on her teaching and her practice was found to be
mostly consistent with her beliefs. The third teacher believed mathematics content to be fixed
and coherent; it was a way of expressing ideas in the physical world symbolically, and it was
composed of interrelated topics. She believed the teacher should control all instruction and
emphasize the logic of mathematical rules and procedures. Her beliefs were not always evident
in her practice, but they were not inconsistent with her practice. She seemed unable to react to
students’ difficulties on the spot, and usually limited discussion to responses to her questions.
The author concluded that the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practice is complex and many things appear to influence teachers’ instructional practice; however, beliefs play an important role in “shaping the teachers’ characteristic patterns of instructional behavior” (p.125). Thompson furthermore identified the teachers’ capacity for reflectiveness as an important contributor to consistency between teachers’ beliefs and practices.

Thompson’s data were presented in a thorough and thoughtful manner, but there were a few omissions that make it the findings less trustworthy. For one, he did not describe the 3 schools the participants worked in although their grade level and classes were given. Context is an important consideration in this literature and because the school is also the setting for the study, it is surprising this information is missing. Also, data analysis procedures were not detailed. Thompson described her data collection procedures in a detailed manner, but did not explain the analysis. Although there was no mention of any credibility measures, triangulation could be inferred and rich, thick data description was easily observed. Findings are best taken as exploratory and tentative rather than conclusive, similarly to the other studies examined in this section. The studies do, however, provide support for the need for further investigation of the influence of teachers’ subject matter beliefs’ relationships to their practice.

**Beliefs about Teaching and Learning**

On a philosophical level, epistemological beliefs about knowledge in a particular domain are distinct from beliefs about teaching and learning in the domain (Hofer, 2002). For example, teachers may believe that knowledge in the domain is fixed and yet employ teaching strategies that encourage students to construct their own knowledge, consistent with a more relativist view of knowledge in the domain (Hofer). Beliefs about how people become proficient in the domain are related to teacher practice; teachers’ beliefs about how students learn seem to be closely associated with how they choose to support student learning. In practice, teachers’
epistemological beliefs are closely related to their beliefs about teaching and learning and often
the distinction is not relevant to researchers or to teachers. Teachers’ beliefs about teaching,
sometimes called pedagogical beliefs or teaching orientation, include beliefs about the role of the
teacher and beliefs about specific kinds of learners and subjects. Beliefs about specific practices
and beliefs about teaching a particular subject may be different at the child, classroom, school or
theoretical levels.

Teachers’ beliefs about how best to teach a particular content area such as literacy are
deeply intertwined with their practice. In a study that derived 121 first grade special and general
educators’ beliefs from teachers’ self-report of hypothetical practices, Cunningham, Zibulsky,
Stanovich and Stanovich (2009) found that most teachers’ beliefs about literacy instruction could
be placed on a continuum from phonics emphasis to literature emphasis. Teachers with strong
beliefs about either phonics or literature reported that they would use different allocations of time
for various kinds of practices. For example, teachers who believed literature should be
emphasized reported that they would spend considerably less time than the mean reported for all
teachers on activities related to phonics and phonemic awareness, spelling and grammar, and
reading comprehension. In contrast, teachers who believed phonics should be emphasized would
spend more time in phonics instruction, but would allocate approximately equivalent amounts of
time to other areas of reading instruction. Thus, the time allocated for different reading practices
by teachers with a strong phonics emphasis seemed more similar to the allocations of the
teachers whose perspectives were more balanced between the two positions.

A closer examination of the instrumentation raises several concerns. First, the Language
Arts Activity Grid was simply two columns on a piece of paper, one for percent time and one for
the description of the activity, with instructions for the teacher to:
Please indicate what kinds of activities you would engage in when teaching language arts (which would include your reading instruction). What proportion of a two-hour Language Arts instruction block would be spent on each activity? (Cunningham et al., 2009, p. 422)

Although the authors were using this report as a measure of implicit beliefs about reading, no method of validating the instrument for that use was reported. The authors, for instance, could have interviewed a small number of teachers to investigate how well teachers’ listing of practices corresponded to a more thorough examination of their beliefs. Or, they could have used other studies to support their underlying assumption that teachers’ beliefs could validly be inferred in this way. Furthermore, the instructions were vague and may have confused teachers. It is not clear from the wording whether teachers should record what they ideally would do if they could, what they habitually did, what they plan to do in the future, or an example of a specific day. It is likely teachers interpreted instructions variously. Finally, even though the authors limited the study to first grade teachers, they did not gather data on teachers’ contexts and so were unable to report whether context exerted an influence on teachers’ responses. For instance, if teachers were using a mandated curriculum or teaching students that had severe reading difficulties, it seems plausible that their catalog of practices would be influenced. Results should be interpreted keeping these issues in mind, particularly in light of the rather tautological design that resulted in the formation of 2 groups of teachers based on differences in time allocation to phonics based or literature based practices, who were then found to have differences in time allocation to other types of reported practices.

To investigate the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991) interviewed 39 4th to 6th grade teachers in 6 elementary schools regarding their beliefs about teaching reading comprehension and observed them twice. Fourteen of the teachers were videotaped a third time.
Teachers’ responses in the interviews were coded as: Learning to Read, Reading, Reading Comprehension, Teaching Reading, and Basals. Coded material was analyzed to determine teachers’ theoretical orientations to reading and beliefs about reading and learning to read.

Theoretical orientations include beliefs not only about what kinds of knowledge the subject area includes but also how that knowledge is attained by students; thus, in this case, it is a little difficult to separate beliefs about the subject from beliefs about teaching and learning. Theoretical orientations to reading in this study were similar to those reported elsewhere in the reading literature (De Ford, 1985; Sacks & Mergendoller, 1997). Teacher’s beliefs ranged from favoring skills based instruction featuring systematic instruction in decoding to more cognitively based instruction featuring constructivist approaches based on authentic texts. Based on the interviews, researchers were able to predict teachers’ instruction in terms of practices that differentiated between orientations: use of a basal, having students read orally or silently, error correction, incorporation of students’ background knowledge, and teaching vocabulary in or out of context. There also was a strong relationship between teachers’ stated beliefs and the teachers’ observed practice in the same six categories; percentage agreement between stated beliefs and observed practice ranged from 66% to 92%.

Because the authors described several means of ensuring the credibility of their conclusions and the quality of the research design and methods, their findings can be interpreted as strong evidence of the connections between teachers’ beliefs about reading and their practices. Procedures for analyzing data, including coding processes for interviews and observations, were explicitly stated and examples were provided, and it was easy to understand how authors reached their conclusions. The authors provided the interview questions used, the coding system used, and a detailed profile for 4 teachers selected to represent beliefs categories. One set of
researchers derived codes from the observations and videotapes and another set used the codes to predict the practices in the videotapes from the interviews. The study also provides strong support for the use of interviews, as opposed to scales or surveys, for eliciting teachers’ beliefs about the subject area itself and about teaching and learning within the subject area for the purpose of relating beliefs to practice.

Graham et al. (2003), mentioned previously in the efficacy section, found no connection between 220 first through third grade teachers’ beliefs about writing instruction and teachers’ responses about their practices to support struggling writers on a 19-item questionnaire (Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996) surveying their use of specific instructional activities. To assess instructional activities, teachers indicated how often they engaged in: basic writing skills and writing processes as well as specific activities such as having conferences with students, minilessons, reteaching, modeling, using a computer, peer conferencing, and encouraging independent writing by allowing student choice of writing topic, writing at students’ own pace, and invented spellings. Teachers responded to questions using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = several times a day.

Beliefs were measured by the Writing Orientation Scale (Graham, Harris, MacArthur & Fink, 2002) designed to assess grade level teachers’ beliefs about teaching writing in three areas: a) the role of explicit instruction, b) the importance of correctness, and c) the role of natural learning. The question of whether teachers’ beliefs and practices were related was not the main area of investigation in this study, but the results can be interpreted as suggesting that the instrumentation may need more development before being used for the purpose of ascertaining links between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the relationship between teachers’ responses to the practices questionnaire and their actual practice, i.e., the validity of the
instrument for measuring teachers’ practice, was not described. It may be the case that teachers’ reports of how often they engage in practices on the questionnaire bear little relation to their actual practice. A judgment of how often a teacher reports performing the practices in the questions may not be a valid proxy for the totality of the teachers’ practice which varies according to more criteria than frequency. Given the questions that were not answered about the instrumentation, the lack of relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices in this study should be interpreted cautiously.

Berry (2006) investigated the link between teachers’ beliefs about teaching, learning and inclusion and their practice, specifically, the nature of writing instruction provided. Two teams of first through fourth grade collaborating teachers, one with three teachers and the other with two, each in a different school, were interviewed twice and observed 55 times total. Each team had at least one special education teacher and one general education teacher. Data were analyzed qualitatively; Berry marked key phrases, isolated beliefs statements and metaphorical statements, developed theoretical categories and performed thematic analysis. Berry found both teams believed students with disabilities should be included in general education classrooms and described both teams’ writing instruction as environmental – neither totally skills based not totally natural learning based. Differences in teachers’ beliefs were revealed through the metaphors they used to describe their instruction and the rationale for their instruction that Berry termed differences in “systemic frames of reference” and these differences were directly related to instruction.

Team 1 believed in a structured, sequenced curriculum with steps and levels students progressed through. “Students who lacked writing skills were seen as out of order or broken; therefore, instruction involved directing the process of repairing the malfunctioning part or parts”
(Berry, 2006, p. 18). Each student learned at his or her own pace within the same curriculum. Team 2 understood writing as relational rather than structural, i.e., they believed writing was primarily a tool for communication rather than a skill in itself. They supported students with disabilities within a structure that moved students from whole group to small group to independent work that provided opportunities for peer support. Students with disabilities were seen as “vulnerable, requiring a protected context in which they would find trust and safety” so they would be “empowered” to “take risks and try things” (Berry, p. 20).

Several features of Berry’s (2006) study lend credibility to her findings, although the presentation of her findings seemed to be less synthesized and organized than the rest of the study was. She spent a great deal of time in the field, collected multiple forms of evidence, and verified her teacher descriptions with the participants. She also described her methods in detail, explaining her coding and her rationale. Missing, however, was an explanation of how her coding led to her conclusions. Her interpretations seem valid based on the large amount of data she provided, but she did not help the reader understand how the categories that evolved were connected with the major themes she articulated when describing her findings, opting for a descriptive rather than an analytic approach to sharing results. Such description is typical and desirable in reports of case study research, but the reader is hard put to follow some of the logical leaps. Nonetheless, the study provides moderately strong evidence for the assertion that the relationship between teachers’ beliefs is complex. The author emphasized that two teams of teachers shared several kinds of beliefs, including beliefs about the nature of disability, a commitment to inclusion, an environmental orientation to teaching writing, and the use of the process writing approach, and yet their practice differed substantially. Berry attributed the differences to what she termed an “underlying belief system.” The underlying belief system
appears to be epistemological beliefs, as it was comprised of the teachers’ beliefs about what writing is (set of skills or tool for communication) and their conception of what progress in writing looks like (acquire skills or communicate successfully). Overall, the study highlights the complicated nature of the relationships among beliefs and practices and provides support for the use of interviews and observations to tease out those relationships; it also underscores the significance of teachers’ epistemological beliefs to their practice.

Pajares and Graham (1998) interviewed 27 middle school language arts teachers with two or more years of experience about how they would respond to a hypothetical case about a student’s poem, written by researchers for the study. Teachers were asked to respond to the student’s question, “Is it good?” in order to investigate the beliefs that underpinned teachers’ responses. Pajares and Graham used five formalistic beliefs derived from a pilot study with perservice teachers enrolled in a language arts methods class to categorize participants’ responses. Formalistic beliefs, or formalisms, are beliefs that influence action regardless of context or circumstances. Formalisms identified in the pilot study included: “a teacher must always respond positively; students should, above all, be praised and encouraged; criticism is the enemy of creativity; evaluative questions should be redirected to the student; and the value of poetry is relative and cannot be judged” (p. 856). The inservice teachers’ interview transcripts were coded for the same formalisms, as well as for strategies and beliefs that emerged during analysis. Researchers found teachers’ responses about how they would respond to the student included a greater quantity of subject matter instruction than responses of the preservice teachers who included more responses directed at bolstering the student’s self esteem. But the teachers’ responses relied just as heavily on the formalistic beliefs as the preservice teachers’. For example, 22 out of 27 teachers believed “a teacher must always respond positively,” and 19
believed “criticism is the enemy of creativity” (p. 860). These beliefs had a profound effect on their imagined practice because they shaped how teachers saw themselves responding to student work. For example, teachers said they would praise the poem even if it was not praiseworthy, or redirect the question to the student. Only three of the teachers described their response as dependent on characteristics of the individual student and context, but those teachers’ responses also included a great deal of formalisms.

The authors concluded that teachers’ beliefs influenced their imagined actions. Teachers who believed they must always respond positively and be concerned with students’ motivation and self-esteem reported that they would tell the student the poem is good rather than provide specific critique and instruction that might help the student to improve. It is difficult to determine how well this study provides support for the connection between formalistic beliefs and teacher practice given the entirely context free nature of the task that was posed to the teachers. The relationship between teachers’ responses to the hypothetical student and their actual responses to real students in the context of their classes was not investigated. In a natural classroom setting, teachers’ instructional goals related to the writing task, the importance of the task to the goals, the history of the individual student, and the purpose for writing the poem are just a few of the possible influences on teachers’ responses. The study nevertheless provides an impetus for further research on the influence of formalistic beliefs on teacher practice and good evidence to support attention to formalistic beliefs in studies of relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices. In fairness, the aim of the study was not to relate beliefs to practice but to investigate beliefs. The warrant for the study, however, depends on an underlying assumption that teachers’ responses bore some verisimilitude to their actual practice. If such a relationship does not exist,
there is no point to the investigation; researchers would be prudent to include some context for
tasks when designing measures such as this one.

**Beliefs about Students with Disabilities and Ability/Disability**

Teachers’ beliefs about ability and disability are also considered epistemological beliefs
because beliefs about the nature of knowledge and how knowledge can be gained are related to
found teachers’ epistemological beliefs, specifically their beliefs about disability and the role
they play in instructing students with disabilities, were related to the use of effective teaching
practices.

To investigate teachers’ beliefs, Jordan and Stanovich (2003) developed an interview for
use with teachers that produced a narrative scored using a rubric; the resulting score was
interpreted as falling on a continuum from Pathognomic to Interventionist (P-I) beliefs. During
the P-I Interview, teachers responded to questions about referral and assessment, setting goals
and monitoring progress, making accommodations, collaborating with others in the school and
communication with parents (Jordan & Stanovich, 2003). Pathognomic teachers believed
disability was an inherent, unchangeable characteristic of a student that teachers could do little to
remediate and that responsibility for instructing students with disabilities belonged to someone
other than the classroom teacher. Interventionist teachers believed that disabilities could be
addressed successfully with accommodations and that the classroom teacher is responsible for
ensuring student learning.

In several studies, Jordan and Stanovich made connections between teachers’ beliefs as
measured by the P-I Interview and effective instructional practice. Effective instructional
practice was assessed according to the Classroom Observation Scale (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998)
that contained items in two parts: 1) the class as a whole, and 2) interactions between the teacher
and three students: one with a disability, one regularly achieving, and one at risk of failure. Whole class instruction was observed using three categories to code teachers’ behavior: time management, classroom management, and lesson delivery. Interactions were rated according to a 5-point scale, including: no dialogue with the student, managerial comments, instructional comments, and interactive dialogue.

In summing up several studies in which they used the Pathognomic-Interventionist Interview with the Classroom Observation Scale to investigate the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices, Jordan and Stanovich concluded that teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities are related to effective teaching practices (Jordan & Stanovich, 2010). In studies that used the P-I Interviews (e.g., Jordan, Lindsay & Stanovich, 1997; Jordan, Kircaali & Diamond, 1993; Jordan & Stanovich, 2002; White, 2007), researchers concluded that about 20% of teachers had Interventionist beliefs, 25% had Pathognomic beliefs, and about half had mixed beliefs. Teachers who had Interventionist beliefs were judged to be more effective overall (Stanovich, 1994; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998). Interventionist teachers spent more time on instruction, spent more time engaged in individual and small group talk, spent more time in academically focused talk, and organized their class routines effectively so that there was little or no wasted time.

In another set of studies (Jordan, Lindsay & Stanovich, 1997; Jordan & Stanovich, 2001), nine teachers’ P-I beliefs were compared to scores on a measure of teacher to student interactions. Transcripts of teacher to student dialogue during lessons were coded for type of student and nature of the dialogue. Students were coded as exceptional, typically achieving or at risk. Dialogue was coded as academic or non-academic, and frequency, length and level of student engagement were scored. Pathognomic teachers had the least amount of interaction with
at risk or exceptional students, and their dialogue with students was mostly non-academic. Teachers who were neither pathognomonic nor interventionist demonstrated classroom practices that were similar to Pathognomonic teachers’. The three teachers with Interventionist beliefs spent more time interacting with at risk and exceptional students, and spent more time engaged in academically focused dialogue with all of their students. Interventionist teachers interacted with low achieving students for almost twice as long as other students and their interactions overall were more frequent and characterized by higher levels of cognitive engagement. Overall, teachers’ P-I beliefs were found to be related to the amount and frequency of academically focused dialogue with low achieving students and to the overall amount of instructional time allotted them. Interventionist teachers’ classrooms were well-managed and routinized, which seemed to allow teachers to spend more time engaging students in academically focused dialogue.

Jordan and Stanovich’s body of work over the past 20 years makes a strong case to support the findings that teachers differ in their beliefs about ability and disability and that teachers’ P-I beliefs are related to the effectiveness of their practice, not just for students with disabilities but for all students. Their findings are substantially consistent across the studies, providing strong support also for the use of the P-I interview to investigate teachers’ beliefs. The authors consistently provided detailed descriptions of the methods and instruments they used and evidence that they were appropriate for pursuing the questions they asked. They reported evidence of validity and reliability for their instrumentation and reported inter-observer reliability for ratings. They also provided examples of their analysis that showed how teachers’ interviews and observations were coded and evaluated, substantial evidence that they worked from their data to their findings in a clear and consistent fashion. The authors included tables
displaying correlation coefficients and the estimate of the probability that their findings resulted by chance ($p$-values). The nature of the correlations computed, however, was not detailed. The assumptions associated with the different ways to compute correlation vary considerably and may have an impact on the interpretation of the analysis. In addition, a discussion of the shape of the distributions for both the interview and the observation data would be useful to other researchers. Finally, their work was confined to teachers at the elementary school level and is not appropriate for generalizing to secondary school teachers.

Overall, Jordan and Stanovich made a substantial and robust case for their assertions about how teachers’ beliefs about the nature of disability are related to their classroom practice. The implication from their work that effective instruction for students with disabilities is effective instruction for all is problematic, however. The authors have asserted consistently that “effective teaching is effective intervention for all students” (2001, 2003, 2009, p. 536). Certainly, the studies do not support such a conclusion, as they did not report data on student outcomes. There is no way to tell if effective teaching, as they defined it, was effective in promoting student achievement gains.

In another study that included the analysis of teachers’ beliefs about student ability/disability and practices, 21 4th to 6th grade teachers in Los Angeles County completed a beliefs survey at the beginning and at the end of the school year and were videotaped twice teaching adding and comparing fractions (Stipek, Givven, Salmon & MacGyvers, 2001). The survey included 57 statements. Teachers indicated the strength of their agreement with the statements by means of a 6 point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey provided information about the following beliefs: 1) math as mostly facts and procedures vs. math as creative thought; 2) primary goal as correct answers vs.
understanding; 3) teacher control vs. some child autonomy; 4) entity vs. incremental view of ability; 5) extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation; 6) confidence to teach math; and 7) enjoyment of teaching math. Teachers also completed a questionnaire about how they weighed effort, relative scores, creativity and independence when assigning grades. Videos were coded separately for whole group instruction and small group or individual instruction in the following areas: emphasis on performance outcomes, emphasis on speed, degree of risk for students, degree of teacher control of learning activities, emphasis on effort rather than ability, focus on mastery of concepts, and teachers’ enthusiasm.

The authors reported correlations between the pre and post tests that indicated teachers’ beliefs were fairly stable over the course of the year. A principal components factor analysis resulted in 2 factors with high alphas (coherence) that were negatively correlated to one another. Teachers that subscribed to a transmission theory of instruction (the first factor) scored low on the second factor: confidence in and enjoyment of teaching math (Stipek et al., 2001).

Correlations were computed between the 5 scales comprising the first factor and the 7 ratings of classroom practice. Several teacher beliefs were associated with instructional practices. This study was not focused on students with disabilities, but given the conclusions of Jordan and Stanovich, the belief that would seem to have the most relevance to the instruction of students with disabilities is number 4, the degree to which teachers believe ability is an unchanging entity as opposed to one that can change incrementally. Teachers who perceived math ability as unchangeable were likely to engage in practices that emphasized student performance, such as responding correctly and completing assignments and they were less concerned about what students were learning and understanding. Correlations between the beliefs scales and the reports
of grading practices indicated that teachers holding strong entity beliefs about ability assessed students according to independence rather than effort, relative performance or creativity.

The high quality of the design and report of this study lend strong credence to the findings. Procedures, measures, analyses and results were thoroughly documented and explained and tables of correlation results that included correlation coefficients as well as p-values were given. Steps were taken to ensure reliability both of participant measures and rater interpretations of video data. For example, 12 of the videos were rated by 2 raters independently; the authors gave the results in a table that provided the percent agreement for each of the 7 coding categories. These ranged from 83% to 92%, within one point. Taken together, the work of Jordan and Stanovich and Stipek et al. (2001) strongly support the existence of a link between teachers’ beliefs about students’ ability and their practice.

**Beliefs about Inclusion**

A belief that students with disabilities should be included in general education classrooms seems to be necessary but insufficient to guarantee teachers will use appropriate practices to support the learning of included students with disabilities (Brighton, 2003; Cook, Tankersley, Cook & Landrum, 2000; Howerton, 2006; Lombard, Miller & Hazelkorn, 1998; Moni, Jobling, van Kraayenoord, Elkins, Miller & Koppenhaver, 2007; Schumm et al., 1994). Researchers have found that overall, general education teachers believe that students with disabilities should be included, but may lack the knowledge, skills, or motivation to provide instructional support, especially as students get older. Two studies were found that focused on the relationship between secondary teachers’ beliefs about inclusion and practices related to supporting included students with disabilities.

Researchers in Australia investigated how 37 middle school teachers’ beliefs about inclusion were related to writing instruction in inclusive classrooms where 57 students with
disabilities were served. Teachers were participating in a three and a half year long professional development effort to improve their writing instruction (Moni et al., 2007). Four instruments were used: 1.) a form on which teachers rated students’ performance and recorded supports provided, and the roles of other people in providing the support using a 6-point Likert type scale, 2.) teachers provided feedback about the professional development, 3.) teachers recorded responses during workshop discussions, and 4.) researchers used the WriteIdeas classroom observation tool to record interactions and activities during lessons and information about the delivery mode, grouping, subject area, differentiation, and support for students with disabilities during 2 observations for each teacher (Moni et al., 2007). The researchers concluded that there was little evidence of teachers’ ability to transfer knowledge into practice. Even though most teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion, most did not use the strategies they had learned during instruction. In the 70 observations of regular classrooms, the students with disabilities were observed completing the same tasks as other students, under the same conditions. In the 14 observations in which support personnel were in the class, no extra supports were provided to students with disabilities in almost half of the classrooms. Only 5 instances of group work and 4 of peer or pair work were observed. Teachers reasoned that all students were going to have to pass mandated assessments, so all students had to do the same work. When teachers did create a differentiated lesson or assignment, they often ended up doing it with the whole class anyway (Moni et al.).

The researchers did not give any description of data analysis or of procedures for rating teacher observations. Results were presented more as a summary than an analysis of the data collected. The study was included in the review because the substantial observation data reported seems rather self-explanatory – no extra support was provided to students with disabilities in any
of 70 observations despite teachers’ participation in an extended professional development program and the researchers’ description of teachers’ beliefs that students with disabilities should be included. The researchers said contextual factors seemed almost impossible to overcome for teachers, especially the use of mandated assessments and mandated assessment criteria teachers in secondary schools were required to use for each task. These assertions should be interpreted with caution, however, due to the lack of description of data analysis procedures.

Robinson (2002) reached similar conclusions after a study of 4 high school science teachers’ beliefs and practices in inclusive classes in New York. One teacher from each grade and its corresponding subject (9th grade, Earth Science; 10th grade, Biology; 11th grade, Chemistry; and 12th grade, Physics) in 3 public schools and 1 private school participated. Teachers played leadership roles in the profession: they were involved in state level curriculum and assessment reform and they educated other teachers on the reforms. Researchers interviewed teachers twice and observed 1 or 2 class periods to determine practices they considered or used for instructing students with disabilities during planning, instruction and assessment. During observations, researchers noted interactions between teachers and included students with disabilities as well as between students with disabilities and their peers when working in cooperative groups.

Both interview and observation data were coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method. Key themes related to teachers’ beliefs and patterns of practice were identified. All four teachers believed that students with disabilities should be included in general education classes. They implemented accommodations as indicated in IEPs and provided in-class supports for students with disabilities such as establishing a signal to warn they would be calling on the student and having students work with stronger peer partners. Strategies for
questioning, cooperative learning and alternate learning modalities emerged as important areas of concern for teachers as did assessment modifications. Teachers believed that since learning outcomes were the same for all, instruction should be similar, and so made one lesson plan for all students. Instructional strategies teachers used were based on their beliefs about the best teaching practices in general. Teachers reported that they used one plan for all students because so few students with disabilities were included, they had limited planning time, and they had to prepare students for mandatory high-stakes assessments administered at the end of the school year. The lack of detailed descriptions of how data were analyzed and interpreted limits the plausibility of the findings in this study.

The disconnect between teachers’ positive beliefs about including students with disabilities and their nonuse of supportive instructional practices for them (Moni et al., 2007; Robinson, 2002) may be related to teachers’ concerns about preparing students for required tests. Although it seems counterintuitive that teachers would prepare students for these tests by not providing any support, it may be that the teachers believe “supports for disabilities” is somehow equal to “watering down the content.” The premise certainly bears investigation. It is also possible that beliefs about inclusion are not the kinds of beliefs that are closely linked to teachers’ instructional decisions. Teachers believed students benefited from inclusion, but reported they lacked support, resources, and knowledge for addressing the needs of included students with disabilities. Although these 2 particular studies do not provide clear and convincing evidence of their claims, this finding is pervasive in the literature. Studies focused on high school teachers’ beliefs and practices for including students with severe disabilities (Carter & Hughes, 2006) and students with physical disabilities (Hodge, Ammah, Casebolt, Lamaster & O’Sullivan, 2004) have drawn similar conclusions.
Taken together, the studies suggest secondary level teachers who believe students with disabilities should be included do not do much to accommodate these students despite their positive attitudes and beliefs. Teacher beliefs that students with disabilities should be included seem necessary but insufficient to guarantee teachers will provide them with any support for learning.

**Summary**

The investigation of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices is a line of research that seems to have persisted in the emergent stage despite the fact that the first study appeared more than two decades ago (Thompson, 1984). With the notable exception of the work of Jordan and Stanovich, the studies reviewed are a somewhat motley assortment of singleton studies, and are diverse in their methods and purposes. It is not possible to trace the development of a clear and well-specified line of research in this area. In several of the studies, the analysis of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices for supporting included students with disabilities is only a small part of an investigation focused on a related question (Graham et al., 2003; Soodak et al., 1998; Schumm et al., 1994). In part, the novice nature of the research is likely due to the difficulty researchers have encountered in relating teachers’ beliefs and practices and to a certain extent weakly conceived and executed studies. The establishment of a robust line of research in this area seems warranted, and even urgent at this time, when one considers the large numbers of students with disabilities who now are receiving most of their education in general education classrooms.

The studies reviewed above are plagued with methodological issues that severely compromise the conclusions that can be drawn from them. Definitions of beliefs are sometimes imprecise and often overlap. Measures for both beliefs and practices were often idiosyncratic (e.g., Cunningham et al., 2009) and lacked proof of validity, making it difficult to draw conclusions
from the individual studies and thus, the literature as a whole. Researchers described many and
various ways of measuring and interpreting teachers’ beliefs and practices. Researchers
sometimes failed to account for the influence of context in their designs, despite the strong
effects it is known to exert on both teachers’ beliefs and practices. Some studies included only
vague descriptions of data analysis procedures.

It is clear from the studies discussed that teachers’ beliefs are related to practice, but
further research that considers how beliefs are related to practice is warranted. Observations and
interviews seemed to be satisfactory ways to collect data on teachers’ practices and beliefs. Data
derived from observations of actual practice in conjunction with conversations with teachers
about real problems of practice faced in real contexts seem more valid for reaching conclusions
about teachers’ beliefs and practices than context free beliefs measures and imagined practices
measures described in two of the studies. Indeed, the strong influence of the context was one
finding that was consistent across all the studies. Other ideas that bear investigation and
consideration include: the influence of mandated testing on teachers’ provision of support, the
influence of beliefs about the subject area on practice, and the influence of beliefs about ability
and disability (this last in contexts other than elementary language arts classes).

Beliefs about the particular subject or content area have proven to be important for teacher
practice studies in the general education literature, however, few researchers sought to
understand how subject area beliefs of general education teachers might be important for their
practice related to students with disabilities (e.g., Berry, 2006). Researchers have found subject-
specific beliefs to be tightly interconnected to teachers’ practice in general (Graham, Harris,
MacArthur & Fink, 2002; Stipek, Givven, Salmon & MacGyvers, 2001; Yerrick, Parke &
Nugent, 1997) and it is possible that these beliefs also undergird general education teachers’
thinking about the kinds of supports they provide for students with disabilities. Subject-specific beliefs may be even more important for secondary level teachers given that their teacher identity is associated with only one subject and they generally teach only one subject. Furthermore, departmental structures in secondary schools reinforce the disciplinary fiefdoms; each department has its own culture within the larger school culture and even its own governance in the form of the department chair. It seems the subject area is an important contextual factor that cannot be ignored.

There are only a few studies focused on linking teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to students with disabilities at the secondary level. Two studies that did, Moni et al. (2007) and Robinson (2002) focused mainly on broad beliefs such as beliefs about inclusion, but omissions in their reports limit the usefulness of their findings. This is a glaring gap in the literature.

Consideration of the needs of students with disabilities is largely absent from the literature in general education that deals with teachers’ beliefs and practices. In special education research, researchers who looked at how general education teachers were supporting included students with disabilities have pointed out the shortcomings of general education teachers’ practice (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Fuchs, Fuchs & Bishop, 1992; McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager & Lee, 1993; Peterson & Clark, 1978; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon & Rothlein, 1994). General education teachers seem to make few changes to their instruction to accommodate included students with disabilities, and the few changes they are willing to make are mostly easily implemented, in-class actions such as moving the student closer to the front of the room or having a partner take notes or providing accommodations that are required by students’ Individual Education Plan (IEP).
Few studies, however, sought to understand how teachers’ practice is congruent with their beliefs from the teachers’ point of view. A better understanding of the forces shaping general education teachers’ practice seems a necessary step in helping to improve support provided for included students with disabilities. Teachers’ own explanations of their beliefs and practices and their ideas on how what they do is linked to what they believe, in the contexts they inhabit physically and metaphorically, with the real students they have is essential for understanding the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. An obvious next step in linking beliefs to practices is a rich, multilayered description of how teachers’ many beliefs are related to specific practices for supporting students with disabilities within the general education classroom. There is a need for high-quality qualitative research in this area that could contribute to laying the foundation for the development of instruments for understanding and measuring beliefs and practices and the genesis of a clear and consistent line of research that incrementally and logically defines and describes domains of teachers’ beliefs and practices and the relationships between them.

Clark and Peterson (1986) conceived of teacher beliefs, with teachers’ theories, as comprising one of three parts of teacher cognition; the other two are planning and interactive thoughts and decisions. Although my main area of investigation was teachers’ beliefs related to the needs of students with disabilities, according to Clark and Peterson’s model of teacher cognition: teachers’ beliefs, planning, and interactive thoughts and decisions are integrally bound, with aspects of each revealed through the other two; thus, my study was designed to allow for careful attention to planning and interaction with students through the interviews and observations. “It is also clear that, if reasonable inference about beliefs requires assessments of
what individuals say, intend, and do, then teachers’ verbal expressions, predispositions to action, and teaching behaviors must all be included in assessments of beliefs” (Pajares, 1992, p. 327).
Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between secondary Language Arts teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with learning disabilities included in their classes and the supports they provided for those students. Through interviews and observations with participant teachers I was able to explore teachers’ beliefs about supporting students with disabilities in meeting the challenges of secondary level general education Language Arts classes, and how those beliefs were related to the ways they helped students with disabilities make progress towards instructional goals.

Research questions included:

1. How are secondary general education Language Arts teachers’ beliefs related to the supports for learning they provide for students with disabilities included in their classes?

2. What are the supports for learning secondary general education Language Arts teachers provide for students with learning disabilities included in their classes?

3. What kinds of beliefs are related to teacher practice in the area of providing support for included students with disabilities?

4. Are there discernible patterns in the relationships among teachers’ beliefs and practices?
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

Theoretical Perspective

An underlying assumption of this study was that teachers’ own understandings of their actions and beliefs may be quite different from an outside observer’s, and the purpose of the study was to understand the meanings attributed to specific actions by the teachers themselves. The value thus placed on individual “meaning-making” is a decidedly constructivist perspective (Schwandt, 1994, p. 127). Constructivism is concerned with the “unique experience” of individuals; “each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other,” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). This study was designed so that my interaction with the teachers enabled me to understand the significance of specific actions teachers identified as supporting the learning of students with disabilities within their classes, and especially, the meaning of those specific actions with regard to the teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities. As such, the study was firmly rooted in the constructivist perspective. A most important goal of constructivist inquiry is to produce “reconstructed understandings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 100). For constructivists, reality is: constructed by the individual, socially and experientially based, and local and specific in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Findings are created through the interaction of the researcher and participants; through dialectical interchange between the researcher and participants, shared meanings are sought, constructed and refined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (i.e., there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 13-14).
My main purpose was to understand specific actions of the teachers in terms of the significance they ascribed to them. A second purpose was to derive from all four teachers’ data a grounded theory that explained how their beliefs were related to their practice in the specific circumstance of providing support for students with disabilities included in their classes. All names are pseudonyms.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

When employing qualitative methods, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher is an integral part of the data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002). A researcher’s subjectivities are inseparable from the data, and thus must be acknowledged. As such, I bracketed my subjective responses by thinking deeply about my own beliefs and experiences throughout the study and recording my thoughts in a notebook. I used the notebook during the analysis to help identify the biases within my interpretations and to help guard against the imposition of my own belief systems on my participants’. The notebook helped me to identify ways I was imposing my own views on the data. For example, during the axial coding, one of the main categories I had identified was “Teachers’ Rationales.” Even though there was a lot of data in this category, the data seemed to be part of other categories also, and through the constant comparative method I was able to figure out how to recategorize the data. I read early entries in my journal while I was thinking about this problem. I had written about how important looking at teachers’ rationales is, and teacher’s rationales appeared to be something I was committed to looking at. Teachers’ rationales, however, did not work out as a category in answering the research question in this study. So, the notebook helped me sort out my pre-existing ideas and expectations and separate them from the data.
Participants

Teachers were sampled purposively from the group of secondary Language Arts teachers in one school, thus keeping the contexts of school, grade level, and content area as similar as possible given that context is such an important influence on both beliefs and practice. Five high school Language Arts teachers out of a possible 8 that taught secondary general education classes in which students with disabilities were included were invited to participate based on the principal’s recommendations of teachers that were effective instructors of their included students with disabilities. Four teachers agreed to participate, and all four completed all phases of the study. The other teacher that was recommended had personal reasons for not wanting to participate that were not related to the purposes of the study.

Teachers’ experience ranged from 3 to 45 years. Teachers had a combined total of 98 years of teaching experience; almost all of their years teaching were in inclusive settings. Teachers taught Language Arts as well as a few other courses in the English Department: Journalism, Reading, and Speech. Teachers from grades 6-12 were recruited because those are the Secondary Certification grades in the state; participants taught grades 6, 7, 8, and 9. All participants held an English 6-12 state certification, 2 were certified to teach journalism, and 1 had a Gifted Endorsement. Teachers had few to no Special Education courses or workshops and conferred with Special Education personnel at the school 1-2 hours per week. Information about the teachers and their classes is given in Tables 3-1 and 3-2 at the end of the chapter.

Setting

The school was located in a small city in the southeast and included middle and high school grades. School demographics reflected the demographics of the town. In the 2009-2010 school year, there were 1139 students enrolled in the school. Slightly more than half the students were white, 26% were black, 18% were Hispanic and 3% were other races or ethnicities. Sixteen
percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Students with disabilities comprised about 10% of the student population, a proportion that is slightly lower than the national average. Numbers of students, classes, and numbers of students with disabilities included in classes for the teachers in the study are given in Table 3-2. Language Arts classes taught ranged from 18-27 students. Numbers of included students with disabilities varied widely among individual classes and ranged from 0 in one 9th grade honors class to 12 (44%) in one 9th grade class.

**Primary Data Sources: Interviews**

Teachers participated in four interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. See Table 3-3 for a data collection timetable and Table 3-4 for a data summary table. Interview protocols are included in the Appendix. Interview One was based on Jordan and Stanovich’s (2003) Pathognomic-Interventionist (P-I) interview, a semi-structured interview that helps the researcher and the teacher co-construct an understanding of the teacher’s personal epistemological beliefs about students with disabilities. The interview consisted of prompts that elicited a narrative of the teacher’s interaction with a specific student with a disability that was in one of his or her classes and was at risk of academic failure at the time of the interview. Within a constructivist perspective, beliefs are specific and local. Providing the teacher with a specific, contextualized narrative subject was therefore consistent with a constructivist perspective. A set of probe questions was used “to guide but not to lead” teachers’ descriptions of five topics (Jordan & Stanovich, p. 8):

- initial concerns about and assessments of the student
- instructional programming
- monitoring student progress
- communication with staff, and
- communication with parents.
Interview Two was a structured interview that took place after Observation One and Observation Two. The purpose of Interview Two was to investigate the teachers’ beliefs about what is important in the content domain and how knowledge is developed within the domain. Teachers also explained how students with learning disabilities can be supported in gaining proficiency in the domain. Finally, teachers discussed how they planned instruction in general and for students with learning disabilities.

Interview Three took place after Observation Three and Observation Four and was a semi-structured interview in three parts. Using the previous interviews and observations as a source, I selected examples of specific supports provided to students with disabilities the teacher reported or I observed. An individualized set of index cards with one support on each card was prepared for each teacher. Figure 3-1 is a photo of one teacher’s set of index cards. Teachers were asked to describe their rationale for using those specific supports and to evaluate how successful the supports were. Cards were presented to each individual teacher during the interview to encourage elaborated responses about each individual strategy or support, which needs it addressed, how it was used, and whether or not it was successful.

In the second part, teachers were asked to describe an upcoming assignment, the challenges one student with a learning disability might have in completing it successfully, and how they might support the student in that specific instance. In the third part, teachers were asked to explain how they assess student progress and work, particularly for students who have received a significant amount of support in order to clarify how they defined learning/progression within the content domain.

In Interview Four, the first part focused on topics for discussion selected from previous interviews and observation data to firm up the emergent theory of beliefs about the relationship
between supports provided for students with learning disabilities and the teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with learning disabilities. Questions were framed to investigate both of those areas and the relationships between them. The second part entailed participants’ examination and discussion of my preliminary analysis of the data to ensure I had not misrepresented their ideas. Discussion centered on clarification of the emerging representation of their beliefs, both for the purposes of member-checking and to uncover any missed ideas. I also provided teachers with a diagram of my emergent theory derived from the interviews and observations and asked them to comment on whether it was a valid representation of their practices and how they would change my representation. See Figure 3-2 for an example of the emergent theory diagram that was presented to one participant.

**Secondary Data Sources**

**Concept Maps**

Teachers were asked to draw two Concept Maps. The first one was created during Interview Two; teachers were asked to represent their ideas about planning for instruction visually. The second was created at the end of Interview Four: I provided teachers with a preliminary concept map that represented my conception of how their beliefs were related to the supports they provided for students with disabilities based on my analysis of the data and selected ideas or practices drawn from the interview and observation data. Teachers were asked to comment on the validity of these representations and to make changes as they saw fit. The purpose of the Concept Maps was to visually portray the relationships among key ideas from the viewpoint of the participant to serve both as a second form of member checking and another data source. Several characteristics of the Concept Maps were analyzed, including relative positions of items, size of items, and the specificity or vagueness of items or concepts and hierarchical structures. Indicated or absent connections between specific items and the strength of those
connections, level of detail provided, and any emphases that are indicated were also considered. The most important contribution of the Concept Maps turned out to be the thoughts teachers spoke aloud as they were creating their maps, which were recorded and transcribed as part of the interviews. (Photos of the Concept Maps are included at the end of Chapter 4, Figures 4-1 to 4-4.)

**Observation Field Notes**

Teachers were observed at least four times for 100 minute periods each time. Observations were videotaped to support analysis. Detailed field notes were taken during each observation. See Figure 3-3 for an example of field notes. Observation One occurred after Interview One was performed so that I had some contextual information to support my observation. During Observation One, I took detailed field notes about the instructional approach and chosen methods, interactions with students, and the classroom context with the goal of being attentive to actions that supported the learning of students with learning disabilities included in the class. Observation Two occurred after the first interview and the first observation. The purpose of Observations Two, Three and Four was similar to that of Observation One, but also included conscious attention to actions related to ideas emerging during data analysis.

**Teacher Lesson Plans and Instructional Materials**

Teachers were asked to provide lesson plans, particularly for observed lessons, to provide insight into the arc of the teacher’s curriculum and specific instructional practices the teacher used regularly and to provide a topic for discussion to help shape my understanding of the teacher’s beliefs about instruction. Teachers did not provide daily lesson plans, except for the day’s to-do list on the board and lists of assignments on their websites. Teachers were, however, able to discuss in detail their general plans for the unit, marking period, and school year during
the interviews. Teachers provided me with all instructional materials during observed lessons, and copies of relevant materials from related lessons.

**Student Work Samples and Other Artifacts**

Copies and photographs of student work samples or other classroom materials or products were collected to help provide examples and details to illustrate specific beliefs the teachers hold and supports they provided. Student work collected included photocopies or photos of essays, worksheets, and projects. Other classroom materials and products included videos of student presentations, photographs of slides students created, and copies of notes students produced during group work, for example.

**Data Sheet**

The Data Sheet was completed by each teacher and included questions related to background information about the teachers such as: number of years of experience and areas of certification, number of courses or other training sessions related to teaching students with disabilities they have completed, and how much consultation they are able to have with the special education teacher. The data sheet included a table for teachers to provide their schedule and class information. Please see Appendix C for the form teachers used.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed according to the procedures for developing grounded theory described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Central features of grounded theory include the interplay between the theory and the data during the research process, use of the constant comparative method, the asking of theoretically oriented questions, systematic coding, and the development of theory. The development of theory occurs during data analysis and the procedures for analysis are inherently recursive. As data are collected and coded, theories that emerge from the data are constantly compared to the new data, and the theory is shaped to reflect the reality represented by the data.
Grounded theory analysis is a systematic method of data analysis beginning with open coding, or searching for major categories of information (Creswell, 2007). Open coding begins close to the data and through comparison and grouping, the codes become organized into concepts. See Figure 3-4 for a list of open codes from an excerpt of an interview. Concepts, often derived from grouping observed actions or statements, then make up categories and subcategories, or groups of ideas that are related to one another. See Table 3-5 for an example of how the open codes in Figure 3-4 were grouped into categories and subcategories.

The second step in grounded theory analysis is axial coding. Axial coding is one step removed from the data – the work is with the categories developed during open coding. Axial coding began with relating subcategories to categories. See Figure 3-5 for the categories in the axial coding and Figure 3-6 for a photo of one page from an interview with open coding and axial coding. Relationships among categories were refined through the next steps in axial coding: the identification of the core phenomenon and the creation of the following categories around the core phenomenon: causal conditions, strategies, intervening conditions, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). See Figure 3-7 for an outline of the core phenomenon and categories. Then, dimensions of categories were specified (See Table 6) and properties of dimensions were clarified (See Table 7). The end result of the previous two steps was a thematic analysis or concept development, in this case, the concept of negotiating support for students with disabilities included in secondary general education language arts classes. Theory production entailed further analysis and explication of the relationships among the categories, especially in terms of the relationships among various categories, dimensions and properties in yet another step.
The final step in grounded theory analysis is selective coding, in which the researcher develops statements about how the categories in the model are related. First, I developed and named a core phenomenon that encompassed the other categories: Negotiating Support. Then, I coded the dataset for the grounded theory categories. Next, I developed statements or propositions about the relationships among the categories, dimensions and properties. These statements comprised the theory. Usually, the theory is shared toward the end of a study and it can assume several forms, including a narrative statement (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), a visual (Morrow & Smith, 1995), or a series of hypotheses or propositions (Creswell & Brown, 1992). I created a series of propositions. Questioning the data -- that is, asking questions such as why, where, how and when -- facilitated theory emergence (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Memoing of secondary data sources and of the evolving theory throughout provided useful data to support the development of categories and codes. The theory is discussed in Chapter 5.

**Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness**

In research within a constructivist paradigm, research quality concerns about internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity in the positivist tradition are not consistent with the goals of the research and quality or rigor is judged according to authenticity and trustworthiness. Strategies that ensured the quality of my study included: triangulation, member checking, rich descriptions, peer debriefing, and the researcher’s journal. The term triangulation is used to refer to the collection of multiple pieces of evidence. I collected interview, observation, and artifact data. Member checking, or ensuring my data and interpretations accurately represented the thoughts of the participants, was conducted throughout the interview process by checking my understandings against participants’ understandings in the interviews and through the concept maps. Specifically, the third interview entailed participant verification of the supports for students with disabilities I identified in their interviews and observations and participant
clarification of my understanding of their practices to support students with disabilities. In the fourth interview, participants considered and commented on an emergent version of the grounded theory. Through in-depth examination of the data, I developed explicit and rich descriptions of the participants, their beliefs about the needs of students with learning disabilities and how these beliefs related to the supports they provided for those students with disabilities. To reduce personal bias, I employed peer-debriefing measures by: conferring regularly with my advisor and colleagues and comparing my coding to the coding of other doctoral students who agreed to assist me by independently coding a portion of my data. Specifically, after I developed the categories, 7 doctoral students each coded 2 interviews for the categories (almost half the dataset). Students were asked to code in chunks rather than line by line or word by word. I then compared their coding with my coding. I looked for patterns of difference, that is, I looked for examples of the second coder consistently choosing a different code when I chose a particular code. I discussed patterns of difference with the other coders, and ultimately, this process was enormously helpful in refining my codes and theoretical categories. Finally, I kept a reflective journal to help me recognize my biases, and I referred to it during the coding and analysis process.

**Limitations**

Limitations to this study included the small number of participants. It is possible that the theory would change if data from more teachers were added, or more connections among the properties and dimensions of the categories would emerge. Another limitation is the varying ability of individual teachers to articulate their beliefs and practices. There were differences among the four teachers in terms of how long they considered questions posed to them in the interviews, how naturally verbose or taciturn they were, and how well they were able to remain focused on particular points of discussion that affected the quality, kind and amount of
interview data generated. Finally, it would have been beneficial to perform a second round of double coding with the refined code set.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
<th>Class Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># students with disabilities/ # students in class</td>
<td># students with disabilities/ # students in class</td>
<td># students with disabilities/ # students in class</td>
<td># students with disabilities/ # students in class</td>
<td># students with disabilities/ # students in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie English 9 Honors 1/20</td>
<td>English 9 Honors 0/26</td>
<td>English 9 9/27</td>
<td>English 9 12/27</td>
<td>English 9 Honors 1/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Reading 7 8/14</td>
<td>Language Arts 7 3/23</td>
<td>Language Arts 7 4/22</td>
<td>Language Arts 7 2/23</td>
<td>Language Arts 7 3/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica Language Arts 6 Gifted 0/23</td>
<td>Language Arts 7 Gifted 2/21</td>
<td>Language Arts 8 Gifted 1/19</td>
<td>Speech 1/19</td>
<td>Executive Internship 0/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-2. Teacher Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># years teaching experience</th>
<th># years teaching Language Arts</th>
<th>Other subjects taught</th>
<th># years teaching in inclusive setting</th>
<th>Special education courses</th>
<th>Special education workshops</th>
<th># Hours per week consulting with special educator</th>
<th>Degrees</th>
<th>Certification Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 workshop in teacher ed program</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>BA, Public Relations; MEd, English Education</td>
<td>English, 6-12; Journalism, 6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Driver’s Ed, Journalism</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Many workshops</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>MEd, Education</td>
<td>English, Speech, Journalism, Driver’s Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Intensive Reading</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>BA, English</td>
<td>Secondary English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Gifted Enrichment</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Gifted Endorsement (5 classes)</td>
<td>Approximately 1 3-hour workshop per year</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>BA, English; MEd, Education</td>
<td>English 6-12, Gifted Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-3. Data Collection Timetable, 2009-10 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Monica</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-5</td>
<td>INT 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-6</td>
<td>OBS 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-10</td>
<td>OBS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-17</td>
<td>OBS 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-18</td>
<td>OBS 4</td>
<td>11-18 INT 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11-19 INT 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12-01 OBS 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>01-14 OBS 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>INT 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-30</td>
<td>OBS 5</td>
<td>3-30 OBS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-01</td>
<td>INT 2</td>
<td>3-30 OBS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>01-20 OBS 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-14</td>
<td>OBS 6</td>
<td>3-31 OBS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>01-14 OBS 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>04-14 INT 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>04-15 OBS 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>04-14 INT 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>04-15 Nora’s Team Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>04-27 OBS 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>04-28 INT 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>04-28 OBS 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>04-28 OBS 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>05-04 OBS 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>05-05 OBS 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-07</td>
<td>INT 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-10</td>
<td>INT 1</td>
<td>(Redo)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>05-28 INT 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>05-29 OBS 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>06-01 INT 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-14</td>
<td>INT 4</td>
<td>06-07 INT 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>06-15 INT 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>06-07 INT 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>06-15 INT 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>06-15 INT 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>06-15 INT 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-4. Data Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Monica</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1900 = 31.6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribed Pages</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summed Pages</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>554 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time in</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minutes per interview</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interview Time</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1148 = 19.1 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Maps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time in</td>
<td>829 min =</td>
<td>688 min =</td>
<td>665 min =</td>
<td>866 min =</td>
<td>50.7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field</td>
<td>13.8 hours</td>
<td>11.5 hours</td>
<td>11.1 hours</td>
<td>14.4 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Code</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Subcategory</td>
<td>Sub-subcategory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum – undefined</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs about</td>
<td>Nature of subject area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of her approach– real world texts</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs about</td>
<td>How students learn this subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinds of texts – commercials, propaganda, speeches, and movies</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Beliefs about</td>
<td>Beliefs about curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit topic - persuasion</td>
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<td>Way to support student with disabilities: one on one help</td>
<td>Supports for Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>Affective/Academic</td>
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<td>Intensity of Instruction</td>
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<td>Responsibility for whole child</td>
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84
Table 3-6. Continued

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<td>Strategy Instruction</td>
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<td>Influence on beliefs</td>
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<td>Dimensions</td>
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<td>Considerations for Specifying the Property: Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>What is the belief? What is the content of the belief?</td>
<td>Explicit teacher statement; inference from statement/action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>How strongly does the teacher hold the belief?</td>
<td>Repetition of the belief, valence of words describing the belief, explicit statement of strength of belief, length of time talking about the belief, degree to which belief can be inferred from practice</td>
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<td>Specificity</td>
<td>2 aspects: 1. How explicitly stated is the belief? Is there a distinction drawn between two similar beliefs? 2. Does the belief pertain to a single student, a specific kind of student, a class? Is it about the subject area in general or a particular portion? Does it apply in all situations or a defined situation?</td>
<td>Analysis of specificity of expression of the belief in terms of the words used to limit the belief; specific verbal cues such as “in general,” “for this student,” etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>Does the teacher connect the beliefs to other beliefs, explicitly or implicitly? Are there logical connections between teacher beliefs?</td>
<td>Causation words, i.e., because I believe x, I believe that y; consistency of expressed beliefs across interviews; analysis of content/nature of beliefs</td>
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<td>Practices</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>How often is the support provided?</td>
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<td>Temporality</td>
<td>Is the support provided before, during or after instruction?</td>
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<td>Duration</td>
<td>How long does the provision of the support last in a particular instance? How long is the provision of the support extended throughout the year?</td>
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<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Is the support provided each time a need a particular need is perceived?</td>
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Table 3-7. Continued

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<td>Reliability</td>
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<td>Is the support the same, and provided in the same way, each time a particular need is perceived?</td>
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<td>Specificity</td>
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<td>Is the support designed for a specific task/goal or can it be generalized to several tasks/goals? Is the task/goal proximal or distal? Is the support designed for a specific student or is it used for several students? Is the support designed for only students with disabilities or is it used with the whole class?</td>
<td>Observation, teacher report, analysis</td>
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<td>Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Was the support adjusted or modified based on student response? Can it be adjusted to individual student needs?</td>
<td>Observation, teacher report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamicism</td>
<td></td>
<td>How convincing is the rationale for the use of the support?</td>
<td>Teacher report, number of reasons, evidence for reasons, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the grounds for the rationale? Is the support used linked to stated student needs? If so, how tightly is it linked?</td>
<td>Teacher report, number of reasons, evidence for reasons, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td></td>
<td>How explicitly stated are the student’s needs?</td>
<td>Teacher report, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificity of</td>
<td></td>
<td>How explicitly articulated is the rationale for the specific support? Is the rationale for the use of the support linked to student needs relative to a specific task, a kind of task, a broader skills area, a specific student, students with specific characteristics, experiences with past students, or an observed instance for a specific student?</td>
<td>Teacher report, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3-1. Photo of set of index cards of identified supports prepared for one participant.
Figure 3-2. Photo of emergent theory presented to one participant in Interview Four
Figure 3-3. Field notes example.
Curriculum – undefined
Definition of her approach
Kinds of texts
Unit topic
Area of focus
Example of a text
Students need – make transition to high school
Class purpose
Goal – prepare for the future
State tests
Way to help
Student needs – tied to test
Planning – tied to student needs
Approach to learning, way students learn
Philosophy of education
Value – student agency
Way to support students with disabilities
Student needs
Way to support all students
Student agency – important
Law – IDEA
Way to support students
Trial and error – way to meet students’ needs
Consequences
Problem
Characteristics of student
Student problem
Way to support student with disabilities: one on one help
Student worry
Student feeling
Teacher insight
Way to accommodate
Way to support – use student’s strengths
Way to support – motivate
Way to support – different ways to meet the same goals
Requirements for students, goals
Student problem, attitude, value
School support
School rule
Student problem
Way to support that failed
Way to help

Figure 3-4. Open codes from pages 1-4 of Maggie’s Interview One
Figure 3-5. Axial Coding categories and colored flags used to code interviews.
Figure 3-6. Photo of interview page with open and axial coding.
Figure 3-7. Outline of grounded theory axial coding
CHAPTER 4
TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between secondary Language Arts teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with learning disabilities included in their classes and the supports they provided for those students. Through interviews and observations with participant teachers I was able to explore teachers’ beliefs about supporting students with disabilities in meeting the challenges of secondary level general education Language Arts classes, and how those beliefs were related to the ways they helped students with disabilities make progress towards instructional goals.

Research questions included:

1. How are secondary general education Language Arts teachers’ beliefs related to the supports for learning they provide for students with disabilities included in their classes?

2. What are the supports for learning secondary general education Language Arts teachers provide for students with learning disabilities included in their classes?

3. What kinds of beliefs are related to teacher practice in the area of providing support for included students with disabilities?

4. Are there discernible patterns in the relationships among teachers’ beliefs and practices?

The purpose of this chapter is to present data collected on teachers’ beliefs and their practices to support students with disabilities included in their secondary level general education Language Arts classes. These data reflect teachers’ understandings of how their beliefs – about themselves, their students, and their subject area – are related to the practices they use to support students with disabilities. Following a description of the school, each of the four teachers’ data is presented separately. Each teacher description begins with a description of the teacher’s classroom followed by a narrative constructed from the teacher’s own words that provides detail
about the particular context of that teacher’s class and the teachers’ beliefs, including: the course content and goals, influences on the class, and students with disabilities and the class. The teacher narrative sections are followed by a discussion that ties the data to the analytical categories identified in Chapter 3.

The teacher narrative sections were constructed from the teachers’ own words and included interview data from all of the four teacher interviews for each teacher. There were four teacher narratives for each teacher: My Class, Influences on My Class, Students with Disabilities and My Class, and I Believe. For each of the four narrative sections for each teacher, first, I read all four interviews to find data related to the section. Next, I copied and pasted all relevant data into the section. I gathered data on each section for one teacher and one section at a time. When I had gathered data for all of the sections for one teacher, I considered how I could edit and shape the narratives to convey the teacher’s ideas in a way that was not only logical for the reader, but also consistent with what the teachers said. The structure of the sections grew out of the teachers’ ideas and was not imposed upon their ideas. All words in the narratives are teachers’ own complete utterances. I preserved the context of teachers’ original remarks as much as possible and represented their viewpoints as accurately as I could, using the teachers’ own words. Finally, I looked for sentences that qualified or contradicted information in the narratives and removed anything that seemed ambiguous or that the teacher had expressed unclear or conflicting ideas about. Sentences from all four interviews were combined in the sections to create the narratives.

The teacher narrative sections are followed by a discussion that ties the data to the analytical categories identified in Chapter 3. The analytical categories were derived from teachers’ beliefs and practices identified in the interviews and observations. The discussion is organized by teachers’ practices. Practices teachers used to support the learning of students with
disabilities are presented in four subsections: procedural, behavioral, affective and psychological, and academic. Teachers’ expressed beliefs were organized into several categories in the analysis, but are discussed within the practices subsections as they were relevant to the specific practices subsection. The beliefs categories that emerged from the data were teachers’ beliefs: about students with disabilities and how they learn, about students in general and how they learn, about themselves as teachers and their roles and responsibilities, and about language arts – what it is and how students progress in it. Connections between teachers’ practices and teachers’ beliefs are identified at the end of each practices subsection. Practices and beliefs did not neatly correspond to one another in exclusive categories; certain beliefs appear to undergird several types of supports and beliefs are discussed in each instance they were relevant. All names are pseudonyms.

The School

Jefferson Secondary School sprawls across a rolling hillside in a small southern city. Athletic fields and grassy meadows border the long, low classroom buildings on one side; a quiet neighborhood of one family homes abuts the campus on the other. Massive live oak trees heavy with Spanish moss line a lazy creek that ambivalently meanders through the campus, taking first one tack, then another. Palm trees and tropical vines peep out here and there. A small bridge crosses the creek, connecting classrooms lower on the hillside to those at the top of the hill. Classrooms are contained in one-story concrete block buildings, 5 classrooms to each building, that radiate from a central walkway. Entry to the classrooms is from an exterior corridor; classroom windows look out on grassy areas between the classroom buildings. Vegetable gardens planted by students as class projects grow in the green areas. The heat is oppressive for much of the school year and the hum of the air conditioners blends with the sounds of the birds, crickets, and bull frogs that make their homes in the gurgling creek. Students laden with
backpacks mill about during the change of classes, cell phones in hand. They shout greetings to friends, make plans for later, and exchange books and notes. The smell of fresh cut grass on a struggling little breeze almost refreshes those outside. Beauty berry, camellia, jasmine, azalea, hibiscus, and crape myrtle each make an appearance, each in its season, here and there throughout the campus.

Although at first glance the school setting seemed idyllic, the school buildings were aged and were in the process of being entirely replaced. The old air conditioners often failed to achieve a comfortable temperature within the school buildings and condensation often formed on interior walls. Several classes took place in mobiles at the rear of the campus.

During my investigation, the school was implementing the first stage of a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. This entailed the identification of ten students who were at risk of failure at each grade level. Typically, the grade level lists included several students with disabilities, but were not exclusive to students with disabilities. Students were identified for the list due to low state test scores. Teachers kept an especially close eye on those students in their classes. Teachers also kept logs recording how often they “checked in” with those students, mostly about whether they had completed assignments and were attending classes. Teachers were also required to meet in grade level teams and discuss students’ performance across each other’s classes; these discussions focused on all students, but a special effort was made to pay attention to students on the list.

The school is on a block schedule. Classes meet for 100 minutes on alternate days except for Mondays. All classes meet for 50 minutes on Mondays.
Maggie

Maggie’s Classroom

Maggie’s classroom is the last one at the end of one of the external corridors. Round painted steel tables in the area outside the classrooms provide space for students to gather or have a snack. The room is rectangular, with the whiteboard taking up one of the short ends immediately to the left of the entrance. Blue lockers line the opposite wall. Towards the rear, boxes are stacked high. At the rear, there are overflowing bookshelves. A small teacher’s office opens from the right rear corner. It contains a computer, desk, and 2 chairs. There is long counter against the wall on the right side of the room that looks like it was installed to hold about 6 classroom computers at one point. Student desks face the center of the room: 6 rows of 2 desks on each of the long sides of the room. In the large space formed by the desks in the center of the room, there is a rectangular table that holds papers, files and the teacher’s laptop, connected to a projector aimed at the white board. Student work and photos are displayed on the bulletin boards above the long counter. The day’s agenda and homework are written on the whiteboard. Maggie stands in the hallway greeting students as they arrive in twos and threes. Students know what they’re about as they put papers in one drawer, get materials from another, and look at the board to see what’s on the agenda for the day. The atmosphere is casual and unrushed, but focused.

This is Maggie’s 4th year teaching. She has a BA in Public Relations and an MEd in English education. She had one workshop during her teacher preparation on teaching students with disabilities, and she consults with the special education support staff 1-2 hours per week.

The Concept Map Maggie drew is at the end of this chapter, with the other teachers’. I included them in this chapter rather than Chapter 3 because they comprise the teachers’ own analysis and representation of their approach to planning instruction. In this kind of research, participants are considered to be contributors to the research and members of the research team.
My Class

I teach Language Arts – at least that’s what I like to call my class. I like to do a lot of real world text. Right now, we’re doing a persuasion unit, so we’re looking at commercials, propaganda, speeches and movies. We hit literature, but we did it in an autobiography way so we looked at a lot of autobiographies. I try to make it tie to things they will have to do in the future.

We have in 9th grade the FCAT exam in March. As we move toward FCAT, my honors class goes in a different direction and my standard class stays a little more focused on reading comprehension in order to do well on the test and that’s just a logistical choice, I guess. I think we try to approach it in a way that is very independent learning, very student directed, so that whenever students have a topic that they are to write about or think about, they have a lot of agency - what are we going to choose to read, what are we going to choose to write. That’s how I am able to cater to students with disabilities as well as students who feel that they need to be challenged in a different way. I guess I try to let it come from them.

I don’t think it’s so much about the book that I assign, or even the vocabulary they have to learn, or the papers they have to write, but I think it’s about making them critical thinkers and equipping them to function in the world. You know, my biggest reason why I became a teacher is because there are so many messages that are coming at kids, like from so many different directions. I think I teach them to think critically about the world. I think language arts is a place that gives me a lot of freedom. I just sort of pull from what’s going on, so how I decide is usually by what I’m interested in at the time. So, for example, right now we’re doing a project on homelessness. The goal is not necessarily to teach them about the issue of homelessness. That is part of it, but it’s more to give them tools on how to be an advocate whenever they’re in the real world. So, we’re learning to talk to people who might be different from us, and how to donate
services for a purpose, and a little bit about self-sacrifice. And we are reading local news articles about the topic, and newsletters published by the woman who runs Home Van.

I try to give the same thing to everyone, and just modify it a little bit. For example, if my second period class is extremely task oriented, and they work really really fast, so for that class, if I’m doing a lesson that involves reading and maybe writing a summary of what they’ve read, then I know I need to add something extra in there to keep them focused because they’ll get through that a lot faster than anyone else. So, I might have to add in something interactive like a speaking component to it as well. And then, for a class that struggles with reading comprehension, I might have to say, okay, rather than everyone reading the paper individually, I might have to be like, read aloud in pairs. So, at the end, every student has gotten pretty much the same material, it’s just a different way of getting it. So, we have the idea of advocacy, and then homelessness is our route to get there. And we’re reading these articles, we’re reading narratives about people who have been homeless, biographies, and we are writing our own biographies and we are: reading, writing, and speaking; we are interviewing people who received services. They’re going to take their biographies and they’re going to bind them at Target Copy, and then sell them for proceeds to give to the shelter. [The kids are writing a biography of] someone who received services at St. Francis House.

[I saw you were teaching the inverted pyramid when I was in the last class, and so that was part of the news - ] Yes, understanding how to read a news article. I would never have a class where we learn about the inverted pyramid in a day. There has to be a so what, how do I use this, how does this apply to the real world.

I think that people who may have had bad experiences that weren’t as positive, when they were in language arts, might think that English is a boring class where you’re made to read about
something you don’t care about and write an essay that you might not like, or it’s not really relevant to the real world. The whole world is about what you do in English. That’s how we communicate, by talking to each other, and by writing things down, and by reading things that each other write. Language is how we relate to each other, and it applies to - everything we could possibly ever do involves some sort of communication. The purpose of English is to learn how to communicate. In anything that you choose to do, you’re going to be communicating with people and learning how to see different perspectives.

**Influences on My Class**

I use the Sunshine State Standards. Oftentimes, whenever I’m doing a lesson plan, I’ll look and make sure that I have things on there. There’s a lot of stuff I don’t naturally think about, so I just go back and fill it in.

I know that a lot of times kind of going along with school initiatives or state, there’s things in our classroom that maybe wouldn’t be there if they weren’t asked of us to be there, and so it’s like a negotiation between what’s expected of us by whatever is set forth and what we actually believe. Maybe negotiation is a good word for it, negotiating what’s important and weighing out our beliefs of what students need to know and what the state or schools say they may need. And you can go through a procedural task and not actually show any academic learning. It’s almost like how do you decide what to teach. How do you pick content in the first place? It’s a huge thing. All these voices telling us what to do, and our personal reasons of why we’re here in the first place. Everyone listens to other voices to do our jobs appropriately because we’re being checked up on all the time.

Kids become good readers, good writers, and good consumers of media by a lot of repetition and practice. I give a lot of time to independent reading and then finding ways for kids
to talk about what they’re reading, and do projects on what they’re reading. Enjoying what you’re doing is a huge part, in proficiency.

[I structure their tasks] around their own interests or wonderings. When we do our fiction segment we talk about similar things in class, characterization and skills they should learn like how to write a paper on a book, literary criticism. But as far as what to read, that should come from them, not me. But sometimes it’s useful to read common things.

**Students with Disabilities and My Class**

I think if a teacher is patient and really paying attention, they’ll know when a student understands, especially a student with disabilities. If you’re already aware of what the disability is, then you’re kind of looking for clues. Like, I have a student who struggles with his processing time, so I already know ahead of time that I’m going to have to say the instructions slower, I’m going to have to give him a little more time to do it, and I’m going to have to check in with him. I can’t just assume that he’s got it after I give him the information. So, just being aware before you even given them something to do is huge, and I think if you are aware and you’re patient and you’re actually listening to them, then you’ll be able to commit to understanding and get them there.

I have one student who couldn’t be reflective on what he had learned. He had trouble understanding whenever I asked him, “Okay, tell me what we’ve learned this semester and what you’ve learned as a person through these assignments.” And his response was, “Well, I already know everything.” And it was hard for me to communicate what I wanted him to do: think back before you learned all this, and what did you learn in your time with me, so that’s tough. It wouldn’t be the same if he was in a math class. That’s something that is finite, you know it or you don’t, versus English, it’s hard to say, “Okay, I used to not know this, but now I know that, and that helps me to understand this other thing to see the connection.”
Timmy is the type of person that I 100% have to stay on. I cannot relieve myself of the responsibility or he’ll do poorly. He made a D this nine weeks on his report card, and I was putting that into my grades, and I had this tinge of if I had stayed on him 100%, he could have made a B or a C, but I kind of stressed at the end of the year and relieved myself a little and saw his grade go down. And that happens on an everyday basis, too. For example, their final exam was the reflection essay, on everything we had done in the second semester. He was writing and the prompt said to address each point: what did you learn, what work did you do or not do, and there were 5 points. And he numbered his rather than writing in narrative format. So, I went to him and said, instead of saying this isn’t an essay, I said I’d like him to write three paragraphs. He took his numbers and wrote them as paragraphs and I accepted them both and gave him a grade as if he had done the whole essay. He didn’t really write the whole essay, but I graded him as if he had because that was the most I could have expected of him given his capabilities. I felt that was the most fair way to assess him.

I think it’s the most important part of my job, to get to know them and accommodate them, not in the educational way, but as a human: having respect for them, paying attention to what they need and how they react, and if it’s making a difference for them or not. In fact, I would say it goes to a fault with me sometimes. I don’t know if I have enough rigor since I love them so much. You make a judgment call at some point about when you need to kick a kid in the butt about some things, and I do get there, but I feel like that’s the most important thing I can give them, is an adult they feel actually respects them and cares. No one has paid attention to them before in that way. They’ve paid attention to them, but to their test taking ability, not who they actually are and what they care about.
I want him to get to the place where he could achieve to the same level as his peers. I want to believe that he can go to college one day and do well, but I don’t know if that’s a realistic goal. It’s so hard. Because on the one hand, I work with people who say, I hold a high standard because the world holds a high standard. For me, this isn’t the real world, it’s 9th grade and this is his chance to learn how to be successful there. You have to build a good relationship with him and then go and explain instruction to him personally. I let him read and I let him draw and then I go over and tell him what to do. I’ll ask him questions about what he’s reading and what he’s thinking about. He comes in every Monday to see me after school for our tutoring.

He needs to force himself to think about what’s going on. Sometimes, he sees the assignments as so huge and boggling and he has all this work to do, and [I] kind of cut it down for him a little bit, help him see a beginning, middle, and end.

Providing a scribe or reader, I have to organize that with Dr. Moon ahead of time, and she’s really helpful if I need anything. Same thing with extra people, providing help, it’s organizational and I wish I had it 100% of the time, and you really do have to try to get it. It’s important that a student has a scribe so that what he cognitively can actually do is evident there, so that his disability doesn’t affect the products. If he has trouble reading a long passage of text or understanding instructions, I don’t want that one problem to affect him showing how much he has learned or that he can pass. What I taught him, that’s what I want to come out, not the disability. Laying it out ahead of time and setting goals, like for this unit, this is what I want my kids to be able to do, to be able to use these vocabulary words correctly and be able to organize an essay based on this formant, or whatever. One thing we worked on in our writing was varying sentence structure. I know that that kid knows how to vary sentence structure, but what I don’t want to test is his ability to use his hands to write the correct words. So, if the support is then
using a laptop, then I can more accurately assess what is going on. I can see he can use different sentences, and that’s the real thing I’m trying to measure.

And it’s so hard, too, it always seems that I have to work on sentence structure with this kid and vocabulary with this kid and spelling with this kid. It’s so huge and maybe not everybody has a problem with sentence structure. One kid writes beautiful varied sentences, why would I want that student wasting three or four weeks of her life when she already knows how to do it? I’ve been trying to think how I can develop curriculum with kids that is more individualized, almost where they decide what the weaknesses are and that’s what we work on together. And practice, but practice with feedback because if you don’t have any feedback, you don’t know what you’re doing wrong.

It’s kind of interesting how RTI is currently organized at our school, like communication with other teachers. Logs, that’s connected to that program as well. And homeroom check in is part of the log thing. And I would say that these things are, the reason why I do it, the first reason why is because I was told to do it, which is actually a good thing cause I might not have conceptualized doing it in the way that it’s done. It’s like a written record of what you do, and when it ends and you’re at meeting with these other teachers, then you tried X, Y, and Z and see if it helped and then change. One of the most helpful things is each teacher is responsible for three to four kids in particular that are kind of like on their radar, as high needs.

The writing partnership is the coolest thing I do all year. Students would write an essay or whatever and then the college students would [give feedback]. The writing process is so individual, and it really takes reading every word that they write, thinking in your head: where are they going with this and what mistakes did the make here, did they put this comma here, then why did they put it here, and that sort of thought process is time consuming and it’s something
that I can do and I love doing it, but the fact that I have such help with the writing partnership and so many people looking at it with me, it’s huge. I think that’s a problem faced by English teachers, we have such big groups of kids. I have 120 students and we have to take them from these low levels to what they’re expected to do by the end of the year, and all of this other stuff thrown at them at the same time. And other teachers say they don’t teach writing because they don’t have the time, and what happens is the kids don’t get better at it.

Multimedia is important because it addresses different learning needs. It gives students something to look at if they can’t catch everything I’m saying, and that’s really important and it connects them to what they’re used to as well.

So it was me and Dr. Moon and we sat together for some vocabulary I wanted my kids to learn, and she had the great idea that the kids could act it out because there were slight differences in the words that they had to show. She helped me come up with the idea for that lesson and was also there for that lesson. Whenever the kids were getting together trying to figure out what to do, she was going around with me checking in on the kids. So, me standing up or just handing them a list of words, I don’t feel that is good teaching; but, getting them in groups to think how to act, that’s good teaching.

I Believe

I believe English is not too hard for anybody. I believe English is accessible to anyone, no matter the level of disability, because I believe there’s so much variation in what you can create and see in language arts that there’s no disability that prevents you from understanding and enjoying what I’m trying to get across; it’s very flexible, very workable.

And it’s an individual thing, too, you can mold it into what you want it to be, so I don’t believe a disability has any bearing over what you can understand in language arts. It’s all about
communication, there’s always a way to communicate something. You might have to be more creative, but there’s always a way to get to that.

I believe it’s really important that kids feel safe in the classroom, and that they feel like they can say something and not be made to feel stupid or wrong, and that they feel supported. My role is not to stand in front of the classroom and tell them everything, but it’s to help them come to their own understanding, and when they struggle, to be there.

I think everybody tries really hard, and every single teacher loves students. I really believe that.

I would love to have one person who really understands special education, who’s an expert in special education and who would have a regular [meeting with me] to talk about my curriculum and then she can think, she can say, this is not going to work because what about your student who has trouble with whatever. Then give me a technique, tactic, or idea. My English education has just been in English teaching and I love the program. I think that, you know, it was really good for me to do. But I haven’t had any special education training. I think that I’m good enough to – I’m good enough. I’ll say that, I’m good enough. But I think that a professional could really help me with those areas where I don’t know exactly what I’m doing. It almost seems like I need another degree to do it, or another person in the room all the time. I say all that, and I don’t think I’m doing a bad job. I think that I’m doing a really good job, but ideally, an ideal situation would be I would have another degree, or I need another special education person that is in my room at least 50% of the time: on the front end, like curriculum wise and in the classroom.

I think that if they don’t have enough in my class, then it’s my shortcoming. I mean, it doesn’t fall on anyone else.
Analysis of Maggie’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities

The analysis section for each teacher will include the practices the teacher used to support the learning of students with disabilities in their classes and a discussion of how those practices are linked to the beliefs the teacher expressed.

Maggie identified a number of ways to support students with disabilities included in her classes. Supports she provided are discussed below in terms of types of supports and the kinds of beliefs she expressed that were linked to specific ways to support the learning of students with disabilities.

Procedural supports for learning

Maggie provided several supports to her included students with disabilities that can be thought of as procedural, or supports that assisted students with procedures related to completing tasks. These kinds of supports are focused on helping students understand the task and organize their approach to the task. Maggie said that students with disabilities often need to have a task explained multiple times, in multiple ways. For example, during one observation, Maggie explained the task of writing a letter to the whole class. She supported her explanation with a handout containing the assignment steps and she also a projected image of the handout on a screen during her explanation. When she finished answering questions from the group, she sat down next to Timmy and talked to him for several minutes about the task until he was able to explain the task to her in his own words. She also helped him get started by writing two sentences with him, thus helping him both to organize the task and to get started.

Another procedural kind of support is continually encouraging the student to perform the task. In the same example, throughout the 100 minute class, Maggie frequently checked in on Timmy’s progress and told him what he was doing well and what he could improve. On other occasions, Maggie provided models of finished products, templates to help with the organization.
of content, and helped with brainstorming ideas for writing. Maggie said it is also important to provide students with disabilities with written instructions and to clarify directions. Finally, Maggie was “in constant contact with Mom, I email her and call her all the time” to support Timmy in completing projects and assignments at home.

The use of procedural supports to support the learning of students with disabilities can be linked to several of Maggie’s beliefs. Maggie’s rationale for providing procedural supports explicitly included the belief that students with disabilities can be successful if they have “someone to come in and intervene, and check on him, remind him of simple things.” She said, “This kid has a disability that prevents him being organized and getting work completed,” revealing her beliefs about how students with disabilities may struggle in her class. “He needs to force himself to think about what’s going on. And a lot of times when I go to him, I’ll say, ‘Timmy, what are you doing? What should you be doing?’ and that forces him to pay attention.”

Maggie believed students must practice in order to learn and so it was essential that she find ways to support them in completing tasks. She believed “a lot of repetition and practice” was necessary for students to become good readers, good writers, and good consumers of media, and so her use of procedural supports is also related to her beliefs about how students progress within the subject area of language arts. Because Maggie believed students must practice in order to learn, she therefore found ways to support practice. Maggie’s taking this responsibility upon herself is related to her beliefs about herself as a teacher and her own roles and responsibilities: “My job is more of a guide and a support. It’s to help them come to their own understanding, and when they struggle, to be there.” Maggie’s use of procedural supports to get students started on tasks and continually checking in on their progress was also related to her beliefs about assessment. Because she saw her tasks and assignments mostly as formative, that is, their
purpose was to provide a learning experience rather than to test how much students already knew, providing help and advice during the performance of a task did not present a conflict as it might for a teacher who believed students should be assessed on what they are able to do on their own. She helped students do the assignment, rather than remediating after they failed.

**Behavioral supports**

The behavioral supports category included teacher behaviors related to ensuring or checking on student behaviors such as attending class, completing assignments, and conducting themselves appropriately. Teachers included these kinds of actions as part of what they did to provide support for students with disabilities. Many of these supports were required of teachers within the context of the school-wide RTI implementation. RTI in this school was in the early stages of implementation and did not include any academic support. Rather, ten students who were at risk of failure were identified at each grade level. Teachers kept an especially close eye on those students in their classes and they kept logs recording how often they “checked in” with those students, mostly about whether they had completed assignments and were attending classes. Teachers were also required to meet in grade level teams and discuss students’ performance across each other’s classes; these discussions focused on all students, but a special effort was made to pay attention to students on the list. Maggie said she complied with RTI requirements, and that she made a special effort to keep track of the students on the list. Timmy was on Maggie’s list, and she said:

> I think that me staying on his butt all the time is what has really helped him... Sometimes throughout the week we’ll talk about grades, what is going on in your life, to establish some sort of relationship... You keep up with their grades, you email their teachers regularly to see how they are doing in the classes and you contact mom and dad.

Other behavioral supports Maggie provided on her own included performing a systematic, regular review of student progress, behavior and attendance for students she had identified as
struggling in her class and students with disabilities. She believed that students often “really just need the extra push” and that it was her responsibility to do everything she could to keep up with the student’s progress. “I feel really bad that moments like that probably passed me by all the time,” she said, referring to the time before she developed a system to track students so regularly.

Complying with the RTI initiative was related to several of Maggie’s beliefs; most obviously, her beliefs about her roles and responsibilities as a teacher included compliance with school policies. Her provision of the RTI supports was also related to her beliefs about how students with disabilities learn in that she believed establishing relationships with students with disabilities and making them believe teachers cared was critical for motivating them to perform in class: “I think it’s the most important part of my job, to get to know them and accommodate them, not in the educational way, but as a human: having respect for them, paying attention to what they need and how they react, and if it’s making a difference for them or not.” Paying attention to students’ attendance and asking them about their assignments were some of the ways Maggie’s practice reflected her beliefs that having respect for students and paying attention to them was important; these beliefs also affected supports described in the next section.

**Affective and psychological supports**

Maggie’s concern for her students as human beings permeated her approach to teaching and she spoke several times of providing supports that can be thought of as related to students’ emotional or psychological well-being. Supports in the affective and psychological supports category are related to students’ relationships with teachers, student emotional well-being, and student motivation.

Affective supports for Maggie’s students were centered on building strong relationships with them. She said that Timmy, in the beginning of the year, was withdrawn and refused to do any work. She put a lot of effort into understanding the reasons for Timmy’s performance and
figuring out how to help him. She said, “I guess it’s a motivational problem that’s affected by feeling inadequate and having high social problems.” One strategy she figured out to support him was to let him have some choice within the structure of her assignments. For example, “he did a writing assignment in a comic book format.” Maggie also figured out that within her online writing partnership activity, Timmy was greatly intimidated by the idea of putting his work on the internet for someone else to read and respond to. So, she “quickly realized I had to restructure the expectations for him, and so rather than even typing it, he’s actually writing it onto his drawings,” and his writing partner comes to meet him instead of communicating with him online. In order to help Timmy build confidence and feel comfortable doing the task, Maggie found a way to change the task both in terms of how Timmy would complete the task and how he would receive feedback. Maggie said that her willingness to work with Timmy’s strengths to help him complete the assignment contributed to the building of trust between them, and she attributed the change in his attitude towards work in her class to that trust: “But I had to prove that to him, by committing to meet with him, and change that assignment, and slowing things down. I think if I wouldn’t have done those things, I wouldn’t hardly see anything out of him. I wouldn’t hardly get any work out of him.” Maggie also made an effort to look for patterns in students’ behavior that might indicate a need for emotional support: “sleeping in class, social things like if there were people being ostracized or boyfriend and girlfriend stuff happens a lot. I know it’s crazy. It affects things.” Maggie phoned parents to alert them to changes in students’ behavior and talked to students about emotional challenges they faced.

Finally, Maggie engendered student motivation by incorporating opportunities for student choice into her coursework and using multimedia. Even though these were things Maggie did for all of her students, she spoke of them in the context of supports for students with disabilities.
Students were often allowed to choose their own novels within parameters Maggie set. Maggie used movie clips in class and often brought in a mobile laptop lab so that each student could work on a computer to create products that incorporated images and movies. Even though teachers at the school each have their own webpage on the school’s website, Maggie said students did not often visit teachers’ pages, so Maggie created her own Facebook page and posted class assignments there so that her assignment would appear in the students’ Facebook Newsfeeds, something that she knew students checked several times a day. “Already when they come to school, it’s outside of the real world to them. They feel like, okay, I’ll come to school, turn off my phone, turn off my brain.”

The affective and psychological supports Maggie provided were related to several of her beliefs. She believed that for some students with disabilities, it was necessary for her to build a trusting relationship before the student could be helped academically. “It’s like a balance, because you want them to understand the material you’re teaching, but I think a lot of people have to learn they won’t listen to you unless they know you . . . almost like a way to bridge the gap between content and relationship building, not see it as two different things.” She believed it was her responsibility to help students negotiate emotional challenges, “especially with kids that don’t have the ability to stand up for themselves; they can be pressured by any number of things, bullying, getting in trouble.” Maggie also believed it was her responsibility to make her class meaningful and relevant to students, so much so that she violated the school’s ethics code in creating her own Facebook page and communicating with students through Facebook. Finally, Maggie’s affective supports were related to her beliefs about language arts and how students make progress within it. She believed that there were multiple ways to reach her academic goals and that it was important for student motivation for her to provide choices about reading material.
and student products whenever possible. “The idea that you’re curious about this, so I’m going to help you understand it, is different than I know all the answers, so I’m going to give them to you.” Maggie’s consistently incorporated opportunities for student choice into her class, allowing students to choose reading material, products or processes.

**Academic supports**

Academic supports for learning were supports designed to help students with specific academic tasks or goals. Maggie employed several kinds of academic supports with her students with disabilities, including: scaffolding, graphic organizers, differentiation, increased intensity of instruction, and on-the-spot responsiveness. She also used external support to implement some of the supports, including the school support staff and parents. Academic supports were provided before, during and after instruction.

Scaffolding is a term used to describe several teacher behaviors associated with using students’ existing or prior knowledge to help them grasp new concepts or extend their skills (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). Teachers might model a complex task repeatedly, gradually shifting responsibility to the student. Or, teachers might engage students in a discussion and use their partially correct answers to guide them towards understanding or questioning a new concept, thus assisting students to use prior knowledge to master new skills or content. Maggie provided scaffolding to students with disabilities on several occasions. One time, Maggie explained a letter writing assignment to Timmy and went over the steps in completing the assignment several times. Finally, she wrote the first two sentences of the letter with him. This gave him a start to the assignment and also served to provide an organizational structure for the remainder of his written response:

A persuasive letter was the assignment. And he told me verbally what he wanted to do. At the top of the paper was “remember what you wanted to write about.” I gave him a few suggestions of what he wanted to cover. He wanted to write to a comic
book publisher and persuade them to publish his comic. So, I kind of guided his thinking, like these are the things that you do well – gave him a little list. Then I formatted the letter, Dear Blank. Then I put a few key sentences already in there, so he kind of had things to work around. It took time. But it gave him some parameters, I think, so it wasn’t so intimidating – okay, so I have to write this letter. I kind of set it up for him so he could fill in the blanks.

Maggie helped the student think of things to write about, provided the format for the assignment, and helped the student start on the assignment. Maggie explicitly identified the assignment being “intimidating” as part of the student’s difficulty, and so her supports in this instance were targeted at affective needs as well as organizational and academic needs.

Maggie reported that she often used graphic organizers to help students organize content. The use of a graphic organizer is an instance of a support that was developed initially with the needs of one or several students in mind that the teacher would then decide to use with the whole group. An example of the use of a graphic organizer I observed was in a lesson focused on the anatomy of a news article. The graphic organizer was an inverted pyramid, a diagram that conveyed the organizational structure of a news article: most important details at the top, least important at the bottom. Students wrote details from a news article into spaces in an outline of an inverted pyramid. The inverted pyramid helped students stay focused on the task and remember how a news article is structured. It also helped students focus on identifying the most important information, a foundational skill in reading comprehension.

Maggie anticipated the struggles of her students with disabilities and consistently devised ways to support their learning when she planned her lessons. She considered the specific tasks she was planning in light of specific students’ strengths and weaknesses. One way she supported students with disabilities in meeting her goals during planning was differentiating either processes or products. An example of differentiating the process for a student with disabilities
was when she arranged for the student to have access to a scribe while completing an assignment:

Providing a scribe or reader, I have to organize that with Dr. Moon ahead of time, and she’s really helpful if I need anything. Same thing with extra people, providing help, it’s organizational and I wish I had it 100% of the time, and you really do have to try to get it. It’s important that a student has a scribe so that what he cognitively can actually do is evident there, so that his disability doesn’t affect the products. If he has trouble reading a long passage of text or understanding instructions, I don’t want that one problem to affect him showing how much he has learned or that he can pass. What I taught him, that’s what I want to come out, not the disability. Laying it out ahead of time and setting goals, like for this unit, this is what I want my kids to be able to do, to be able to use these vocabulary words correctly and be able to organize an essay based on this format, or whatever.

Maggie stressed the idea of separating specific instructional goals in her course from reading or writing processes that students with disabilities may have difficulty with. She set content related goals that she believed could be measured separately from reading and writing ability. To support students in meeting the goals she set for them, she also provided opportunities for students to differentiate products as long as they met expectations. For instance, she allowed students to choose alternate forms for writing assignments and read books of their own choice within certain parameters.

Maggie structured class time so there were opportunities to provide support to students who needed extra help, and also increased the intensity of instruction through after school tutoring, arranging for support staff at the school to come into class to help students, and participating in a partnership with the local university that paired college students in English Education with students in her classes to provide individual feedback on writing assignments. Students came to her classroom and worked with her students and also communicated with students about their writing online. Maggie stressed the importance of on-the-spot responsiveness for supporting students in class:
You have to anticipate that there are going to be people who aren’t going to understand it. You can’t think that the second you say, “Okay, get to work,” it’s time for you to check out. It’s time for me to be like, okay, I have to be there, because you’re not going to understand this, and you’re not going to understand that. It’s not time to sit down at your desk and start grading papers. At the beginning there is planning and anticipation of student difficulty and at some point of a lesson, a teacher modifies what they’re doing. Even if I plan for students with disabilities, there are points where you can’t anticipate and someone doesn’t understand. You could totally redesign the lesson or you could go talk to the one kid that has a problem with it.

Several connections between Maggie’s academic supports for students with disabilities and her beliefs existed. Maggie’s strong belief that she was responsible for the learning of all of her students was evidenced in the extra time and work she put in to ensure that students had access to several different kinds of supports such as coordinating with school and university personnel. She spent a great deal of time thinking about the needs of her students and planning how to help them be successful. Maggie believed her role encompassed several sorts of activities, including being an after-school tutor and providing individual help during class. Maggie believed that all of her students could improve in English no matter what challenges their disability brought, and she found ways, such as working with a scribe or a reader, that allowed students to demonstrate content knowledge in ways other than reading or writing. Maggie’s belief that content knowledge could be separated from proficiency in the communicative process is related to her beliefs about the nature of language arts, her goals for students, and her beliefs about how students make progress in language arts. Because she had specific, well-articulated goals in the subject area, she was able to allow for multiple ways to meet her goals and discriminate specific ways students struggled. She was thus able to provide support targeted specifically to both student and task.
Nora

Nora’s Classroom

Nora’s classroom is in the middle of one exterior corridor of classrooms. Student work is displayed on bulletin boards lining the corridor and inside the classroom. The room is rectangular; the entry door is in a corner of the room and faces windows overlooking a grassy area. The windows fill the room with natural light. Blackboards and bulletin boards line the walls that meet at the doorway. Left of the windows, the far left corner of the classroom is partitioned to form a teachers’ office/storage area. A teacher’s desk with a computer on it is set catercorner in front of the storage area, facing the door across the room. The wall on the left contains wooden storage lockers, painted blue. There is a television within one of them. Student desks face the wooden storage lockers and are arranged in 6 rows of 4 desks. Students sit down and begin copying homework from the board when they enter the room. A large monthly calendar with notes is displayed on the wall behind the students. Nora stands in the doorway between classes and hurries students along to their destinations. She begins class before the sound of the bell has completely faded. Her agenda is detailed and fast-paced, and she sticks to it. Students are cooperative and engaged. Nora monitors student work continuously, encouraging, correcting and helping students.

Nora has been teaching for 38 years and has a master’s in education. She also teaches Journalism and Driver’s Education. She attended many workshops related to supporting students with disabilities over the years. She spends about 1 hour a week consulting with the special education support staff.

My Class

We’re responsible for many of the skills: the writing obviously, the vocabulary. It’s literature based, always bringing in some vocabulary usage, writing and thinking skills, speaking.
I always try to provide at least 2 speaking opportunities for the kids [so they are] getting some practice with that. That is the problem with language arts - there is just so much that we are responsible for as English teachers. Just a wide range of skills, and that’s frustrating, but it’s also nice because it’s never boring. There’s always something you can do. There’s always a skill to work on and you can relate anything to what we’re doing in language arts, really.

And that’s part of the frustration, because it’s a skill, whereas in math, you multiply, and you learn the multiplication tables, and that gives you the skills. In language arts, you’re going to be coming across different words and different concepts, so to me the difference between the two is great. In math or science, you have a set of knowledge you can just teach them: this is the fact, these are the things to learn, but in language arts, it’s dealing with the world.

But I think it is all about them independently attacking the work. You know, you’ll read the book or practicing speaking. The more writing they do, the better they are at it, the more confidence they have. So all those things are tied together. You can give direct instruction, like, let’s see how can we figure out what the word means in context, or let’s underline something that you think is a synonym. You can give direct instruction, but so much of it, you know, it’s not about the instruction that they get, it’s them applying it individually. Proficiency in say, reading and writing, develops by practice, practice, practice.

Another one of my goals is making kids think, having them question things. To me, that’s a big goal of a lot of the literature they read. Like, what is this saying about society or why did this happen? A book that makes you think about things is an important course goal for me, something that makes the students think or question or challenge their beliefs, just to get their minds going.
I start off with short stories, usually, with terminology. Then we will do a novel and apply that terminology. After that, sometimes I’ll go into different authors, specific authors, and do a non-fiction unit or a science fiction unit. Then I do a poetry unit. Usually the poetry unit is before FCAT because they have a lot of things like that on FCAT and the kids like to have that experience. Though I don’t think they ask them the kind of questions that I do, it is still just exposure to poetry. Usually, I’ll do a little bit of mythology, then I usually do The Miracle Worker or a play. Then, science fiction again at the end when we do The Giver which is kind of futuristic, and The Watsons Go to Birmingham, which is a classic that I do, which is historical fiction. Throughout that whole course we focus on the same literary terms, story elements, symbols, conflicts, and then of course writing - grammar usage is part of it. The test has a lot of objective stuff, like those little terms that you saw, but then they have to pick one of the novels, and apply one of the literary terms we’ve studied all year to that one novel, like go through and talk about the point of view and the symbolism and the conflicts and the resolutions and just the whole thing. That way, it shows me that they understand the terminology, not just the definition of it.

And I’ll often make comparisons, like before novels we were reviewing, I said let’s talk about a theme that we decided could go for almost all the books we’ve read, not just from this semester. We talked about a common theme, and we first applied that theme to them all, and then they went and divided it up and did their individual focuses, just to make them realize that there are connections with what they're doing and hopefully to get them to remember that we didn’t just read a story to read a story, but because of the ideas it generates, because it makes you think. So that’s part of it, I'm hoping to develop not just reading skills, but thinking skills.
Influences on My Class

I am always sure to cover Sunshine State standards. Instructional goals grow out of the Sunshine State standards. I think it is pretty clear that we are expected to cover those. We have to code our unit-plans with the numbers now. But there are things that I have been teaching way before the sunshine state standards existed and that I am going to teach them: how to organize, I am going to do vocabulary.

We’re imposing standards that are going to be pretty rigid that may hurt some of the kids with disabilities, like I said with the end of the course requirements. And the state and government are kind of, not dictating, but setting us up with structures that don’t give us as much flexibility if we wanted to make an assignment different for one kid, or someone had to do just 5 out of the 10, or something like that. Because when they come to the end of the course exam, I’m afraid they’re not going to have, the requirements aren’t going to be waived the way they are now, like with FCAT. But we still have the state standards and are still supposed to do the reading, the speaking, the writing, the comprehension skills.

This year with all the mythology going on outside, like the Percy Jackson series and the Clash of the Titans, I could see that the kids have more background knowledge and were wanting more. So, instead of just doing a week of mythology, I did three weeks. So I’ll adjust and probably do a little bit less non-fiction with them. So it is just playing around and seeing what they’re interested in.

There are some times like with one class I may not even do an activity if I don’t think the kids are ready for it even though I do it with the other 3 or 4 classes, just those kind of day to day judgments. It’s not just based on the kids with disabilities, it’s based on the behavior issues or just the time of day sometimes is a factor, lots of things to take into consideration.
I would certainly like to think that I provide [students with disabilities] more support than the other kids, and I do try to make sure to check in with them. In general, I don’t have them do things that are really lengthy. I would say just do 2 of the 3 pages, but Fatima doesn’t have problems completing the work, so no I don’t really modify too much. I know I’m supposed to, but I don’t really, just more attention and direction, redirection.

Her planner is always in great shape, that’s a skill she has, she can come in and copy it down, and in fact I wrote in her planner today, “Great planner, Fatima.” She knows she’s got to study, she knows what she’s doing, or supposed to be doing, but then sometimes it doesn’t work. She just doesn’t get the scores, sometimes she has excuses for why she didn’t study, but I think a lot of it is just lack of skills. [She has trouble with] reading and finding the meaning out of reading, interacting with the text, and then remembering vocabulary words, even though we use them over and over before their quiz.

And her grades are not really bad. She had Bs and Cs, but she does struggle. You can see it takes her longer to get things. There were a couple of times where she had excuses, but usually she wants to do well. And she’s not distracted in class - distracted between classes, yes. She maybe could spend more time studying.

We always do prior knowledge before they get started, try to make sure she’s tuned in and can relate to something, making the connections, you know all that stuff. Previewing the text, just those kinds of things, to always give them a lot of motivation, I hope, to read, especially when it’s independent reading. So far, about half the reading we have done, has been doing the readings to them while they’re following along. Then of course, they have their own reading time, too. She chose to report on “Walter Dean Meyers” and really enjoyed his books, and is now on his 3rd book. She did an adequate job on her report, she missed some of the stuff that I
would’ve probably shared, but the fact that she knows that she likes this author and is now reading a second or third book by the author is good. That’s part of the strategies too, helping her find an author that she’s comfortable with, and the content that she likes.

I think that when I plan for the kids with the exceptionalities [I don’t] just give them the list, but give them the flashcards or give them a computer program where they can go and play the games with it. When I introduce a unit or give them specific information that they would have to take notes, instead of having them take the notes, I give them the notes, and then we go through and highlight it together and I originally started doing that because of the kids that had, back in the day they were called LD, but all the kids benefit from that because then they can listen to what I'm saying, and highlight instead of worrying about copying it down. So that’s improved my instruction I think, being aware that it helps to give them the notes. Now, maybe they don’t have the note taking skills because they're not being asked to do it in language arts, but to me, it was mostly copying what I wrote on the board, and I’d just as soon them listen and pay attention than have to worry about copying it. Some kids like Fatima and Devon would still be copying the first 2 concepts while I'm discussing the 4th or 5th concept, so that’s why I find that has been advantageous.

When you tell a kid to study, and they don’t know which 10 or 12 terms to study, then they’re just staring into space, and the time’s not well spent for anybody. One of the frustrations is that I always give the kids 4 or 5 day’s practice with the terminology; we did poetry, they had 15 terms. They had to find the similes in a poem, they had to look for the personification, they had to look for the rhyme scheme, and then they were given a quiz on those terms. And that’s the frustration, where kids don’t make the connection, between, that’s what we’ve been doing - we’ve been talking about symbols, themes. Here’s the definition, here’s an example, you should
be able to make that connection. That’s where those kids struggle the most; in making the connection. Then there are even some kids that are like, I’m going to learn those words, but then don’t apply them. You know they’re learning the words for the quiz, but then it doesn’t make sense. When I say to them, you just told me yesterday on a quiz that you knew what point of view meant, so when I’m asking you point of view right now, shouldn’t you be able to tell me. So I think they have difficulty recognizing that what they’re studying is also what they’re supposed to be applying in class. They think, I’m studying for a test, not I’m studying it to learn about all the poems we’re doing, or all the short stories or whatever.

Organization, that’s one of the main things they need to figure out: how to stay organized and which folders to bring which days. I actually did a couple of backpack checks in homeroom, and I said, never again! I don’t want to know what’s in your backpack.

I Believe

I believe in doing a wide variety of literature to try and appeal to all different interests. I believe in classics, I think they’ve stood the test of time. So I do think it is important to read things that they will refer to or be happy that they have had that background knowledge. I believe it’s very important in writing, speaking, and reading so they have different ways they can express themselves. It is the most fun, exciting thing to teach but also the most challenging because there is so much involved in the grading and responsibility for the basic skills.

I believe that there are so many skills in language arts that students with disabilities have to actively remember to do their best, like to make the application.

I believe students with disabilities, especially if they're reading, if they're not efficient in reading or decoding, will sometimes not get the bigger picture. So they're still stuck on trying to figure out what something says, and not making the next step, where we’re applying it to what’s going on today. Silly example: when it was the NCAA basketball tournament, we talked about
making allusions, and Cinderella teams, and I talked about what an allusion was. Then I did this whole thing with Cinderella, and the glass slipper, and clock striking 12, which I probably heard 20 times during the course of the tournament, because they had a team that was in it that was a Cinderella team. And those kids are still going, Cinderella? They don’t ever make the connections.

I believe [students with disabilities] struggle because they don’t have the skills that allow them to take the next step. I believe they can still pass a class, but not always get the deeper meanings or the higher order thinking that we’d like them to.

**Analysis of Nora’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities**

**Procedural supports**

Nora provided several procedural supports to ensure students knew how to navigate the tasks she set them. During class, Nora would consistently monitor the completion of tasks by perambulating the room while students were working. She looked at what students were doing and explained if a student was confused. For instance, during a lesson on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, students were given a list of metaphors and instructed to pick out the contrasting metaphors in the speech. Fatima busily wrote answers and flipped through the pages of her book. Nora looked closely at her work and saw she was writing phrases from the speech, but she did not understand the task. Fatima knew what the word contrast meant, but had difficulty applying that concept to the task. Nora explained again, completed a couple of examples with her and watched her do a couple on her own before moving to the next student.

During another observation, students were assigned to review their individual parts in the play “The Miracle Worker” to read aloud later. Devon was studying his book, just like the other students, and looked as though he was making great progress through the task. But Nora knew to
check closely on what he was doing. She helped him to mark his parts off in the book so that he could more easily find them and thus focus his energy entirely on reading them.

Nora habitually monitored her students with disabilities to make sure they understood tasks:

Like today, they did a class worksheet and I made sure that I spent 45 seconds asking her, do you know what you’re supposed to, do you have any questions. And then I came back while she was working to see that she was understanding and pointed things out to her.

Nora also made a habit of ensuring her students with disabilities knew what to focus on for homework or study time. She said, “Sometimes that 20 seconds checking in, can help them achieve more. And that doesn’t take long, and that way I know that they're focused instead of just distracted by stuff.” Nora would quickly ask students to identify the important things to study and tell them what they could skip.

Nora believed that it was her responsibility not only to provide tasks and directions to students, but also to ensure that students were proceeding in the correct manner. She accomplished that by checking in with students frequently as they were working and making sure they were able to discriminate important concepts to study. She believed that students with disabilities needed extra attention and often needed more specific, repeated instructions for tasks. She believed that students with disabilities could be successful if she provided extra support to ensure they understood the steps in a task and that they often struggled to organize materials necessary for a task, so she took a proactive approach to support. Nora’s assignments were carefully structured to provide students with exposure to important concepts and she believed it was important that students with disabilities be supported in completing them successfully.
Behavioral supports

Nora complied with the school’s RTI initiative and spoke of the actions associated with the initiative as part of the support she provided for students with disabilities. She met with other grade level content teachers once a week to discuss the progress of specific needy students and kept notes on her interactions with those students. Nora paid close attention to student attendance and notified parents if there were any behavioral or attendance problems. She checked students’ planners to make sure they wrote down their assignments and important due dates and test dates. She made a point of having informal conversations with students about keeping up with their assignments and praised them for actions such as turning in work on time and beginning tasks promptly in class. All of these supports were intended to ensure students were behaving well: attending class, completing assignments, and staying out of disciplinary trouble.

The provision of these behavioral supports was mostly related to Nora’s belief that it was her responsibility to comply with school procedures, but in doing so, she came to believe that students with disabilities especially were benefitting from the extra attention she and their other teachers were giving students. She believed that students with disabilities often needed help organizing tasks and materials, and that reminding them to keep their planners updated helped the students stay current on assignments and remember to bring home materials to study. She believed that practice in language arts was essential for making progress, and that making sure students kept track of and completed assignments was the first step in providing adequate exposure to the material:

Repetition, repetition, repetition. You know just making sure that she knows, that she knows exactly, don’t worry about this part and that part, this is the part to study, so that she’s able to use the time more wisely: don’t feel like you’ve got to work through all this again, this is what’s going to be on the quiz, organization and selecting the important parts.
Affective and psychological supports

Supports in the affective and psychological supports category are related to students’ relationships with teachers, student emotional well being, and student motivation. By helping students make personal connections to texts, incorporating peer collaboration into tasks, and paying “deliberate attention” to individual students’ progress, Nora increased students’ motivation to learn. Nora built opportunities for motivating students into every class and constantly encouraged students to make connections between the content and their own lives. She also created opportunities for students to build relationships with the other students in the class. For example, Nora often provided students with opportunities to work collaboratively in class. Students were placed in mixed ability groups and worked together to complete assignments. For example, before reading The Miracle Worker, students brainstormed a list of 5 things they would miss seeing if they were blind and then formed groups of 4 to share their lists. This allowed students to work together to generate 5 ideas if they were not able to do so on their own and also met the affective needs of young adolescents to socialize with one another. In addition, the activity increased their motivation for reading about Helen Keller by helping them to make connections with the character. Nora said that in an honors class, she might have just had students call out things they would miss seeing if they were blind.

Providing opportunities for collaborative work was related to Nora’s beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities. Nora believed that students with disabilities benefitted from working with peers because they need positive reinforcement and support:

They need support from anybody that can give it to them. They just need encouragement and the positive feedback if they can get it, and in general, kids are really good about that. I think they try to help them along. Fatima is very social, and she appreciates the attention, and her friends, they definitely try to get her back on track: let’s look for this, what do you think Fatima.
Nora believed that it was important to increase the amount of individual attention given to students with disabilities in every way possible, and that they needed to know teachers cared about them and their progress. “One of the kids the other day did real well on a science test and [the science teacher] told me, so I said something to him, and he was so proud. That’s such a good moment, when you can be positive and reward them so that they see that it’s worth it.” She paid close attention to the pace and progress of individual students by watching them in class, communicating with parents and other teachers, and tracking student data that she generated or standardized testing data she could access. For Nora, these information gathering activities were part of her close noticing of students with disabilities. “So, deliberate attention, that’s key I think,” Nora said.

Nora believed motivation was critical for students with disabilities to be successful in language arts and that it was an essential part of her role to motivate students to read and write. “I’ll ask a question to get their attention, or pose a challenge to them, or ask, how do you feel about this.” Nora did a lot of on-the-spot intervention with students to motivate them and often seemed able to anticipate student confusion by drawing on her years of experience. Nora also believed that her course content should reflect student interests, and spoke of expanding a mythology unit when several mythology related movies for teens were popular. Her flexibility with regard to subject matter was related to her strong beliefs about how important motivation is for student learning in language arts.

**Academic supports**

Nora employed several kinds of academic supports with her students with disabilities, including: flexibility, scaffolding, graphic organizers, differentiation, and on-the-spot responsiveness. She also used external support to implement some of the supports, including the school support staff. Academic supports were provided mostly during instruction.
An important way Nora supported students with disabilities was through flexibility in terms of meeting students’ individual needs with regard to academic goals. She often gave students extra time to complete tasks if they needed it, but still held them to a high standard of responsibility for their work: “especially if they come to me way ahead of time, if you say I'm working on it, I need more time, that’s fine.” She was also flexible at times in terms of the mode of the assignment. For instance, for one assignment that originally was a written report, she allowed students to make presentations instead, so long as the content was covered sufficiently:

I assumed they were all going to do their research, and do a more traditional essay, and then they started asking about PowerPoint. And then I realized after they did it, they like doing bullets instead of paragraphs. They knew they had to do an oral piece to it, they had to present it, and so the PowerPoint gives them something very concrete to go through, when they're making their presentation.

Nora sometimes shortened assignments for students with disabilities, allowing them to complete fewer examples or read fewer pages. She expressed reservations about relying on simple reduction as a way to meet students’ needs, however:

The biggest supports for me to do are adjusting the pace and/or the amount of work. And that’s unfortunately what I tend to do the most, I think that’s just because it’s easy for me to eliminate a couple of sections or give them more time than to actually change the material. And I think that works well for most of the situations, but then I’m sure there are much better ways to do it too.

For example, during an observation students were matching words with definitions. Nora told Fatima not to worry if she didn’t finish. Nora said that she would be going over them with the class, and that Fatima should just focus on doing the first 5 correctly. Another example of adjusting the amount of work was how Nora modified vocabulary quizzes:

One of the things that I do, one of the kids was really struggling on 10 word vocab quizzes, and I said, ok, pick the 5 words you like. So sometimes I’ll reduce the number, and the ESE person actually worked with her and tested her, and that worked out better, because she felt like she could handle it. And the last couple of tests, she did all 10. She gained confidence only having 5.
This was also an example of collaborating with other school personnel to provide support for learning for a student with disabilities. In this instance, Nora concluded not only that doing fewer questions suited the student’s needs, but also that the confidence the student built by being successful on the shorter quizzes supported her in completing the longer quiz. Thus, this support had both academic and affective outcomes for the student. Another way Nora supported students with disabilities during assessment was that she allowed students to retake tests and quizzes if they wanted to: “She often needs to retake a test to bring her grade up, and I always provide that opportunity for her, if she has the initiative to come do it.” Nora said, however, that often students would not bother to retake a test or would retake the test without doing any further preparation for it.

Nora provided several supports to help students with disabilities organize information, especially information she wanted them to study. She often provided graphic organizers, such as a Venn diagram. A Venn diagram consists of 2 overlapping circles and assists students with organizing comparison and contrast ideas. The overlapping portion of the 2 circles represents the comparison, or shared ideas or characteristics. The non-overlapping portions of the diagram represent non-shared ideas or characteristics. Another organizer Nora provided was 3-column notes. The first column contained main ideas or topics from the text. The second contained examples and details. The third was for comments, opinions or questions. Nora also provided flashcards, both on paper and through a computer program, to help students with disabilities focus on important concepts to study. She provided study guides and worked with students to highlight the most important information in them. All of these supports were focused on discriminating among ideas and helping students pick out the most important concepts.
Nora paid close attention to what students with disabilities were doing in class. In the example based on the contrasting metaphor assignment described above, Nora provided academic support as well as procedural support. Fatima had had difficulty not only with understanding the task itself, but also with concepts such as contrast and metaphor that were necessary for completing the task. Even though Fatima could tell Nora that contrast meant differences and a metaphor was a comparison between 2 unlike things, she was having great difficulty using all of that knowledge in conjunction with interpreting and selecting examples from the text. Fatima picked a couple of statements that were not contrasting metaphors, but did contain imagery of light and dark. Nora, through dialog and questioning, helped her to navigate the task and guided her while she completed a couple of examples. This was an example of scaffolding during on-the-spot responsiveness.

Nora believed “repetition, repetition, repetition” was key to learning for students in language arts, and her course was structured so that key concepts in literature and writing were repeated throughout the year. This is a practice called spiraling (Bruner, 1960), that is, coming back to concepts again and again to reinforce and further develop students’ understanding of them. Nora had high expectations for students in terms of the amount of content she expected them to master: vocabulary, literary analysis, poetry analysis, reading skills, writing skills, speaking, and test taking skills. She believed it was her role and responsibility to help students organize concepts and information so that they could study and remember them. She believed that students with disabilities often struggled to organize information and several of the supports she provided were targeted at organization. She also believed that students with disabilities sometimes needed more time to process information, and her provision of extra time, shortened tasks, and retake opportunities for tests were related to that belief. Nora’s beliefs about the
content area of language arts were also related to the kinds of supports she provided. She believed that students needed to master a great amount of terminology and that the best way to do that was to keep exposing them to it in different works of literature. This was related to her supporting students with disabilities by allowing them to deal with fewer terms or concepts during assignments because Nora knew they would have the opportunity to learn those concepts in relation to another text later in the course.

Dan

Dan’s Classroom

Dan’s classroom is at the end of the same exterior corridor as Nora’s. Bulletin boards filled with brightly colored student work line the wall on the one side. Pink, green, purple and orange hand cutouts proclaim ways to be a good citizen: “Respect!” “Honest,” “Vote” and “Actively Involved.” Jellyfish, crab, starfish and other marine life cutouts swim below the hands, with writing on them exhorting viewers to “Lose the attitude” and “Play – Make it educational.” Directly across from Dan’s classroom door, there is a giant live oak tree with an octagonal bench built around its trunk.

The classroom door opens at the front of room. Upon entering, there is a whiteboard on the left wall and three overstuffed bookshelves beside and under the whiteboard. Past the whiteboard is a bulletin board with student work displayed on it and beyond the bulletin boards, there is a door to a shared office space. On the left side of the far wall, a bank of windows overlooks green space and student vegetable gardens. More bookshelves overflowing with books for students to read are built-in under the window. On the right hand side of the far wall, there is a chest high putty-colored filing cabinet, more bookshelves, and a small rectangular teacher’s desk facing the window with a laptop on it. A kidney shaped table opposite the teacher’s desk demarcates the rear right hand corner. Shelves display books, stacked files, and a boom box. The right hand wall
is completely devoted to storage: cabinets at head height run the entire length of the wall. Beneath the cabinets is a counter atop a double row of cubbies. Books and assorted items are stored on top of the cabinets. The cabinet faces are decorated with student work, including more fish cutouts, but these ones are vocabulary fish containing words from students’ reading with definitions and sentences. The counter contains stacks of materials and milk crates full of papers and files. The wall to the right of the door has a whiteboard with bulletin boards on either side. There are short windows above the whiteboard that meet the ceiling and let in light. Chains made from colored paper cascade down the whiteboard and bulletin boards. Students create links for their chains when they finish a book and write information about the book on a link. Some chains are long enough to loop around twice. Six sets of headphones hang above the bulletin board. More books stand on either end of a shelf above the whiteboard. Beside the door, the American flag is displayed.

There is a long rectangular table immediately to the right of the entrance, placed perpendicular to the wall and extending several feet into the room. Each student desk has an open storage space facing the user and a separate chair. Twenty desks are arranged in five islands of four desks each, two facing two, spread throughout the room and oriented so that most students can see the whiteboard at the front of the room. A sixth island is formed by a second rectangular table with four chairs. At one end of each island, there is a numbered crate that contains materials for use when the class is rotating through work in centers. In front of the whiteboard, there often is a projector on a rolling cart. Dan stands in the doorway as classes change, joking with students and asking them about their day or their assignments, and exhorting them to get to class on time. Dan and the students are obviously on friendly terms and he uses humor to get their cooperation.
Dan has been teaching for 12 years. His B. A. is in English. He said he spends about an hour a week consulting with special education support staff. Dan teaches Intensive Reading as well as Language Arts.

**My Class**

You need big picture questions. That is the whole point - to get them to play with the ideas. Then, you have to have stuff to do that also helps with FCAT, so you’ll have tasks. The tasks have to keep moving you forward, but then they still have to keep bringing you back around to these big questions. The stuff that they do has to help them with their reading, and their writing, and their FCAT skills. But at the same time, it has to be feeding them back into these questions and making them think more and creating a need to move onto something bigger.

Then, there is literature study that I don’t do. To me, literature study is more like an art elective. But my class is all about process and I try to come up with a big theme, something that makes the work that we do real, some big purpose to it. Like right now, we are talking about water and Florida’s water issues. You can teach reading and writing through any kind of content. We sort of come up with some big wonderings that will carry us through. Then, we sort of plug in the need to do the stuff that I teach. We are going to email authors or we are going to email the experts, so you have to be able to write well.

It’s a combination of instruction and practice, and motivation - that’s a big one in secondary school. So that means there has to be a fair amount of choice, so we do a lot of book clubs and student selected reading. We do basically a couple of novels together in the first part of the year and with those, we practice a lot of reciprocal teaching and work so they can practice consciously using reading strategies with the hope that they internalize them and use them when they are alone. That is what it is all about - giving them tools to handle challenging text when we are not around. It is easy to help them when we are here, and then of course the motivation plays
into that, because if they are not hungry to find out what is in that text, then there is no point in working at it. Well you know, it’s sort of a double prong. You practice it so much that it becomes automatic and you realize that you’re doing it without thinking about it.

Consciously using the strategies will help them stay focused with the boring passages. It makes them tougher readers. Whenever you want to advance, you’re going have to do a text that you didn’t choose. That is just how the world is. And if you want to be the next level of firemen or whatever, you’re going to have to do texts that are boring. The tougher you are, the better you’ll do. So if you’re thinking about forcing yourself to write a little 2 word summary for every paragraph, then you’ll toughen up your ability to stay focused.

They all of sudden go “Ohhhh, FCAT is next week. We haven’t done anything.” You know, they haven’t done a single practice test and so I run them through all the stuff we’ve talked about. The SSR and learning summary frame and linear reciprocal teaching, and all these things that are proven score raisers. So then they feel better about it. And we talk about the test itself, and what the standards are and stuff, but we don’t practice. We practice the test a little, just to get used to the kinds of questions, but not very much. Kids who read well, do well on the FCAT, as long as they have a little bit of understanding of what the questions are like. We don’t practice for it a lot.

Well, with writing it is so differentiated. The writing in class is run as a writing workshop. Everybody is at a different spot, so until you can conference individually with the kids about their writing, you aren’t doing anything except testing them. So it is really about individual conferencing and kind of breaking the room into centers and having them work their way through the process.
The centers thing, it is basically a small group in a large group setting, and to me that’s the only thing that will work. There will always be 25 of them. That is never going away, so how do you work individually with 25 kids? That is the only way I have figured it out. It works great for worksheets. It isn’t necessarily teaching them how to do those things. I’m not modeling; they are doing it. The tradeoff is the instruction going on over here is really intense, especially in terms of writing, and working with kids on their individual writing is very powerful. It is sort of an individual trade off. Is this being so positive that the other stuff can be a bit busier work to make sure this happens?

Influences on My Class

[The state test] is tough. But I think that [students] try pretty hard. I don’t think they realize that we have a lot more at stake with their FCAT score than they do. Kids do more at school than just take a reading test. There’re A & B students all through the school that are failing the FCAT year after year, and of course that makes the administration mad because how can a kid be successful if they can’t pass the FCAT? Well, they’re really organized and really good verbal learners and good teachers teach to students’ strengths. We are supposed to be personalizing our instruction. Good teachers should be making sure that kids who don’t read as well are successful. It’s a paradox.

The ESE people are with us all the time. We didn’t make AYP for 2 years in a row. There’s a lot of things that we have to do and so they are more present in terms of working with the kids who are on the list of at risk. The ESE coordinator co-teaches in the math class next door, but she’s in here a lot. There is a school psych, I don’t even know what her official title is. We have a lot of support people. I don’t even know where they all come from. There are 3 different support teachers involved with instruction going on in here. They’ll come in and talk
about stuff. They’ll work with kids in the room. They’ll work with me in terms of instructional practices, but basically the centers and the group work.

The whole school is on this big Kagan push. That’s a little schizophrenic right now at the school. We are saying to have these targeted small groups. At the same time, we are all about Kagan, so we have to be diverse and mixed for the group work to function. The work that we do in here pretty much is a result of what the professional development we’ve received. That right there is probably the main thing, that we’ve had an opportunity to get the professional development that is going to improve our craft.

I’m not against instructional technology and it’s what we all have to do, but technology does not equal motivation. It has to be very carefully monitored. Just because they’re in front of a computer screen doesn’t make it better or more engaging for the kid. They have to have their reasons for wanting to know this stuff just like out of a book. So it’s different and it’s important but it’s not, it doesn’t fix everything. You get a lot of the rhetoric from the instructional technology people, like this is it, you have to know it and they’ll love it, and it’s just going to solve everything. And it doesn’t.

**Students with Disabilities and My Class**

I have wonderful kids in my class, that are very talented in all their own ways and they are terrific kids. It is just so hard for them, because [they say], “I’m not going to be a lawyer. Why do I need to be working so hard at this?”

Kids who have paperwork are just, for whatever reason, they’re just the ones who have paperwork. There’s nothing different about them. They’re all disabled in some way and gifted in some way.

It’s like 90% higher level comprehension stuff; at this school, the phonics issues and decoding issues and stuff isn’t really there. They’re all basically no more than a couple years’
deficit, so it’s really just the reading stamina, and the higher level comprehension. [There are] a lot of motivational issues in middle school, so it’s really hard to know, where does the reading deficit stop and the motivational issues begin? It’s hard to be bad at something, your whole academic career, and be forced to do more and more of it. I’m always amazed at the ones that haven’t quit on the process.

I guess in my mind there’s sort of 2 reasons [kids struggle with reading]. One is background deficits and that to me is the easy fix. There’s nothing wrong with their processing, nothing organic, they just haven’t had the exposure to enough, they just haven’t had enough linguistically rich, or whatever. Then the other group is that there’s something organically interfering with their ability to read well. Those are tough, because the background deficit, I can teach them strategies, they work immediately and they start to read better. The kids with the organic problems - I believe that everybody is capable of learning everything; it’s a matter of how much time you spend working on it. So the instructional strategy is the same. It’s just that I know that it’ll take a whole lot longer and it may not ever happen while they’re with me, but eventually they’ll be able to read strategically and successfully. You’ve got to keep hammering away at it; those are the tough fixes. They are just so disfluent that they read a sentence or two and they are sick and tired of it and they just want to do something else. It’s like doing something physically difficult and so you just keep hammering away and try to get them to the point where they will at least have the motivation to keep pushing on this very hard thing that they are trying to do.

But definitely the motivation piece, that is the critical piece. They are all different you know. Some of them have processing issues that I can’t crack. I can’t figure out how to help them. It’s just like you keep hammering away and hope that at some point, they are going to
break through. I don’t think they are ever going to catch back up, but if they are going to be functional readers, that is what we have to have. We have to function in society as a reader, so you just keep plugging away at what you believe are the best practices for them.

Teaching kids where they are, it’s like what I tell my interns when they come in: it is not a class. It is 23 different people and as soon as you start thinking it is a class, you are dead. Thinking of it as 23 different people is really intimidating, but you have to go that way. So if I could have 23 different centers, I would. Work with kids one at a time. But I can’t, so it is a compromise, the small group. That is the only way to be able to handle this many kids in one room and instruct them individually. That is the only way I can figure out how to do it. It is about carving out time to work with them individually to help them, or building in mechanisms like in cooperative learning they are required to have a part in the whole process. They can’t kick back and have somebody else interpret the text for them. But, they are masters at that - the kids who don’t read well are not dumb and they know exactly what they need to do to be successful and one of those ways is to let the good readers handle the interpretation of the text and they work from there. They take some other role.

How you’re going to make the differentiated instruction work is constantly a problem. The differentiating my instruction is what I’m doing for my kids with disabilities. But it just happens completely with everybody else too. A big part of planning is how you’re going to carve up that period and not teach a room full of kids, but teach 24 different kids who are in your room at the same time. That’s the first thing I tell my interns. You’ve got to make that change in your thinking. You come in and they get to work; you go around and you have your finger on the greatest need and that’s what you do.
I wish I knew more about what’s really going on with my SLD reading issue kids because I really don’t feel like I know. Because I can say processing speed disorders, but I don’t really know what that means or what is really going on. And what that means in the long run. We make accommodations, but good teachers accommodate everyone’s learning styles and learning deficits. So that’s not that. Their accommodations don’t really mean much unless they want to do well. I’ll go back to motivation. Once you hit secondary school - that’s it. I think that’s everything - if you’re willing to work. The ESE kids who are successful, that’s because they know who they are. They know that things are going to take longer and they know they are going to need help with certain things, and they do great. [Other] ones want to slide or are going to put the responsibility on their disability rather than on themselves.

Self advocacy, that’s huge. That is what happens in middle school. I think that’s the thing. They either develop that or they don’t. And if they don’t, then high school is kind of spinning their wheels until they can get into a vocat program, or get out, or something.

**I Believe**

I believe that everybody can be successful, but it depends on how you’re defining success. And I think there needs to be some serious thought given to the way the state has decided to decide what success means and what that really means for the kids with disabilities at one end of the spectrum. They are all different, so we need to rethink how we are defining success. There is no reason why we can’t all be successful, all of them.

I believe that being a functional reader is critical in our society. You know the views of the future, that we don’t know what jobs our kids will have? We can’t get them ready for those jobs, but we can, the one thing we can do is make sure they can learn anything on their own, and so that means reading. So, if you don’t know what is coming, being able to read well seems pretty important. Written communication is huge if you want to get somewhere within your chosen
field, if you want to be the boss of the people in your chosen field whatever it is, engineering, firemen, or whatever. If you want to advance in that field, you have to communicate well with the written word. So reading and writing are huge, bigger than they have probably ever needed to be in terms of where society is going.

It’s the teacher creating this need to learn or it is just a big old book full of worksheets. The teacher gives meaning to the work the kids are doing.

I have two quotes, one is from Jeff Wilhelm who was an English teacher who died, book writer, and he has a terrific quote about what kids need to read well and it’s basically, it’s really good. “No one was ever motivated more by having their weaknesses and errors identified. People are motivated to learn and they do so with a kind of joy when there is a social component to their purpose, assurance of assistance, visible signs of success, and the resulting capacity to do more independent and meaningful work in the world.” When my intern comes in, that’s where we start. It’s like, here’s your checklist and everything that you do: does it have a clear purpose, is there assurance of assistance, is there visible signs of success. We just work through those things over and over again. Them feeling like it has meaning in their future is huge. The other quote is something from Plato and how knowledge gained by force has no compulsion on the mind or something like that. You can’t force someone to learn something. You can only provide them the opportunity to learn it and help them with some good reason why they ought to learn it. That’s it. You’ve got nothing if they’re not in it with you.

[Teachers] are truly, everybody is interested in kids being successful at the content that teacher loves; everybody wants that.

I believe that everybody is capable of learning everything, it’s a matter of how much time you spend working on it.
Analysis of Dan’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities

Procedural supports

Procedural supports are supports that help students understand the steps in completing a task or help students maintain focus to complete a task. Procedural supports Dan used included: clarifying directions, ensuring students were focused on the task, minimizing distractions and pairing with a student that could help students understand the task. During one observation, the task was to “write an essay explaining how you would get kids to read over the summer.” Dan clarified the directions for the whole class by explicitly telling the students that the task was not a persuasive essay arguing for or against summer reading, but an expository essay in which they were to “explain how.” He also said that the audience is “your teacher.” One student with disabilities immediately raised her hand and asked, “But, how do I start off? What words?” Dan said he would help her in a minute, then he explained the scoring criteria briefly to the class and summarized the task again. He also emphasized the importance of providing support for ideas. Then, Dan moved to the student’s table and told her to start with rewording the prompt and then explain her ways. “Jenna, kids have to read over the summer. If you were in charge, how would you get kids to read over the summer? If I was in charge of the seventh grade, I would . . .” Dan modeled a possible beginning for Jenna. Dan kept answering students’ questions, about how long it had to be and how long they had to complete it. Then, he checked back with Jenna. Dan said that students with disabilities often will have trouble getting going on a task. “’Cause I have a lot of LD kids who will do OK if they start, but they’re just going to lay low and do nothing for as long as you let them.” Throughout the writing time, Dan walked around and checked on students’ progress, another support he identified for students with disabilities to help them stay on task.
Dan also checked often to make sure students with disabilities were focused on the task during group work. Dan paid more attention, more often, to groups that included students with disabilities:

In small group work, I float a lot. I try to work with one group at a time, but in reality what I wind up doing is working with them a little, getting them going on something and then checking in with everybody. That level of check-in with his (a student with disabilities) group is much higher. I spend more time with his group, regardless of which center they’re in, just because of that and because the other kids in the group, they’ll get frustrated and need me to get him back on task and stuff.

Dan said he also paired students with disabilities with partners that were able to help the student understand the task during group work. Another procedural support Dan said was helpful was the use of headphones to help minimize distractions. “Headphones, if it is independent work that requires them to focus like writing, then they probably need to shut everyone else out.”

While working on individual tasks, students were allowed to use their own headphones or borrow the classroom headphones to listen to music. Finally, Dan said he provided study guides to help students navigate tasks at home.

Dan’s procedural supports were related to his belief that as the teacher, it was his responsibility to be aware of individual students’ progress and to keep checking on them to keep them on task. He believed many students with disabilities had to work so hard to read and write and that it was essential that he do whatever he could to help them persevere. “You know, because it’s hard to be bad at something, your whole academic career, and be forced to do more and more of it.” Perseverance at the tasks he employed was important to Dan because he believed that students needed to build up the ability to stay focused on reading and writing tasks:

It’s like you are sick of doing drills in basketball, but you know why you’re doing them. You are doing them to build up your stamina and that is kind of what we do, the strategies and stuff. And then there is just endurance training, working through the text.
Dan believed that staying focused on a task was exceedingly difficult for students with disabilities; this belief was related to the several supports he provided to help them persevere. Dan also believed that practice, especially correct practice of reading strategies, was essential for all students to make progress in the subject area, and that students sometimes needed support in becoming and remaining cognitively engaged. He believed it was his job to “toughen them up,” that is, provide not only opportunities for practice, but also supports for staying fully engaged in the tasks.

Behavioral supports

The behavioral supports category included teacher behaviors related to ensuring or checking on student behaviors such as attending class, completing assignments, and conducting themselves appropriately. Dan performed the check-ins with students on the RTI list and discussed those students during grade level meetings, similarly to the other teachers in the study. Dan said he also communicated with parents by telephone and email if students were habitually tardy or missing assignments. But Dan said the most important way to ensure students did what they were supposed to do in terms of showing up on time and behaving appropriately was to make sure students knew you were keeping an eye out for them:

It’s the little conversations that you have sitting on the wall between classes, and making it clear to them all the time that you know what’s going on with their other classes, and just little comments and advice and stuff.

Just like the other teachers, Dan performed the RTI check-ins and participated in the grade level meetings because he believed it was part of his job to do so. But his checking in on students was related to his belief that teachers were important in students’ lives and students responded well to teachers checking in on them. Finally, Dan strongly believed that students needed to be supported in making choices that were in their best interest – to show up for class, to show up on
time, to bring the work they were responsible for, and to behave appropriately – because many students were not receiving support in those areas at home:

Some of them know who they are and when they start to get antsy, they deal with it and they go outside. They have things that they do. Others are just like, “Oh, that’s the way I am. I can’t help it.” I think that’s something that comes from home.

In this instance, Dan believed it was his responsibility to help students learn behaviors that would be beneficial to them as adults, especially if they did not receive support in those areas at home.

**Affective and psychological supports**

Supports in the affective and psychological supports category are related to students’ relationships with teachers, student emotional well-being, and student motivation. Student motivation was at the heart of Dan’s beliefs about supporting students with disabilities in his class and he spoke at length about how he worked to motivate both students with disabilities and students in general in his classes. Dan described building students’ motivation to read in several ways: talking informally with kids about books, providing a purpose for reading specific texts, allowing students to choose books to read, creating book clubs, and personalizing instruction.

So yes, so I talk a lot about books. I know a lot about books that they might like. I like to read books that entertain me, so I use that as a way to hook them into reading more than they normally would. That’s what it’s all about: you need to read more than you do now. I don’t care who you are or what you do, you need to read more. When I run into parents, that’s the thing that I get. “Joe reads for pleasure now. When we’re driving, he’s got a book.” So that’s it, I’ve won. When someone is reading a book because they want to, then I’ve done my job.

Dan provided silent reading time regularly so that students could read what they wanted to read during school and so that he had time to talk informally with students about books. During one observation, Dan had a 7 minute long discussion with one student solely about which book he would pick to read. Dan said student choice was important both in reading and in writing.
“They have a lot of choice in terms of what they write, and that’s another piece of that motivation. The more choice they have, the more motivated they are and better they’ll do.”

Dan also stressed that providing a purpose for reading that was relevant to the real world was important to motivate students to read. As an example, Dan motivated students by building reading tasks around an upcoming field trip to a spring.

But we want to take intellectual work out of the classroom and put it somewhere fun. Put it somewhere where real people do things that are real. They don’t do them in class because they are told to. They are out and do them because they are compelled to. We try to create that need.

During one of my observations, students were reading a dispatch from a website called www.FloridaSprings.org that was about where springs come from and why it is important to protect springheads. During another observation, students were creating presentations for younger students to teach them what they had learned about the springs. The connection between the two assignments and the upcoming field trip, as well as the authentic nature of the tasks, i.e., real text and real audience, provided motivation for students. “Well, it comes back to that hunger: are they hungry to learn something? And if they are, then your work is done. If not, then you’re not getting anywhere until they are.” Dan created this “hunger” not only by using authentic texts, but also by connecting the texts to a field trip and providing a real audience for students’ work.

Dan believed providing motivation for students to persevere with tasks was critical for student success because practice is essential to student progress in literacy.

The one thing that [students with disabilities] need, that they all need, is practice. You don’t play basketball without practicing, and it’s so physically painful for them to read for long periods of time, that it’s just a matter of getting them to stay with it for more than a page. And so it’s all, that’s all tied up with motivation. But it’s all about finding what they will stay engaged with - this constant battle with finding something fresh and new that they’re excited about, and then they’ll practice and then be more fluent. It almost doesn't matter what the deficit is.
Dan’s strong beliefs about the essential role motivation plays in student perseverance and achievement relates to his beliefs about a teachers’ roles and responsibilities, what he believes language arts is, and how students with disabilities make progress in language arts. Dan clearly believed it was his responsibility to motivate students. He believed it was his responsibility as a teacher not to give up on students. Even though it may seem like a student is making little or no progress, he would “keep hammering away at it,” he said. The importance of motivating students to persevere with reading and writing is also related to his beliefs about his class: what he believes language arts is and how he believes students and students with disabilities make progress in language arts. Dan believed the purpose of his class was to improve students’ reading and writing skills. “For me, its just - my job is to teach reading, writing. [My class] is all about process and communication.” Dan believed the best way to improve students’ reading and writing skills, for all students, was to provide plenty of practice and the best way to do that was by motivating them to complete tasks. “It’s a combination of instruction and practice, and motivation - that’s a big one in secondary school.” Dan also has a great deal of empathy for how hard students with disabilities have to work at tasks, and this empathy is tied into his beliefs that it is important to respect and appreciate the effort students make:

These are kids that have been working really hard at this since first grade. They are really bad at it and being asked to work on it more than anything else. So, just the fact that they will even show up is just impressive.

Dan believed students with disabilities needed “endurance training,” that is, opportunities for him to encourage them to persevere in reading and writing even though it was difficult. Dan also believed that collaborative student groupings helped motivate students.

**Academic supports**

Academic supports for learning were supports designed to help students with specific academic tasks or goals. Dan employed several kinds of academic supports with his students.
with disabilities, including: individualized instruction, group work, increased intensity of instruction, strategy instruction and on-the-spot responsiveness. He also used external support to implement some of the supports, including the school support staff. Academic supports were provided mostly before and during instruction.

Dan structured his class to provide supports for students with disabilities in their areas of need based on data he collected about them. Dan spoke of investigating students’ files and records, doing one-on-one testing, and performing ongoing formal and informal assessment. He looked for patterns that would point to areas of student weakness months before he even met his students:

The day the FCAT scores come out, I’m going over mine just to make sure they’re not going to fire me, and an hour later I’m going over the list of the kids I'm about to get and it’s just that fast and I need to see who they are and it’s just names at that point. I’m already trying to process what I’m going to do with those kids differently than what they got this year, just immediately.

Dan’s entire approach to curriculum design incorporated the needs of students with disabilities. He addressed student needs by structuring his class to provide opportunities for individualized instruction, especially in writing. He reported holding conferences with students about their writing and working with them individually on their writing during class. He also employed group work and rotating centers to increase the amount of individual instruction he could provide in reading:

You can’t measure that level of comprehension where it’s how hard you’re fighting to understand individual words. And it’s like a puzzle. Everyone does it differently and every word is in a different context. What have I got so far that will help me solve this riddle of what this word means? When I work one on one with kids, I’m going back through what we’ve just read, looking for clues that I can show them - what happened in the last sentence, what’s here that will help you figure out what’s here.

Dan employed group structures to achieve his goal of personalizing instruction for the students. Mixed ability groups provided support by enlisting stronger students to assist weaker
students. Same ability groups allowed Dan to give more, and more appropriate support, to weaker students while stronger ones were able to complete tasks more independently. But, Dan said, group tasks had to be carefully planned and structured. Dan said the group dynamics were important: “The reciprocal responsibility piece, it’s not just that they have jobs, it’s that the success for everyone depends on each one. That’s a big piece.” The group structure supported students in completing the tasks and motivated them to complete the task and also, structurally, provided the opportunity for Dan to give more intensive and targeted support for the task.

Student groups often rotated through centers in Dan’s class. In each center, there were prepared tasks for students. This was the main activity during two observations. One center was comprised of laptops set up with a reading activity program. At another, students created vocabulary fish by identifying words they did not know from their independent reading books, writing the sentence the word was in, writing the word’s definition, and writing a sentence of their own using the word. They wrote the information on fish shapes cut from colored paper, then taped them to the cabinets. Dan himself manned one of the centers and provided intensive instruction in reading. On one day, a member of the school support staff did the same at another center. Dan said the time spent in intensive instruction was essential. He said:

You’ve got to get at what they’re thinking and that’s almost impossible with four kids, much less 24. [I’m] digging at their processing, trying to get them to clarify their understanding.

During one lesson in the intensive reading station, Dan was reading non-fictional text with the students, a passage called “The Journey of Water” that was related to the springs field trip. He first alerted them to textual clues such as the photo, the photo caption, the title, and the section headers. Then, he had students read aloud together, stopping them to correct pronunciation. He asked them what specific words meant, and pointed out context clues if they did not know. After each paragraph, he asked them to tell the main idea of the paragraph and
every so often, he asked a question about the overall main idea. The support staff person was asking similar kinds of questions of a different group of students at another center. Students spent about 20 minutes at each center. Dan said that during the reading instruction, student internalization of the vocabulary cues was his current goal:

If I can talk kids through vocabulary that they don’t know, and keep hammering them with the same questions that I would be asking myself if I didn’t know that word, they figure out what the word means. But they don’t take the time to do that. They just go on happily not understanding that word, and so it’s, I won’t be around to support their comprehension. I want them to be aggressively trying to figure it out themselves.

Dan also used groups to provide opportunities for students to practice using strategies he had taught them. These strategies were taught to all students, not just students with disabilities, but Dan talked about how the strategies met the needs of any student who was a struggling reader. Two of the most important strategies, he said, were Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1985) and Learning Summary Frames. In Reciprocal Teaching, as Dan explained it, each student in the group had a specific job related to a text: predict, clarify, summarize, or question. This strategy provided comprehension support, Dan said. Goals were to help students extract meaning and stay focused. Longer term goals, after much practice, were internalization of the strategy and independent use of the strategy. Dan said he invested weeks in teaching the strategy.

The four kids working together happening all over the room is one of the only things that happens in a classroom where there is improvement in their skill and I’m not necessarily the one doing it. They really are, if they’re listening to each other and if they have the basics of the structure down, they really do progress in their reading comprehension whether I’m sitting there or not.

Another strategy Dan said was valuable for students with disabilities was Learning Summary Frames. Frames were created by making sentences that summarized a text, but leaving blanks for students to fill in key words. Dan said the Summary Frames helped students build summarization skills.
Kids are told to summarize their whole lives, but no one actually talks to them about what it means to summarize. And how do you decide what is more important and what isn’t, what to get rid of? So the summary frames are a nice scaffold.

Learning Summary Frames could also be adapted to help students figure out the main idea of a text. “It’s a really complicated thing to decide what the main idea of something is, and we all treat it like it’s nothing.” Dan assigned Summary Frames he had created based on texts read in class for homework during two observations.

The academic supports Dan provided were related to his beliefs in several ways. First, Dan believed his role as a teacher included the responsibility to provide individualized and/or intensive instruction. Giving more support to students that need it is a must, he said, it’s the “only thing that will work. How do you work individually with 25 kids?” The groups and centers were Dan’s solution to the need to have more time to spend with individual students and small groups of students within the traditional large group format. Dan also believed that the most important language arts goals are reading and writing, and he focused on skills in both areas to the exclusion of other language arts goals, for example, literature, speaking and listening, and media literacy. He believed that reading and writing were the skills that were essential for success in life and focused his class on them. He believed that students with disabilities made progress in reading and writing through targeted, intensive instruction in selected essential skills, extensive practice in reading and writing, and strategy mastery and use.

Dan believed that data, both historical data and ongoing assessment data, was important for making decisions about instruction for students with disabilities. “So this one is a logistical problem, but super important, you don’t want to assess all the time, but the more data you collect the better. They’re all different, and when you’re talking about assessing what they’re doing or saying, it has to be small group or individual.” Dan’s commitment to using data to drive
instruction is related to his beliefs about the need for individualized or intensive instruction for students with disabilities to make progress in reading and writing.

Dan believed that strategies such as Reciprocal Teaching were valuable resources for students with disabilities and that strategies helped students become cognitively engaged: “You should be questioning every single sentence you read. It’s a whole dialogue going on in your head while you read. That’s the piece that a lot of them skip over.” He believed that strategies could be internalized through repetition and then, he hoped, students would use their strategies in other settings:

The internalization of the strategies and the fluency of their use of the strategy, that’s why we do these things over and over again, is eventually they’ll start doing it when they take the FCAT.

Dan’s beliefs are clearly and explicitly linked to his practice and it seemed evident in the interviews that he had thought a great deal about what the purpose of his class was and what the needs of students with disabilities were relative to making progress in the class.

**Monica**

**Monica’s Classroom**

Monica said, to get to her classroom, go over the creek to the end of the path and past the garden. Her classroom was a portable at the rear of the campus, set with two others in a row behind the gymnasium. In the area outside the classroom, she and her students had created a literary garden over the years. Tom Sawyer’s fence stood, half painted, behind Janie’s pear tree. Gary Soto’s Oranges were ripening; some had fallen to the ground. Frost’s birch tree and mending wall kept company with Walden Pond.

Monica’s classroom door opens into the rear left of the room. A riot of words, quotes, books, student work and everything literary fills every nook and cranny and every available surface. The walls are lined with an assortment of bookshelves bursting with books and knick
knacks. Quotes are mounted on colored paper and hung around the perimeter of the room near the ceiling. Posters hang everywhere. Immediately to the right, there is the Fame and Glory bulletin board with student work on it and a television on a stand tucked into the near corner. In the right far corner, a storage closet is filled with books and supplies. Outside the closet, there is a brown rectangular table and a blue easy chair. The far wall is filled with bookcases. The next wall to the left is the front of the room. There is another bookcase, a table with files, a whiteboard with the day’s agenda for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade written on it, and a projector screen at the front of the room. The teacher’s desk is in the front left corner, a large desk heaped with papers and files facing the back wall. There are 3 file cabinets beside and behind it and 2 printers and a coffee maker atop the cabinets. In front of the desk there is a projector on a cart aimed at the screen. Between the desk and the door are more bookshelves and posters. Students sit at 6 rectangular white tables arranged in 3 rows of two, 3 students to a table. The tables take up all the space in the room. All of the windows are shaded with blinds. The students enter, full of energy. They bounce around, getting supplies and books and talking to one another until the bell rings. Monica begins by going over the agenda. The students are attentive as they continue unpacking and getting ready.

Monica’s class is Language Arts, like the others, but it is unofficially a gifted/enrichment class. Most of the students have gifted Education Plans (EPs) and two 7th graders and one 8th grader also have special education Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

The “Antholio” Monica refers to is a combination anthology and portfolio that her students create during 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. They put writing assignments and examples of literature and poetry that they like in it, and in 8th grade, they write reflective pieces throughout and make it
into a book. They design the cover, make a table of contents, number the pages, and add illustrations. It constitutes the major portion of the end of the year grade for the students.

Monica also refers to the school literary magazine that she is the faculty coordinator for. It is published once a year and includes art, poetry and stories from the whole student body.

Monica has a remarkable way of speaking. The phrase southern drawl somewhat captures her intonation, but her delivery is rapid, even urgent, within an altogether circuitous style of elocution. Thoughts elbow each other, fighting to get out as her words tumble one over the other, straining the seams of elaborate sentence constructions. Each thought is accompanied by multiple supporting details strung along behind, sometimes briskly interrupted by another thought before it is shoved aside, only to edge it’s way in again later. She often illustrated ideas by switching into her teacher talk, as though she were addressing her students instead of me, or switching into her own inner talk at some point in the past. She is also quite animated, accentuating her ideas with gestures and expressions, so that the text that follows does not quite capture it all.

Monica has been an English teacher for 45 years. Her degrees are an English, B.A., and an Education, M.A. She also has a state gifted endorsement that required 5 graduate level courses. She said she consulted with the special education support staff for one or two hours per week and completed approximately 1-3 hours of professional development in special education yearly.

My Class

I want to teach them to be good people. I want them to really respect literature and poetry. My course goals are centered on the child and what the child is going to know how to do. My course goals are just what I think are the wonderful things that all human beings in the world need to know how to do. Every time I start [planning], it’s for the kids. I will tend to change my course goals and my course materials more than I’ll change my beliefs about the children.
I change my course goals in relation to my students. I decide what to teach by the literature that I think is really important, what they need to know: pieces of literature that are going to help them be better people and better stewards of the earth. Through Huckleberry Finn, it’s not just the usual literature: what is this setting and this character. It’s, what struggle is going on in Huck’s heart? There’s a part of Faulkner’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech that the human heart in conflict with itself is alone, but makes good writing. How is he in conflict with himself? And Twain even said that’s what Huckleberry Finn was about; it was about a deformed conscience and a good heart at war. And the heart won out. And I want them to see, because that’s where these middle schoolers are. They're struggling. Are they going to go with the peer group, are they going to be good? What are they? They constantly struggle, struggle, struggle within themselves.

And of course Mark Twain, I just absolutely love Mark Twain’s writing and his take on society. I think Mark Twain is an extremely important writer, and so in 6th grade, my kids read Tom Sawyer, and we study that. I show them the DVD of The Prince and the Pauper, and we look at a couple of short Mark Twain pieces. And 7th grade, they study Huckleberry Finn. Eighth grade, they study Puddin’ Jack Wilson and The Diary of Adam and Eve. So I can, each year, just give them more and more. No child of mine is ever going to just get away from me without studying Huckleberry Finn and they love it.

And poetry, talking about all the things that poetry can do for humans and for language, teaching some of the basic language beauties. They can be taught to love it, and most kids come in thinking they’re not going to like it at all. My most stubborn kids that are going to hate poetry - when you approach it through language, when you see what can be done with it and the prize at the end, the way that words are put together - they say, wow, that’s cool. And suddenly they’re in love with poetry and they can write it. I want them to fall in love with poetry, because I’m in
love with poetry. Most of them don’t like poetry when they come to me, and they do by the time they're out. Emily Dickinson is my favorite poet, so they all get a dose of Emily. She is wonderful because so many of her poems are little puzzles. They are short. They are enigmatic, many of them. I love Robert Frost too, and the kids do. He is a storyteller poet.

I want kids to write so much. I believe writing is such a vital part of language arts. I like to give them lots and lots of writing assignments that are poems: because they're shorter, because they have to really get just the right word, they’re getting an image or an idea across, and I don’t have to grade a bazillion essays. And then they can turn poetry intro prose and prose into poetry. And kids who love poetry who are not as good at prose, I can just teach them: You love poetry. Get your first thoughts down in poetry, get your first thoughts down in a poem. Then pull it apart. Then turn it into an essay.

I tell them that I wasn’t always a writer. I was never taught how to write when I was in school. I learned by myself and I had to learn how to teach it. I like to show them some of the old writings that I did that were just horrible. They need to see that it takes hard work. They need to see that the teacher has struggled through some things. I have shown them everything I have ever had to write or do that I have hated that I have had to do, as we all do, the red tape stuff that we have to write. I let them know that I’d rather ‘bout have my nose pulled off than do some of that, but I have to do it. So I just do it. “Here it is. Here is how I feel, and I hate it. It is okay if you hate to do it, you just have to do it.” I just share a lot of that and it is always a process, always a process, always a process. It is never finished, never finished. They need to know that, that their writing is never finished. Like Shelly Fraser Mickle just taught them how she spent 7 years working on some book. I find examples that writers have said about their writing. I will share those with the kids, “Oh, here I found this and I just want to share it with you, here it is.”
I always used the anthology and the portfolio. I always had kids producing a product like that, rather than just me giving tests. If I was teaching a particular story, I would find several other poems or stories, and like “Okay, you two look at this one, you two look at this one,” and then bring it back to the class and share just so they would have to sort of enrich each other. I am a great believer in having the kids do the work; I’m not the lecturer. I tell them what I want them to find and give them approaches to it, but then they do it, and they bring it back and present it to the class and to me, and my jaw just drops at what my kids can do. It just blows me away. My whole thing is it’s better to know some of the questions than all of the answers, the Thurber quote. I want it to be open ended.

It’s almost as if I have this room full of 22 individuals, and we’re a class, but what am I going to do for each of them individually, within the scope of my course goals. Because there is so much option and choice within my course goals, and my course goals are pretty simple in nature. I want them to love words, appreciate other people, learn from the past; I want them to feel about writing and reading the way I do. I guess I almost see myself as a parent more than a teacher: here’s what I feel like I’ve learned in my life and I want to impart it to you guys and be the model of it. I’m going to be the model, the guide, the cheerleader, the one that leads them in the goals of my course.

[Kids become good readers, writers, and consumers of literature by] practice, practice, practice. It is all practice, and then they need to see examples. I think teachers need to put in front of their kids better examples of things. They need to not get just the middle school poets. They need to put some of the great poets because the kids can appreciate that. I don’t think we always need to be dumbing it down to where everything in middle school is just cutesy-tootsie. I mean you can be fun, but so many of the great pieces of literature are just awesome. You have to
help the kids with them. When we did Mending Wall, I broke it all up into little Kagan structures and whatnot. This group is going to try and make titles for these parts of the poem. This group, I am going to cut the poem up and “try to piece it together the way you think it was written,” just playing with it. Also, Mending Wall is the one that I just know when people say, “Good fences make good neighbors,” they think it means to put up a dadgum fence. It does not mean that! It means exactly the opposite. That is part of what I am trying to teach. Anyway, we all need to appreciate one another, love one another, learn from one another and not wall one another out. We need to be accepting; the point is that. Just plainly, it is a good poem.

Practice and good models: It is really important for the teacher to model for the kids what the teacher is asking them to do. That is why I have an Antholio. That is why I write everything I ask them to write, every poem. I ask them to write - I try too.

My students love to collaborate and work with one another. They just almost can’t function - they just want to talk with each other about what they are learning. It’s not necessarily even producing group projects - when they are working on individual projects. This is just really huge. They want to show what they’ve done. If I did not let them do that, I don’t think they could breathe.

**Influences on My Class**

I do look at Sunshine State Standards. Most of the time what I think is important to teach is already in there, but I don’t just go by that. That’s why [administrator] has been good to me. She said, don’t worry about the Sunshine State standards. I pretty much decide what is - I have a hard time because I am a pretty avid reader. I read things and, oh, I need to share part of this with them. Or I find a new poet and, oh, it would just be perfect for the kids.

The children are the children, and every year when I come in I have to start with them. How are they going to feed into my course goals? They already know all this, I don’t need to do
all this, I need to give more emphasis to this, less emphasis to this. And I don’t want them doing a month of FCAT prep when they’re already making 5’s on the reading. Why should I be doing that?

**Students with Disabilities and My Class**

Of all students, I think they have a great need to feel successful. I just think that success breeds success. And they also have a need to sort of bond and feel special to the teacher, that the teacher cares about their situation and about what they’re doing. It’s not just a class. The assignments that I give them are long-term, and they work on them, they worry about them. They need to hear from my mouth that they are okay, that they’re going to do fine. And giving extra time, reducing the number of assignments, providing all of these things are just the things that I know help them do better. So when they do better, they are prouder of themselves. It also front-loads it if they got the models to begin with, and they’ve got the written directions to begin with. They’ve got the extra time, they’ve got the website to give them guidelines - if they’ve got all of that before they start, then they are much more likely to do well.

The organization is what usually will get them, and sometimes what I’ll do if I know the child is much slower in what they do, if I’m requiring 10 pieces from most of the kids, I’ll require 6 or 5, just fewer things, particularly if they're collecting their 10 favorite poems in all the world, get your 5, just do it, but just fewer things.

I guess I always think no matter what my course goals are, they’re going to make it somehow, and they don’t always and that disappoints me. I’ll tend to try to weave them through my course goals and materials and whatever they can handle and whatever they can do and whatever they’re willing to do and hope that somehow through all the things I’ve got there, they’ll at least see the value of expression and writing and reading, and that makes me happy even if they don’t get to it.
I have to follow the accommodations for the IEPs. Fortunately, so many of the IEP accommodations are just things that are built in; that’s just how I want to do it anyway. We have the notebooks with the IEP plans and the Xerox thing, and I know this [Michaels’ needs] and so I don’t look at the book. I know what Michael’s needs were, what the couple of other kids’ basic needs were, and I just try to keep the one or two biggest ones. But the notebooks, the files, all of this stuff, it’s just not useful at all. That’s just not helpful for me. Here’s your accommodations list that you can check off for each of your children. Please keep this in your room somewhere, in a folder. Yeah, like right. I’m going to go whipping out that accommodations folder wherever it has disappeared to, in the middle of a class when the kid - it’s just, what I’m going to look at is the work my kids do: the real stuff, the learning. The only accommodation where I have trouble in my class is often it says sit them right up near the front. And if I have several accommodation kids, I cannot sit them all up near the front because it’s - I find it better to sit them by themselves. And you see, now I’ve got another table. I even changed the room around some so that I’ve got more isolation spots. That sounds mean, but.

And I think often particularly counselors and ESE teachers are so into charts and documents and checklists and all that stuff, and they give it to teachers, and I think, you all have to do it because the state makes you do it. And it’s just all these bureaucrats that are into this chart making. It’s not how most anybody lives life, like, oh let me get my checklist out. You either really internalize and do it because you - or you don’t.

I know a lot of the other teachers in regular ed, they had meetings where they had to do stuff with the level 1 and 2 reading kids, and had to fill things out. I doubt they liked it much, I’m glad I didn’t have to. Things like that don’t help me.
The behavior piece is really difficult. In talking to the teachers in general about kids with disabilities, that’s so difficult for the teachers to handle because it’s so disruptive to the classes. In the mainstream classes, it is much more difficult than it is in my class or than it would be in a class of all ESE kids. Because, well, my class is ESE, just the gifted ESE. But you know that you’re going to have issues with behavior. And so, everybody in the class sort of knows it whether they’re one of the behavior issues or not. And so the rest of the kids, when a couple of my kids are just really being terrible, the whole rest of them don’t get totally thrown off for the rest of the class. They may laugh or they may act frightened or something like that. But it doesn’t disrupt the class for the rest of the day like it does in classes where you’ve got kids who are just looking for something to get you off track and they can nurse that along. But, I don’t have that, so usually I can figure out some way to solve the problem or get somebody in who can help me solve the problem. That’s the hardest, it’s the ESE behavior. And I imagine some of the behavior and acting out is because they feel like they can’t succeed.

Right now Michael is fixated on what he wants the cover of his Antholio to look like, and he has nothing in it as far as I know. But he is fixated on that cover because he’s very artistic and he wants to bring some technology thing into his - and it’s just going to be the cover. I bet he spent 3 or 4 hours fixating on the cover and he says, “But I’m just checking this.” “Michael, you’re going to have a cover on an empty book!” And he’ll say, “No, Miss Monica, I will have the whole thing done.” And I so hope that I’m wrong and he’s right, but there’s just no way. These children just amaze me. Somehow just by thinking it’s so, just by having an intention to do it, they just think that’s the reality. And that’s Michael: I intend to do, I’m thinking about it, it’s engaging me, I’m interested in it, but it never-gets-done.
It’s just got to be involved with the home and helping the home value education. I have another child who has got all kinds of learning issues and stuff and that child just does incredible. But I know the parents - his academics is so important to them, and they know his issues and know how to work around them. Interestingly enough, in my class, most of my kids who have a documented learning disability of some kind are doing extremely well, because they’re sitting where they need to be, I’m aware, their teachers are aware and also their parents are almost hovering to be sure that they make it, so they’re doing fine. If they’re willing to put in that extra time and work, they’re going to do fine.

With Michael basically, when we’re one on one, we have much better communication. I see his cleverness, he feels comfortable with me, I think, one on one. When he’s in a classroom, I think he doesn’t feel comfortable, so his way of compensating is just to get silly or to walk around or just try to do anything other than his work. But he has a great deal of trouble keeping up with his materials. I’ve just gotten in the habit of making a couple copies of everything extra because I know I need to give it to Michael. I know he’s far more capable then he seems to be. He told me, “No, I’m just not willing to work hard.” He likes being in here, but anything he does is so halfhearted as far as what he’s capable of, and I know he has trouble with handwriting, but he doesn’t need to hand write. I know he has trouble with sustaining his ideas together and putting them into some piece of work, but he’s not even willing to try the little steps. I’m terrified about what’s going to happen to his Antholio, I’m just terrified. They’re having work days now in class. I’ve given all the kids and the parents - I call it May Day Help is on the Way - and there’s a handout check sheet that they have, and their parents have. It just has everything that we’re doing for the rest of the year. I mean this is the kind of thing he needs. It’s the kind of thing that’s helpful.
But all in all, as bright as Michael is, his brightness is not being captured in the language arts area of the classroom. And I did a lot more looking and talking to his elementary school teachers and he seemed to do fine up until the 3rd grade. And then after that, it just, he started being silly and not paying attention and it’s probably where some of the problems with his reading and that kind of thing kicked in. And so that’s just the road that he chose to take.

And the other thing I was so worried about was in the 8th grade is when the FCAT is so huge because they have to do the FCAT writing. It’s one of those critical times, and Michael has done not well at all on the FCAT. He has made 2s, and I told his mom, too, that I don’t do a lot of FCAT review in here. There’s not a need here and I just don’t do it. And if he’s in my class in 8th grade he’s not going to get any of that, whereas if he’s in the regular class, he will get quite a lot of FCAT review.

But I’ve already made up in my mind, even if it looks like a D Antholio, no matter. Just because he has tried harder I’m going to give him a C for a grade, I’m just going to give it to him. It’s middle school, he came into this class late, I’m not giving him a D. I’m just, I’m not. Honestly, even though that is what it’s worth and deserves, and even with some of his behavior. But some of the kids like this, these kids that have the various disabilities and all, you just wait until the end. I’m sure I’ve said that lots of times. However long it takes. And if at the end he’s at the turning point, and he’s going to be at a place next year where he can feel some success, I don’t want him going in to think, “Oh, I’m a D student.” I mean, they are children. They have their little egos. That’s part of it. And I think he learned stuff.

For most of the day [one day], he was thinking about fiddling around with this thing, and he came up and asked me a question about it. It was good, but he was a little bit on the wrong track, so I steered him back on the right one and he understood just like that what he needs to do.
If he could just engage in the work and ask questions about it, just enough to get going, he wouldn’t mind it as much. I think he’s just been so reluctant to work for basically his school career that it’s just sort of locked in. That’s who he thinks it is: school is just not something that I do.

He loves to respond. He loves to give his opinion about things, which he can do in this class and he can be listened to, but the work ethic is just not there. And I think his mom is interested in what he’s doing, but I think she has no idea of the time investment that she has to give to him to get him on his feet. She wants him to come to school to work with me, and he can, but he always forgets. I mean they just somehow have got to get it together to get him here.

He will not revise or does not. It’s not just like he says, “I will not.” He just doesn’t. What he does in school is just not in his frame. He just wants to play on the computer and I don’t know what he does at home because he tells me he studies at home which is just not true.

I don’t think Michael is ADD or any of that kind of thing. They say it’s whatever the learning disability is - his processing words and that kind of thing, and maybe that affects him more than I know. But I just never feel like that’s the big hang up. I think it’s just a history of habit. I think it’s just habit, and I think he can’t break the habit. And there are enough other boys like him in the class that it’s very difficult. Were he the only one - but there is not a boy in the 7th grade class that is focused. Every boy is just about in the same boat that Michael’s in, except the difference is, they’re the ones with the parents that said, “I sat with my child until he did his work.” Those kids are getting C’s primarily, and I mean the parents are so frustrated. I have help sessions with the parents of the other kids, but they’re determined they’re going to do it. And I just keep telling them, “You’re going to make it. Come on, 7th grade is that tough year.” A lot of it is just hormones.
[Michael’s] parents have just now decided they’re going to get involved but today, he didn’t do his work either because he didn’t have his folder. He left it at home. I mean I’m just - ok, you’ve got your kids. Line them up before you get in the car: do you have your folder, let me see it, do you have your memory stick. And I’m sorry, it’s just parents need to get it together. I tell them because it’s the truth. Middle school, particularly in a class where the demands are higher, they need help from their parents so much. And they’re going to fuss about it, but they need it so much. And they don’t need to be helicoptered over, but they need to be reminded.

Michael is supposed to use his planner to help turn in his assignments, that’s not working. He’ll use separate folders for each class. He has a separate folder for my class. I don’t know what he’s doing in the other classes, but that doesn’t help him turn it in on time. He’s supposed to attend after school help programs to keep up with his academics, but he’s not doing anything that’s on his IEP, so I mean, what do you do? I’m not going to write him referrals. That’s not going to help. The student’s disability affects his involvement and progress in the general curriculum, because of his processing speed. He also has difficulties with processing in reading and writing, so I guess just from all the processing stuff he’s just frustrated with it, and I mean if he just even gets his [assignment] for chapter one together for his Antholio, I will be ecstatic.

Although it’s sort of behavior in here, it’s been probably about 2 1/2 weeks since I’ve gone into the “I don’t know what to do” kind of thing and then nobody sort of knows. And then I think that’s it, because we’ve tried several things and usually some of these kind of things work. It’s because, like even these other ones that I mentioned, I had had some successes with these other children, so I think, okay, if I e-mail the dad that’s going to take care of it. With this one over here, it’s going to be really hard. He’s probably going to have to make a C on his report card and that is going to shock the living day lights out of him. And he will decide. And because that’s
what I’ve told her now, his mother will force him to work to get A’s. But I e-mailed her back and said, “I think now’s the time we just need to let him see what it’s like to follow this little path he wants to follow and see if he likes it, and I don’t think he’s going to like it, so he will then change, and I really do believe that.”

I mean if he would just come and sit here. I would have to sit with him, but he would do it. I don’t even think after school all by himself he could stay focused. Michael must hate doing the stuff I ask him. I’ve said, let me just see one thing at a time, word by word, one thing at a time, not the whole picture, but still no. I know that’s where a lot of them are most of the time. They just see the humungous amount of stuff they still have left to do, and what on earth are they going to do? And they can’t even get themselves to take the baby steps, and I just tell them, “Pretend this is the only thing you have to do and let’s just deal with this one thing.”

I do love him, he has an adorability to him in many ways. I mean you like him, you can’t help it, even if he just gets on your last nerve sometimes. But I have not done one thing but give him some things to be interested in from time to time. As far as him progressing as a student, I have not done one thing to help him. As far as I can see, nothing that I have done has worked. I do not understand as deeply and well as I would like to, but I know that some of the things that I do are probably things that would work for those kinds of kids whether I know it or not. That’s where I am now, but I obviously I need some deeper things. And it’s the parents, I need to know how to somehow get the parents consistently in, because if the kids aren’t consistent, the parents usually aren’t either and that’s what we need. I would love to make some type of support group, I mean maybe that’s going to be the thing, just a support group for the parents who are being driven to distraction. They just need to meet for coffee, maybe that could be a thing, and I could offer it out and I definitely would.
I Believe

I’m an English teacher, English major, and that’s just my passion.

Language arts, reading, writing is not something that you do just to satisfy teacher. Without it, we are just not human. If we cannot express ourselves in writing, if we cannot tell stories, and we can’t appreciate stories and literature, then we’re just not human beings. I believe that, I really believe that.

Another thing I really believe, I believe in real world learning. That is why I wanted to do the literary magazine. That is why I want my kids going to the radio station doing little book reviews. I want their work to get beyond me. I want it to be out there for other people to see when it is really good.

I want kids to write so much. I believe writing is such a vital part of language arts.

I believe [in] how the [coaches] do their track - you put the bar high. This is an age where they like to challenge and try and see who they are and what they can do, it’s a good age to do that.

I know at this school the resources are here, I do not feel abandoned. If anything came up that I could not handle I could get help immediately. Most of the people who work in the field are kind and good and approachable.

The real world, on paper, looks good and all these charts and all these things that come from the state, and we just fill them in and think it’s going to work, but it’s not. There’s a humungous disconnect with all these charts and all these things and what is actually going on, especially with middle school kids and everyday. Some of those questions that - it just takes so much experience and hope and prayer.

My final word on the ESE is to not dumb down the content that you give them. That’s one of the biggest things. All these special workbooks and easier text. You can find things that are
extraordinarily engaging that they want to read and do, that’s how those kids ought to be taught. The basic text and the regular text and the advanced text, all that used to make me mad. Who would want to teach that? It’s such a bore, especially for the kids. And so that’s a good thing, when the kids are in the regular class, but there needs to be so much choice, so that everyone can find their piece that they can engage and understand and be willing to work with. Teaching is harder than people think it is.

**Analysis of Monica’s Beliefs and Practices to Support Students with Disabilities**

**Procedural supports**

Procedural supports are supports that help students understand the steps in completing a task or help students maintain focus to complete a task. Monica’s supports were provided to all students, not just students with disabilities, and she said they were helpful in meeting the needs of students with disabilities related to understanding and completing tasks. Procedural supports Monica used were: providing individual assistance, having the student tell the assignment in his own words, communicating with parents, providing written directions, and providing models.

Monica provided individual assistance to students in class and after school. During one observation, students were working on a parody project based on the work of William Shakespeare. Students worked with laptops in small groups: discussing ideas, taking notes, figuring out the steps in the task, and splitting up the work amongst themselves. The assignment was to choose a scene from any work of Shakespeare and create a parody of it to share with the class. Students had considerable freedom in interpreting the task, so long as their product was limited to 10 minutes and included a summary, demonstration, and parody. They could work alone, with a partner, or in a group. The summary and demonstration could be delivered any way students chose: they could make a movie, put on a performance or anything else they wanted. Most students worked in groups of 3 or 4.
Michael chose to work alone. He said he wanted to create a stick figure animation using the computer program Pivot that parodied the dagger scene in Macbeth, in which Macbeth’s murderous thoughts are so strong he has a vision of a dagger, covered with blood. Michael wanted to represent a boy whose hunger is so strong he has a vision of pancakes, slowly becoming covered with syrup. Monica moved from group to group, helping students figure out the task, for half an hour. Then, she had conferences with each group in turn at her desk about their plans.

Michael had a laptop with Pivot loaded, and he was creating his stick figure and applying animations to it. During his conference, Monica pointed out that he had not written his summary, “You’ve got to write, so ideas will come to you.” He said he had an idea. She said, “Well, where’s your script? You want to find a scene that interests you, and try to tweak it some so you’ve got a parody.” Then, she asked Michael, “Now, tell me what you have to do. What are you going to do first?” The individual assistance provided was focused on helping Michael to understand the steps involved in completing the task and remember all of the components that were required. Monica also provided individual assistance to students after school and made herself available for an hour every day. Most of our interviews began at the end of that hour, and I was able to observe Monica providing similar assistance to students. Michael, however, did not avail himself of the after school help, she said.

In the example above, Monica also asked Michael to tell her the task in his own words. She asked him to tell her what he was going to do first. Monica did this to verify that he understood not only what the task was, but also how he was going to make his way through it.

Another way Monica helped students understand tasks was by communicating her expectations to parents through emailed memos, phone calls, and the maintenance of a website.
“I talk to parents a lot. I e-mail them and talk to them a lot,” she said. Monica also met with parents of students who were struggling in a regular support group. Emails contained weekly updates about what the class was doing and what assignments were coming due. Monica phoned parents of individual students she was concerned about. Her website was her main vehicle of communication and repository of class documents. She uploaded all of her course information and materials: course outlines, directions for completing projects, all of her handouts, supplemental reading, and models of completed assignments.

I tell the parents things they’re supposed to do, but if the parents of students with disabilities don’t take the responsibility at home, reminding their child what they’re suppose to be doing - and it’s parents too, being willing to spend the time that it takes. Just like a teacher in the classroom has to work with the child who has the disability, so does the parent at home on the schoolwork. You can’t just say, ok, go over to the computer or the kitchen table and do your work. Because they won’t do it. They need the same kind of one-on-one help and unfortunately not all of the parents can provide it. They don’t know what the work is. Parents need to have the detailed instructions just as much as the kid. And the parents have told me before that my directions are complicated and long and hard sometimes, but I try to simplify all the time which is again why I’ve got to do the models, cause a picture is worth a thousand words.

Finally, Monica said a way to help students with disabilities to understand how to do a task is to provide models.

A little girl came up and “I just don’t know how to do this at all.” She even had some highlighting done on her guide sheet, and so I knew she had gone over it and she even highlighted the right things. It was just overwhelming to her. So I told her, well first of all, I want you just to watch. You know, is it ok if she sees your powerpoint? [to another student]. So just look at her things. So that’s always models, I just love models, just looking at the model, seeing the thing. And then I just turned to her and said, ok now, what do you think it is I want you to do, from having seen this and read that. And she was able to tell me. And then I said, ok, tell me now, looking at my directions what do you think the first thing is that you’re going to do when you start this assignment? And she, there it was. I mean it was already written down for her, but she just needed to tell me after seeing that.

Monica’s procedural supports were related to her beliefs in several ways. Monica believed it was her responsibility to ensure students understood what she wanted them to do. She believed
that students with disabilities often had difficulty figuring out how to start assignments and organizing materials and ideas to complete the task. They needed instructions repeated, several times if necessary, and written down. She also believed that part of her role was to build students’ capacity to take responsibility for themselves. She believed it was her role and responsibility to help them individually, in and after school, and to enlist their parents in providing support. Monica also believed that to learn to love literature, students had to experience it for themselves and interact with it and work with it. Her class was designed as a series of projects that guided students’ explorations and was organized so that students worked with the literature to create a product of their own.

The creation of the website was related to several of Monica’s beliefs about: the needs of students with disabilities, the necessity of parent support, and her role in helping parents provide support. Monica believed that students needed to learn responsibility for themselves, and the website supported that goal by making it possible to access course materials any time they chose. It was also related to her beliefs about the subject area: that students needed to be exposed to a great deal of literature and needed to explore it themselves. Through the website, she provided literature resources and helped students organize and access the materials for her class; she provided a resource for parents so that they could support their students at home. She believed students with disabilities needed written directions and that they often needed to be provided with handouts more than once. She also believed it was essential that parents assist their children, and the website was a convenience for both parents and students.

Because I can say, “Go to the website.” See, I mean, they have to do it. It’s not like I hand a piece of paper into their hand. They have to go to it. They have to print it out. They are more responsible for it. And models are on the website. The written directions are on the website. They just like websites better. If the written directions come by way of the website, it’s just easier. I just can’t tell you how many times I’ve said, “Go to the website,” and how many times I’ve said, “Here, let me give
you the model.” And the bottom line is, it’s putting the responsibility on the child. I know I’ve said that a lot. Because [to complete the Shakespeare project described above], they have to choose which ones they’re going to read, they have to read it, and when they do, they can get it. Many times for some of the kids who need these IEPs, I think they get told too much. You know, do this, do this, do this. And they aren’t given, maybe, just again the time; when they know they’ve got time, then they know they’ve got time to read through it.

The passage demonstrates also how Monica’s provision of the website is related not only to her beliefs that students with disabilities need directions repeated and clarified, but also to her belief that models are essential for learning in language arts. She provided numerous examples of completed assignments for students to view when they were thinking about how they were going to approach a given task. She made these available to students on the website and in notebooks in the class:

If they’ve got the models to begin with, and they’ve got the written directions to begin with, they’ve got the extra time, they’ve got the website to give them guidelines, if they’ve got all of that before they start, then they are much more likely to do well.

Finally, the provision of the website as a support was related to her beliefs that students needed to learn to take responsibility for themselves. Students were expected to know how to access handouts and resources for assignments. They were expected to check the website regularly for updates and due dates. Monica believed the website supported students in becoming independent learners. She emphasized that idea explicitly throughout our interviews and stated it several times to students during observations.

**Behavioral supports**

The behavioral supports category included teacher behaviors related to ensuring or checking on student behaviors such as attending class, completing assignments, and conducting themselves appropriately. Teachers included these kinds of actions as part of what they did to provide support for students with disabilities. Monica was not a part of the school-wide RTI
implementation, but she spoke of several ways she supported students with disabilities in
developing behaviors that would help them in school.

Monica investigated students’ personal background as a way to support students who were
acting out in class or not turning in work, to see if there were family issues that might have
caused the behavior. She also communicated with other teachers to see if they were having
similar issues, and with the special education support staff members. She said that problems
often were related to students’ personal histories or problems in the home:

[What does help me is] informal brainstorming with other teachers about the kids
and getting background information. So often, it’s not even some education related
thing. It’s just something that happened in the family if you’re having a snag, so
just almost informal chats with other teachers and with the ESE support staff. I
would just die if I couldn’t do that. And particularly Winnie. Winnie who is the
ESE main support, oh she is so helpful to me. I just finished communicating with
the teachers of fifth graders about my incoming sixth graders just to find out, ok
who is going to need extra help? Talking with the ESE support staff, even if I don’t
get specific answers, it just reminds me to pay attention to the needs of these kids.

Monica encouraged the other students to remind Michael to complete assignments, as well
as reminding him herself. One way she did this way by giving group grades to encourage
Michael’s peers to help him remember. Another way was by giving candy as an incentive for
turning in work. Monica thought one of Michael’s biggest challenges was just remembering to
do and bring the work.

Michael will not make it through high school if he cannot somehow get a footing to
himself and become self motivating and self starting and self finishing and just see
it to the end and figure out some way that we haven’t got yet. The checklist doesn’t
work and the planner doesn’t work. There’re several kids just constantly reminding
him now. If Michael’s in the group and he doesn’t have his stuff, then his group
won’t get candy. And they’re like, come on, Michael, come on! But, oh Lord! It’s
going to take a while but I haven’t found the magic thing yet.

The website, discussed above, was another way Monica enlisted others to remind students
to complete their assignments. Parents were encouraged to check the website regularly. Monica
also emailed parents weekly about what was coming due and phoned parents if work was not
turned in.

Finally, Monica said her high expectations for her students to supported good behavior for
Michael. “And that’s the other thing with Michael. He needs to be challenged, even though he
struggles, because he’s going to ultimately have better behavior when he’s challenged rather than
when he’s just bored to death.”

The behavioral supports Monica provided are related to her beliefs in several ways. First,
she believed it was her responsibility to let parents know if their child was falling behind. She
also believed that parents had to take responsibility for ensuring students completed assignments
at home, and for reminding students about due dates and bringing completed work to school. She
believed that students’ home lives had a pervasive influence on their ability to function in school
and that problems in the home had to be addressed for students to make progress. In fact, Monica
completed a case study on a child as part of her professional development in which she was able
to convince divorced parents to change their alternating week custody plan. The student’s
performance improved immediately, she said.

Finally, Monica’s behavioral supports are related to her belief that one of the most pressing
challenges for students with disabilities is remembering to complete and turn in work. To that
end, she enlisted parents and peers through the website and by providing incentives. The website
also supported students in taking responsibility for themselves and their own learning by making
instructions, due dates and model assignments available to them on demand. Monica believed it
was critical for students in middle school to develop a sense of responsibility and the ability to
organize themselves.
Affective and psychological supports

Supports in the affective and psychological supports category are related to students’ relationships with teachers, students’ emotional well-being, and students’ motivation. Affective supports for Monica’s students were centered on valuing students’ creativity and individual ways of doing things. The projects in her class incorporated a considerable amount of freedom in terms of content, materials and mode and she provided supports to motivate students and to bolster students’ confidence in their ability to do the work.

Of all students, I think they have a great need to feel successful. I just think that success breeds success. And they also have a need to sort of bond and feel special to the teacher, that the teacher cares about their situation and about what they’re doing. It’s not just a class, particularly the assignments that I give them are long-term, and they work on them, they worry about. They need to hear from my mouth that they are ok, that they’re going to do fine.

One way Monica motivated students and increased their self-confidence in their ability to complete a task was by providing models:

Just to see what other kids have done, not just what you expect of yourself or not just what your teacher expects of you…and then many times they feel like, ok I can do it. They’ll see this and think I can do that. And sometimes it’s just the name of the, ok, this student I know who it is, that student can do it, so I know I can do it.

Monica said motivation was important because if students were motivated, they would complete tasks: “If you try to appeal to their motivation most of the time, usually they’ll just man up and do the couple of things that they hate to do. “ Incorporating the use of technology was another way Monica motivated students and bolstered their self-confidence:

But I know the kids love technology so much. And particularly, sometimes kids can be very good at that when they’re so poor in some other things, so they become the class czar for technology and it gives them confidence and, and they just you know, once success leads to another.

Appealing to students’ strengths increased motivation, she said, “They are more motivated if they can work to their strengths.” Monica encouraged students to focus on just one part of the
task so that the project was not so overwhelming, and she helped the students break down the
tasks. For example, in the Shakespeare scenario above, Monica tried to persuade Michael to start
with just one part of the assignment, i.e., reading the scene he was going to parody.

The affective and psychological supports Monica provided were related to her beliefs
about herself and her students. Monica believed motivation was important for students’ success
and that the element of student choice was powerfully motivational. Aspects of her class design
that she believed were motivating for students because they provided opportunities for individual
student choice included: the flexibility in tasks, the freedom to use technology, the freedom to
choose modes of expression and the freedom to collaborate or work alone. She also believed it
was her responsibility to form relationships with students and help to build their self-confidence;
she believed these were critical at the early adolescent developmental stage. She built their self-
confidence through motivating them to do their work, thus building their confidence in
themselves.

Academic supports

Academic supports for learning were supports designed to help students with specific
academic tasks or goals. Monica employed several kinds of academic supports with her students
with disabilities, including: individual help, differentiation and individualization of curriculum,
flexibility, use of technology, modeling, collaboration and scaffolding. She also used external
support to implement some of the supports, including parents. Academic supports were provided
before, during and after instruction.

Monica provided individual help for students, with and without disabilities, in class and
after school.

They know they can come by after school for help. It’s just open and there’s
nothing organized about it, I’m just here, and they can come and ask whatever they
want to ask. It’s so, so difficult for me to give individual assistance to my kids unless they are here after school. But that is the best, more one-on-one.

Monica said that one-on-one instruction was the best way to help students be successful, but said that it was often difficult to manage to provide it unless the student came after school. Her one-on-one support sessions were not structured: she made herself available to answer students’ questions.

The overall curriculum in Monica’s class is structured to provide opportunities for differentiation and individualization along with flexibility in terms of ways of meeting goals. Monica provided opportunities for student choice to appeal to students’ strengths and interests. She said choice provided support for students with disabilities because it helped them to figure out their strengths:

Differentiation, flexibility, student choice, those are just huge. But all of that, of course is going to appeal to their strengths because they’re going to choose what most of the time, or they’ll choose something they’re not good at and they’ll figure pretty quickly that they’re not and do something else the next time.

An example of a way Monica provided choice was in learning vocabulary. Students were able to choose among a number of activities to practice their words. Some created skits using the vocabulary words. Others wrote stories with the words, with partners or on their own. Another example was during an activity called concept creation. Students were assigned to write an essay that related a metaphor to a piece of literature. One student, immediately supported by a few others, asked if she could write it in poetry form. Monica reiterated the goals of the assignment and ensured that the students understood; the students discussed how they could do that as a poem. She agreed that they could meet the goals with the poem instead. Monica’s rationale was that there are multiple ways to meet academic goals, so she was flexible as much as possible. A last way to be flexible, particularly for students with disabilities, was to reduce the number of
items in an assignment or the total number of required assignments to reduce the formidability of the task in the student’s eyes.

Monica said that using technology could help students with disabilities overcome slow writing or poor handwriting.

Technology, I love being able to use technology. The kids do. I would use it more if I had access to it. It lets them go faster. I mean the motor skills, they don’t have to fiddle with their motor skills. They don’t have to worry that their writing looks like 2nd graders’ writing. They get the spell checks and the grammar check things that help them.

She often brought laptops into the room and wrote passes for students to go to the computer lab. She arranged for Michael to be able to bring a school laptop home to help him do his assignments for her class. The use of technology was fully integrated into Monica’s ways of differentiating instruction. Students were able to complete projects using any medium they could think of, including creating web pages, movies, slide presentations, and animations.

Other supports for academic learning Monica used included modeling, collaboration and scaffolding. In one lesson, Monica was teaching how to write a thesis statement. Monica began by showing them a draft of an introduction she had intentionally written poorly. The whole group gave feedback on how to improve it. Then, students were split into groups. Each group was responsible for writing a different paragraph. One student in the group was the scribe. The students discussed ideas and created bullet points that they turned into sentences. Then, Monica had students put the paragraphs together and the groups wrote the transition sentences. For students to write transitions between paragraphs, they must understand how the paragraphs are related to one another, and to whole. That understanding, of the ideas in the essay and how they are related to one another, is a fundamental understanding for writing a thesis statement. So, even though no student wrote a thesis statement and supporting essay on their own, the lesson supported practice in the skills necessary to do so.
Step by step, dividing it into small manageable steps. One step at a time. And the kids with disabilities, and the one we were talking about in particular, he gave his two cents in those group discussions. The kids with disabilities didn’t do so much smoothing out of the paragraphs, but they could put in transitions. So they contributed in the group and therefore learned how to support a thesis, talking anyway. I don’t know if they could have, I don’t know if many of my kids, had I asked them to just write the whole thing could have done it.

Monica said that collaboration is like modeling. “They learn from each other, they encourage each other even on their individual products.” Students collaborated, in groups or informally, during every one of my observations. I observed them explaining assignments and concepts to one another. Michael consulted other students about assignments as well, and was able to explain to another student what a parody was one day I observed him. He said it was like a scene in a play, but funny because you changed the people or something about the scene, which is accurate.

The academic supports for learning Monica provided were mostly structures she had built in her way of teaching, her “Modus Operandi,” as she called it. These were related to her beliefs about her roles and responsibilities, her subject area, and students with disabilities. Monica believed her role as a teacher was more of a guide or a coach. She created tasks and projects that provided an avenue for student learning, and guided students as they completed them by providing individual assistance during class and after school and by enlisting parents to help students get the work done. She provided checklists of assignment parts on the website, to parents in email and in handouts to students. Students often needed help making decisions because of the great deal of choice involved in the assignments. For example, in the Shakespeare parody assignment, students decided the Shakespeare play to focus on (content), the medium of the parody (product), and the group members and task distribution within the group (process). Many of the students needed help figuring out what to do and how to accomplish it, and Monica talked to groups in turn about ways they might approach the project and sent directions to parents.
so parents could understand the task enough to help their students at home. Monica believed that it was parents’ responsibility to help their children succeed in school by reminding them of tasks and helping with assignments.

The way to learn in her class was to complete the tasks she assigned. Many of the assignments were complicated and required the production of different pieces over several weeks. Some involved meeting other students outside class to work on projects. This project-based approach to instruction was related to Monica’s belief that learning happened as students worked through the tasks and made connections among works of literature and their own work. She believed that students should grapple with authentic works of literature rather than texts created for their age group.

Monica provided opportunities to collaborate with other students in class, and this was related to her belief that knowledge in the area of language arts was gained by immersion in literature. She believed students should be talking about, reading, writing, and creating artifacts related to literature and poetry as much as possible. She believed that students should be able to work to their strengths and believed strongly that student choice was essential for motivating students. Motivating students to complete tasks was particularly important for Monica because the tasks were the main avenue to learning in her class. The tasks and projects were the center of the curriculum. Monica believed that students with disabilities often had difficulty with the length and the amount of work and a number of her supports were aimed at adjusting those so that students could complete at least part of a task, and achieve at least some of her goals.

**Summary**

Teachers identified several practices to support the learning of students with disabilities that could clearly be linked to their beliefs. Teachers’ beliefs about their own roles and responsibilities were important for many of the practices they described; teachers often went far
above and beyond what they were required to do to ensure students with disabilities had the help and support they needed to succeed. Teachers also showed a great deal of caring for the whole student – their emotional lives, their home lives, their self-confidence, and their need to feel valued. A great number of supports were aimed at ensuring students with disabilities understood the tasks required of them and at motivating students with disabilities to complete those tasks. Teachers firmly believed that what students with disabilities needed in order to learn was a great deal of encouragement and assistance with organizing the steps in larger tasks. Teachers’ supports were often intimately linked with their subject area beliefs and goals: they supported students in making progress in the aspects of the language arts curriculum they believed were most important. There were, however, many differences in how teachers implemented supports and even in their rationale behind the implementation of the same supports. Some of the differences seemed to be related to differences in teachers’ beliefs. The relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices are explored theoretically in the next chapter.
Figure 4-1. Concept Map: Maggie. Maggie started with her big idea, whatever it was about the world she wanted to teach, for example, advocacy. Then, she considered the state standards in light of her students’ needs. She chose content and then tasks, thinking all the time about the standards and the big idea. Last, she considered the underlying skills she would have to teach to enable students to successfully accomplish the end product and laid out a timeline. She described content as a funnel or channel that connected the big idea to the skills students were learning.
Figure 4-2. Concept Map: Nora. Classroom instruction was influenced by several things in Nora’s planning process. She met with her grade level team and considered her department standards. She considered her students’ achievement and the previous year’s results with an activity or unit. She brainstormed, using her own prior knowledge to think of how to meet her students’ needs. Then, she gathered the necessary materials.
Figure 4-3. Concept Map: Dan’s big questions are represented to the left in the diagram. Instruction began and ended with the big questions, as indicated by the arrows. Students worked to develop skills that would support successful performance on the state test through products, or assignments, that were related to the big questions. Dan provided ways for his students to share their work with others and believed “going public” was essential for students.
Figure 4-4. Concept Map: Monica. Language and words are at the center of Monica’s planning, enclosed in a star for excellence. Everything in the star points is related to language and words: activities, listening, writing, creativity and literature. All of this is enclosed in a circle that represents the positive classroom atmosphere of: tolerance, acceptance, caring, questioning, and referencing the past.
CHAPTER 5
THE GROUNDED THEORY

I analyzed the dataset using the procedures for developing grounded theory detailed in Chapter 3. Grounded theory analysis procedures culminated in a theory specified through the identification of relationships among the properties and dimensions of categories that emerged from the organization of concepts formed from grouping observed phenomena such as action and talk present in the dataset. More specifically, the relationship between the categories and the core phenomenon is made explicit through a series of proposition statements. The grounded theory explanation begins with an explication of the core phenomenon and the related categories in terms of their properties and dimensions. Then, the derived proposition statements that specify the relationships between beliefs and practices are identified, explained and grounded in the data.

The grounded theory analysis focused on the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and their practices to support included students with disabilities. The grounded theory contains only beliefs that can be linked to practice in the data, and not theoretical categories that might be logically inferred. To draw conclusions, categories must be full; data must exist for all teachers in the category. In other words, if only one teacher expressed a particular belief, linking that belief to her practice would not be a valid interpretation of the data. On the other hand, if that particular belief was related to the other teachers’ beliefs within a specific category or dimension of a belief, then teachers could vary in their expression of that belief and interpretations of their practice would be valid. For example, Monica strongly believed that parents bore some of the responsibility for their children’s success in school. None of the other teachers expressed that belief. Therefore, there is no grounding for the data for interpretations of how that belief influenced teacher practice. On the other hand, after further analysis I concluded Monica’s belief about sharing responsibility for student success with parents was essentially an aspect of her
beliefs about responsibility for student learning; all four teachers had beliefs about the responsibility for student learning. Thus, the category is full and can be specified on a continuum firmly grounded in the data that ranges from Maggie’s belief that she is totally responsible for student learning, through Dan and Nora who believe the responsibility is shared, but mostly with students, to Monica who believes responsibility is not only shared but resides largely in the students and parents. Each teacher expressed a belief in that category: conclusions therefore can be made about how teachers’ beliefs about responsibility for student learning are related to their practices and to other beliefs.

**Overview of the Grounded Theory**

The core phenomenon of a grounded theory can be thought of as a nexus; all of the categories in the grounded theory interacted with the core phenomenon. In this grounded theory of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices to support students with disabilities included in their secondary general education language arts classes, the core phenomenon that emerged was named Negotiating Support through Trial and Error to reflect teachers’ ongoing decision-making about how to support students with disabilities in a complex, dynamic environment with limited temporal, material and personnel resources. Teachers’ decision-making about how to provide support for their included students with disabilities was a complex process that involved aspects of the context as well as their own beliefs. The process was complex for several reasons: beliefs themselves are changeable in response to circumstance, the context is dynamic and constantly changing, and the context is comprised partially of aspects of the teachers’ beliefs.

Grounded theory procedures were useful in coming to an understanding of components of the teachers’ decision-making process. Strauss and Corbin (1990) provided an organizing paradigm for grounded theory categories that included the following: causal condition, core
phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences.

The categories that emerged from the data fit into the paradigm categories as follows:

- **Causal Condition**: Student Struggles or Expectation that Student will Struggle
- **Core Phenomenon**: Negotiating Support through Trial and Error
- **Context**: Temporal, Academic, Structural and Individual
- **Intervening Conditions**: Beliefs about Self as Teacher, Beliefs about Subject Area, Beliefs about Students with Disabilities
- **Action/Interaction Strategies**: Procedural Supports, Behavioral Supports, Affective and Psychological Supports, and Academic Supports
- **Consequences**

Every category contained dimensions and properties, and relationships could be specified among them. For example, the Causal Condition: Student Struggles category contained many ways students with disabilities struggled or were expected to struggle in teachers’ language arts classes: following directions, completing assignments, and organizing tasks, for example. The struggles had properties such as frequency, severity, duration and so on. Relationships could be specified between those properties and the properties of any other feature of the model, for example, state testing, teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities, or academic supports provided. This investigation, however, is focused on the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices, and specifically, how teachers negotiated support for students with disabilities. This negotiating is essentially a decision, a psychological process, and so the immediate context for the decision is the teachers’ mind. Therefore, an assumption about the other categories is that although the categories may exist externally, they also exist in the teachers’ minds. Since my study adopted a constructivist lens, the teachers’ perceptions about students’ struggles, contextual influences on their ability to provide support, and the supports they provided for students with disabilities were the primary focus. As an example, the category, Causal
Condition: Student Struggles, contains data about how students struggled, but it is data about how teachers believed students struggled. I did not do any independent verification of how students struggled that would allow me to reach a conclusion about how students struggled that might differ from the teachers’ perception. My analyses therefore, were confined to teachers’ beliefs that influenced the supports they provided for students with disabilities and my conclusions were limited to propositions that specified relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices. In this section, the grounded theory model itself is described. Relationships among teachers’ beliefs and practices are specified and grounded in the data within the propositions sections that follow the description of the grounded theory model.

Please see Figure 5-1 at the end of this chapter for a visual representation of the grounded theory. The large dark circle represents teachers’ minds or cognition. At the center of teachers’ minds, a smaller circle represents teachers’ beliefs related to negotiating supports for included students with disabilities. Within the beliefs circle are three smaller circles, one each for Self, Subject, and Student; these represent teachers’ beliefs about themselves as teachers (Self), the subject area of language arts (Subject), and students with disabilities (Student). On the outer edge of the teachers’ minds circle are 4 smaller circles: Student Struggles, Context, Supports, and Consequences. These were arrayed so that they overlap with the teachers’ mind circle to represent the idea that they include phenomena that existed both in the teachers’ minds and in the external reality I observed.

The arrows outside the teachers’ mind circle represent interactions that take place without input from the teachers’ thinking or beliefs. For example, the school provided after-school tutoring for students who were struggling. In terms of the model, the path traced started at Student Struggles, went through Context, and reached Supports outside of the teachers’ mind.
circle. That sort of support took place without the teachers thinking much, if anything, about it. But it belongs in the model because the student’s response to such support or the teachers’ opinion of the support may influence teachers’ ideas of what they need to do to further help the student. The propositions about relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices are comprised of paths that involved the inner circle of teachers’ beliefs and the circle representing the supports teachers provided. The double-headed arrows within the large circle represent interactions between teachers’ beliefs and the other categories. Teachers’ beliefs interacted with each of the other categories: Student Struggles, Context, Supports, and Consequences in a reflexive manner. That is, the teachers’ beliefs influenced and were influenced by phenomena in each of the categories.

**The Causal Condition**

The causal condition in this paradigm of Negotiating Support through Trial and Error was labeled Student Struggles. Teachers provided supports for students they perceived to be having difficulty with a task. Teachers also anticipated that students would have difficulty with an upcoming task and planned to provide supports, so the expectation that a student would struggle was another dimension of the causal condition for Negotiating Support.

Teachers identified several ways students with disabilities struggled or had difficulty in language arts. Teachers interpreted student performance broadly and their discussions were not limited to academic issues. Teachers said students with disabilities often displayed psychological problems such as a lack of motivation or a poor self-image with regard to schoolwork or relationships with peers. Affective issues seemed particularly important for students at the early adolescent developmental stage. For example, students had difficulty focusing on schoolwork when confronted with instability in the home, boyfriend/girlfriend problems, or if they seemed to have a general distrust of teachers and the school system in general. Academic problems of
students with disabilities that affected language arts performance teachers identified included: difficulty with written expression and organization, reading comprehension problems, inability to organize tasks, inability to work independently, and slow processing speed.

Teachers identified Student Struggles in several ways. Teachers used records and consulted with other teachers to help themselves understand the ways a student struggled. Teachers relied on their own observations and interactions with students. Teachers consulted with parents and with support professionals at the school. Finally, teachers predicted how students might struggle based on past experience with both individual students and students with disabilities that they taught in previous years. Teachers also weighed the frequency, severity and duration of how students struggled in deciding an approach for supporting students and those properties were important influences on how teachers Negotiated Support for students.

Student Struggles interacted with other categories in the grounded theory. For example, how students struggled could influence the context in a profound way. For example, Dan completely restructured his class to incorporate time for assisting students individually, thus affecting the larger context for learning. Another way students’ struggles influenced the context was in the school’s response to students who did not perform well on standardized tests. The school’s desire to improve students’ performance resulted in an effort to implement the RTI initiative and provide professional development in how to use the Kagan (1989) approach to cooperative learning. Both the RTI initiative and the use of the Kagan groups affected the context for learning. Due to the RTI initiative, teachers did more checking up on students and discussed students identified to be at risk with other grade level teachers. The use of the Kagan groups changed the instructional delivery model: teachers made a deliberate effort to have
students working in mixed ability groups to complete assignments. How students struggled also influenced teachers’ beliefs and the supports they provided, as discussed in the following section.

The Core Phenomenon: Negotiating Support through Trial and Error

The relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices to support students with disabilities is multi-dimensional and dynamic. In the process of making a decision about how to address the needs of students with disabilities included in their classes, all of the categories in the model interacted as teachers negotiated support. The Causal Condition, Student Struggles, was the impetus for providing support and also a source of information about how to provide support. Teachers considered the nature of the students’ struggles when determining how to provide support. Contextual features also were part of the process of negotiating support, including, for example, what point of the school year it was, support staff available, and course goals or tasks. Teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities, the subject of language arts, and the needs of students with disabilities influenced the supports they provided and so were designated as Intervening Conditions. The supports provided comprised the Action/Interaction Strategies category, and they resulted in Consequences. Consequences sometimes included the need to provide more or different support, starting the Negotiating Support process again. Teachers’ beliefs affected how they interpreted the context, the kinds of supports they provided, and their willingness to persevere in the process of trial and error to find out what worked for a student.

The Context, Intervening Conditions, and Action/Interaction Strategies could be considered component categories of Negotiating Support through Trial and Error.

Context

Teachers Negotiated Support within multiple contextual layers: temporal, academic, structural, and individual. The temporal context included aspects of the context related to time, such as how much time was available in the class or how far into the school year it was. The
temporal context also included temporal proximity to important events such as state testing or report card issuance. The academic context had both general and specific dimensions. Specific tasks led to shorter term goals that were related to larger, more general goals for individual students and for classes. The structural context included dimensions such as the class, the school site, and state and federal policies. Finally, the individual student with disabilities was part of the context for negotiating support.

Each of the dimensions varied according to a number of properties. Individual students could have behavioral, affective, psychological and academic issues that varied in severity, duration, frequency and kind. Classes varied greatly in terms of their makeup relative to students with disabilities. In some classes, several students had disabilities; in others, there was only one. Classes also differed in terms of behavioral and academic properties, and these differences affected teachers’ planning processes. The school organization both supported and limited teachers’ efforts to negotiate support. For example, teachers said the grade level meetings were helpful in reminding them to focus on students who needed help, but the meetings took place during planning time that might have been used in other ways to support students. The state mandated certain assessments that exerted influence over teachers’ ability to negotiate support and what they prioritized. Teachers mentioned the tests several times in the interviews. The federal government was part of teachers’ negotiation of support through the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for each individual student with disabilities; students’ IEPs often explicitly mandated the provision of specific supports.

**Intervening Conditions: Teacher Beliefs**

Teachers’ beliefs that influenced the supports they provided for students with disabilities had 3 dimensions: beliefs about self, beliefs about subject, and beliefs about students with disabilities. Each dimension of beliefs had several subdimensions. Teachers’ beliefs about
themselves included beliefs about their roles and responsibilities in following areas or subdimensions: instructional roles, their responsibility to adhere to policy, responsibility for student success, responsibility for the whole child, their role in the construction or transmission of knowledge, and to what extent they would persevere with students with disabilities. Teachers’ beliefs about their subject areas included beliefs about: how knowledge is defined in the subject area, how knowledge is attained in the subject area, the nature of knowledge in the subject area, and the goals or purposes of instruction. Teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities included beliefs about: ways students with disabilities struggled, the needs of students with disabilities, and the nature of ability and disability.

Each subdimension of beliefs could further be specified according to its properties. Properties of beliefs are characteristics of beliefs or ways beliefs vary. The dimensions (and subdimensions) of teachers’ beliefs varied according to the following properties: nature, strength, specificity, and connectedness. The nature of teachers’ beliefs was the content of the belief itself and when there was variance in the nature of teachers’ beliefs, it was possible to form a continuum. An example provided earlier was teachers’ beliefs about the responsibility for student learning. Maggie believed that she was responsible for students’ learning; in contrast, Monica believed that students and parents shared responsibility for students’ learning.

The strength of teachers’ beliefs is how committed to the belief the teacher is and how definitely and unambiguously stated the belief is. There are two aspects to the specificity of teachers’ beliefs: a) the explicitness and distinctness of the belief, that is, how well differentiated the belief is from other similar beliefs, and b) the degree of generalizability of the belief in terms of its relationship to students, subject area, and situations. A highly generalizable belief would apply to many students or many kinds of students, to several aspects of the subject area (e.g.,
reading, writing, speaking), or to many situations (as opposed to a specific situation). Teachers’ beliefs also varied in the degree of connectedness to other beliefs they expressed. Some beliefs depended on other beliefs or seemed to influence Negotiating Supports only when certain other beliefs were also involved. Other beliefs seemed to be singleton beliefs that did not appear to be connected to other beliefs. The specification of beliefs held by each teacher according to its dimensions, subdimensions and properties is necessary for the formation of the propositions. The propositions concern relationships among aspects of beliefs and between aspects of beliefs and practices.

In the following sections, the dimensions of the teachers’ beliefs are discussed. See Table 5-1 for a descriptive summary of the nature of the teachers’ beliefs and Figure 5-2 for a representation of the nature and properties of teachers’ beliefs. In Figure 5-2, the strength, specificity and connectedness of the teachers’ beliefs are represented by the legs of the glyphs. Glyphs are symbols whose parts have significance. In the teacher beliefs’ properties glyphs, the red leg represents strength, the blue leg represents specificity and the green leg represents connectedness. The length of each leg corresponds to the intensity of the property: the longer the leg is, the more intensely the property was represented in the data for that teacher. The glyphs were helpful in spotting trends in the data. The most marked differences among the strength, specificity and connectedness of the teachers’ beliefs were in the areas of beliefs about self and beliefs about students with disabilities; all of the teachers had strong, specific, connected beliefs about language arts. Two of the teachers had less developed beliefs about students with disabilities. The nature of teachers’ beliefs varied in several ways, most obviously in beliefs about instructional roles, the responsibility for student learning, the goals of language arts instruction, and beliefs about students with disabilities. The most marked similarity among the
nature of teachers’ beliefs overall was that they all believed it was their responsibility to adhere to school/district/state policies, although the degree to which they did so differed. The most marked similarity among the properties of the teachers’ beliefs was in the category of beliefs about the subject area: all of the teachers’ beliefs about language arts were strong, specific and connected.

**Teachers’ beliefs about themselves**

Teachers’ beliefs about themselves included beliefs about their roles and responsibilities in following areas or subdimensions: how they would provide instruction, their responsibility to adhere to policy, responsibility for student success, responsibility for the whole child, their role in the construction or transmission of knowledge, and perseverance with students with disabilities. Teachers’ own beliefs about their roles and responsibilities were often closely related to one another. Maggie and Dan believed their role as a teacher included a variety of instructional roles, such as whole class instruction and supervising group work as well as intensive one-on-one instruction. Nora and Monica also provided whole class instruction and supervised groups. They made themselves available for individual consultation by students, but did not believe their role included the provision of planned, intensive, teacher directed instruction during those individual consultations.

The teachers’ beliefs about adhering to policies were similar to one another’s. They were inclined to adhere to policy so long as it did not conflict with other beliefs they held. For instance, Maggie violated school policy by creating a Facebook page because she believed it enabled her to help students keep up with assignments. In another example, Monica had students with disabilities sit by themselves to minimize distractions rather than seating them in the front of the room as stated in their IEPs. Because she moved around the room a lot and did not spend a lot of time lecturing and writing things on the board, she believed that accommodation was not
useful given her style of teaching. But overall, teachers believed it was their responsibility to follow school, state and federal guidelines.

Teachers varied greatly in beliefs about responsibility for student success. Maggie believed she was totally responsible for student success. Dan believed he was responsible for student success, but that students also bore some responsibility. Nora believed students shared even more of the responsibility for their own success. Last, Monica believed students and their parents were mostly responsible for student success.

Maggie and Dan believed their roles included taking responsibility for the whole child, that is, they were concerned with students’ emotional and psychological lives. Nora also was concerned with students’ emotional and psychological lives, but less so. Monica believed her role mainly was to provide instruction. It is evident from the glyphs that this area of belief for Nora and Monica is rather undeveloped: their beliefs lack strength, specificity, and connectedness.

Maggie, Dan and Monica held constructivist beliefs about knowledge. They believed that students created knowledge through completing the tasks and assignments in the class and that the process of completing the tasks was the way to become proficient. The believed their role was to guide students in completing tasks successfully. Nora believed her role was to give or transmit knowledge to students. Nora held some constructivist beliefs, too, but overall her beliefs were more transmissive than the other teachers’ beliefs. This tendency in Nora’s beliefs is related to her subject area beliefs and goals for students, because she believed language arts included not only building reading and writing skills but also acquiring a real world and literary vocabulary and learning how to analyze literature.
All of the teachers believed to some extent that students with disabilities would encounter difficulties in their classes no matter what they did. Two teachers, however, Maggie and Dan, believed that it was their responsibility to persevere until they found a way to help students succeed. The other two teachers had less strong, specific and connected beliefs not only in this area, but in the other two areas of self beliefs that affected supports for students with disabilities: a) assuming a variety of instructional roles, including the provision of intensive instruction, and b) responsibility for the whole child. The teachers’ beliefs in these areas differed not only in their nature, but also in their strength, specificity and connectedness. Beliefs in this area seemed related to beliefs about responsibility for student success: the teachers who believed they were responsible for student success were the same teachers that believed it was their responsibility to persevere until they found a way for students to succeed.

**Teachers’ beliefs about the subject area**

Teachers’ beliefs about the subject area included beliefs about the definition of language arts, how knowledge is gained in language arts, the nature of knowledge in language arts, and the goals of instruction in language arts. Overall, teachers’ subject area beliefs were strong, specific and well-connected. All the teachers believed knowledge in language arts was gained through practice. Monica believed that knowledge was also attained through immersion in and experiencing literature. Teachers were explicit about their subject area beliefs overall.

Teachers had different beliefs about the nature of knowledge in language arts: Dan, Maggie, and Nora believed knowledge was definite and unchanging. They believed there were certain things students needed to learn in order to be able to read, write and interpret text, and that these things were unchanging. Tasks in their classes were structured to bring students to mastery of explicit, definite goals. Monica, on the other hand, believed knowledge in language arts was open to interpretation and constantly changing. She believed students gained knowledge
by experiencing literature and that the things students learn might be personal in nature. She also believed that what students can know could change as they became more experienced consumers of literature and she required students to revisit and reflect upon previous work. Goals in her class were experiential; the experience was the process and the goal.

Teachers’ beliefs about the goals of language arts instruction also differed. Maggie and Dan believed the goals of instruction in language arts were for students to master skills in reading and writing. Nora believed students should master those skills as well as other content area material, such as literature and vocabulary. Monica’s goals were to provide students with opportunities for enrichment or literature appreciation. Overall, there are obvious connections among teachers’ subject area beliefs: teachers who believed the purpose of language arts was to master skills believed that students made progress through practicing tasks structured to help them master the skills. Monica’s beliefs were the most different from the others in this area because of the experiential aspect of her beliefs about the goals of language arts. Nora’s beliefs were the most traditional; she believed she was transmitting knowledge to students, and that students mastered content and skills through repetition and practice.

Teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities

Teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities included beliefs about the nature of disability, the needs of students with disabilities, and beliefs about how students with disabilities gain skills and knowledge. Dan and Maggie’s beliefs in this area are stronger, more specific and more connected than the other teachers’, but the nature of Dan and Maggie’s beliefs is not always the same. Maggie believed strongly that the struggles of students with disabilities at least partially arose from the environment. Nora and Monica believed the causes of the struggles of students with disabilities lay within the student. Dan’s beliefs differed from all of the other teachers’ in that his beliefs incorporated aspects of both extremes. Maggie and Dan both believed
students with disabilities needed specially designed instruction; Nora and Monica believed students with disabilities needed the same instruction as other students, but might need more time or a shorter assignment, for example. Nora and Monica also believed that students with disabilities have a condition that limits growth in language arts, but the weak, non-specific and unconnected nature of their beliefs may indicate that they have not had opportunities to reflect on their beliefs. Maggie and Dan believed that students with disabilities can gain skills and knowledge through constant practice and hard work; their beliefs were strong, specific and connected.

**Action/Interaction Strategies: Supports for Students with Disabilities**

Supports provided for students with disabilities (also referred to as practices) comprise the Action/Interaction Strategies category. See Table 5-2 for a summary of the teachers’ practices and Figure 5-3 for the properties of teachers’ practices. Teachers provided the following kinds or dimensions of support: procedural, behavioral, affective/psychological, and academic. Supports were categorized according to their purpose. Procedural supports were supports intended to assist students in understanding how to complete tasks. Procedural supports ranged from task-specific supports (such as “I wrote the first sentence for him”) to more generalized supports that were intended to support students in completing tasks in general (such as “give individual help”). Behavioral supports were those that supported desirable behavior on the part of the students, e.g., attending school, being on time for class, and turning in assignments on time. Some of these were individual to the teachers; some were part of a school initiative. Affective and psychological supports were aimed at establishing relationships with students, gaining the trust of students, caring about the emotional lives of students, and engendering or increasing student motivation. Academic supports were targeted at enhancing performance or knowledge in the subject area. These included: varying the intensity, format or explicitness of
instruction, providing instructional aids, providing on-the-spot assistance and modifying the pace, process, or products of student work efforts.

The dimensions of support varied according to the properties: frequency, temporality, duration, consistency, reliability, specificity, responsiveness or dynamicism, and strength and specificity of rationale. Frequency was how often a support was used. Temporality was whether the support was used before, during and/or after instruction. Duration was both how long an instance of support lasted and how long the use of the support was sustained over several instances. Consistency was the degree to which a support was provided each time a particular need manifested. Reliability was the degree to which the support was the same and provided the same way in response to a particular need. Specificity referred to the generalizability of the support across tasks or goals, how proximal or distal the goal for the support was, and whether the support was used only for an individual student, only for students with disabilities, only for struggling students, or with all students. Responsiveness or dynamicism was the extent the support was modified in response to student performance or to individual student needs. The strength of the teacher’s rationale for the support was the degree to which the teacher stated a reason for using the support that was linked to student needs (related to how explicitly stated the student needs were). The specificity of the rationale was the degree to which it was explicitly articulated and whether it was linked to: a specific task, a kind of task, or a broader skills area; a specific student or students with specific characteristics; and/or an observed need of an individual student or experiences with past students.

No valence is implied in the specification of the properties; they are descriptive only and were created to provide a way for relationships among beliefs and supports to emerge in the analysis. For instance, the name of the property Reliability has a positive connotation. It may not,
however, be more beneficial for students to receive the same support, the same way, each time a particular need is observed if that support does not appear to helping the student. Similarly, Responsiveness has a positive connotation; it refers to whether the support was adjusted based on student response. Adjusting a support may not be optimally beneficial to the student if the support is an evidence based strategy that requires time for students to master and derive benefit. Furthermore, properties in this analysis cannot be conceived of as having been measured. Properties were generated for analysis purposes only, to enhance my ability to describe teachers’ beliefs and practices in an explicit way and thus to apprehend more clearly the relationships among them.

Teachers’ practices to support students with disabilities were elaborated in great detail in Chapter 4, and so an overview is provided here. Only a few supports for students with disabilities were used by all four teachers. See Table 5-2 for the practices used by each teacher. One support all the teachers used was collaborative groupings. This is not surprising because teachers received professional development in the Kagan grouping strategies and were strongly encouraged to use them. Structures also existed at the school that supported communication with other teachers, and all of the teachers named that as a way to support students with disabilities. All of the teachers said contacting parents was a way to support students with disabilities, and all said they provided individual help to students with disabilities. All of the teachers reported providing some kinds of supports in each of the four support categories: Procedural, Behavioral, Affective/Psychological, and Academic. The greatest number of strategies teachers reported was in the Academic Supports category and the fewest was in the Behavioral Supports category. Teachers seemed idiosyncratic in their support for students with disabilities and I was not able to identify any other trends in the nature of their supports. Teachers were mostly observed
providing Procedural supports and Academic supports. Teachers believed understanding the task was one of the biggest challenges for students with disabilities, along with following through on a task once they understood it. Behavioral and Affective/Psychological supports were mostly provided outside of class time and were reported to me in the teachers’ interviews.

There was variability in the properties of teachers’ supports for students with disabilities. Only Maggie and Dan reported providing support for students with disabilities on a daily basis, and only Maggie and Dan planned their units and lessons with the needs of students with disabilities and supports for them in mind. Maggie and Dan also provided supports that took longer to provide and extended over a longer period of time than those provided by Nora and Monica. Maggie and Dan’s supports were more specifically targeted to meet students’ needs, and they were able to link what they were doing to students’ needs more explicitly than the other teachers. One exception to the above was in the area of motivation; all of the teachers believed motivation was a critical component of student success and their practices to support students with disabilities in this area were frequent, consistent, reliable and supported by an explicit rationale.

Consequences

The use of the Action/Interaction Strategies had consequences for students, teachers, and classes. The word consequence has a negative connotation, but in this context it is neutral and refers to the outcome of the use of supports for students with disabilities. This category is unique, as it was the only category that included an exit from the model of Negotiating Support. Teachers stopped Negotiating Support when they believed a support they provided was successful and would continue to be successful. Another way to exit Negotiating Support was when a teacher believed she had done everything possible to support the student already.
Individual students responded differently to the supports provided. The data collected in this study were collected for the purpose of making connections between teachers’ beliefs and practices and are not appropriate for drawing conclusions about how the provision of different kinds of supports affected student outcomes. Therefore, the consequences for individual students provided in this section are for descriptive purposes. The teachers described several student outcomes during the interviews. For example, one outcome was the end of the year grades students received. Dan’s students with disabilities were on track to pass the course and proceed to the next grade level. During the last interview, Maggie was unsure whether Tim was going to pass for the year. She said that he had made progress, but she was not sure he had made enough progress to deal with the demands of the next grade, and especially the state testing that happens in that grade. Nora’s student was doing fine, she said, making B’s and C’s. Monica’s student failed the class. He had not turned in enough work to earn the grades to pass the class.

Another kind of outcome was the student’s performance on a specific task. Nora, for instance, found that having a support staff person to assist Destiny with her vocabulary quiz was a successful strategy and decided to continue it throughout the year, thus breaking out of the model of negotiating support for that particular student need. Maggie found that the supports she was providing for Tim worked while she was with him, and she re-entered the cycle of negotiating support as Tim continued to struggle to work independently and she continued to try to find ways to help him. In general, when teachers found a support that worked, they kept implementing it until there was a reason to change it and sometimes even after there was a reason to change it. For example, Dan believed using centers that created opportunities to provide intensive instruction to small groups was effective in supporting struggling students in improving their reading skills. He therefore kept using centers even though some of his students
continued to struggle, he said, even with the intensive instruction. Dan’s beliefs about the effectiveness of intensive instruction in this case were strong, specific and interconnected, and he believed that the best way to proceed was to continue providing intensive instruction and give it more time to succeed.

The provision of supports to students with disabilities also had consequences for classes, and therefore, the context for learning. For example, teachers reported that graphic organizers or supportive groupings they employed to support students with disabilities were often helpful to the other students. Dan restructured his whole class into a centers/groups format in order to provide more intensive support for struggling students. He believed the centers/groups format was also beneficial to all students. All of the teachers used group structures in some fashion and reported that groups allowed them to give more help to students that needed it. These were significant changes to the context for other students in the classes.

Finally, there were consequences for teachers. Providing supports to students with disabilities influenced their beliefs. For example, Maggie and Nora initially were not enthusiastic about the RTI initiative at the school, but as time went on, their beliefs changed as they came to believe that checking up on students frequently and talking about students with other teachers helped the students in visible ways. Maggie even expanded the RTI record-keeping and activities to other students she was concerned about. As teachers tried one thing and another, their beliefs about students with disabilities in a specific and in a general sense were affected. All of the teachers said they needed more knowledge of how to intervene with students with disabilities. Some teachers invested considerable time in devising ways to support students or staying after school to help students, thereby incurring costs in terms of their time. Teachers sometimes became frustrated with students, especially when they had made unsuccessful efforts to help.
Maggie and Monica also became attached to the students, and said that because they liked the students and they were aware that the grades they assigned had consequences for the students, it was difficult to judge the students’ progress objectively. Last, a consequence of providing supports for students with disabilities was the refining of teachers’ beliefs about the effectiveness of the supports they had provided and of their understanding of the individual student’s needs and strengths. As they tried supports, they adjusted their ideas about how effective supports were and what the needs of the students were. For example, Nora had long believed that shortening the length of assignment was beneficial for students with disabilities. When her student, Destiny, continued to have trouble with the shortened assignments, Nora’s beliefs about Destiny’s needs changed. Nora renegotiated support for Destiny that included help from the special education teacher. When that extra help seemed to be effective, Nora exited the cycle of negotiating support.

Overall, the consequences were interpreted by the teachers and affected their beliefs and subsequent actions differently for each teacher. Teachers’ interpretations of the consequences depended on how strongly they believed they were responsible for student learning, how committed they were to persevering with students with disabilities and on how explicitly they were able to understand students’ needs. For example, Monica’s student Michael continued to struggle. Because she believed so strongly that parents shared in the responsibility for student learning, her response to Michael’s struggles was to increase her efforts to get the parents involved. She was not able to understand why Michael either could not or would not complete assignments despite having been told several times how to do them and having had the assignments shortened to encourage him.
Propositions

Propositions are one way to express a grounded theory. (The diagram is another. Grounded theory can also be expressed through narratives that tell the story of movement through the categories.) Propositions are created by examining the data in light of the analytical categories, dimensions and properties; propositions consist of statements of relationships among these. Relationships specified may be among any of these data divisions: a relationship may be specified between 2 categories, for instance, or between a property of one dimension and a property of another. Relationships may also be expressed in terms of “paths” through the grounded theory diagram, thus expressing how categories interact. The propositions I derived from the data follow, with a discussion that demonstrates how they are grounded in the data. Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-3 provide an overview of the properties of teachers’ beliefs and practices.

Proposition 1: The Nature of Teachers’ Subject Matter Beliefs Influenced the Kinds of Supports They Provided for Students with Disabilities because Subject Matter Beliefs Exerted a Strong Influence on Both the Academic Context for Learning and the Perceived Needs of Students with Disabilities within that Context.

The nature of teachers’ subject matter beliefs contributed substantially to the academic dimension of the context. The academic context was strongly influenced by teachers’ subject matter beliefs and was created almost entirely by teachers. Teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities were rooted largely in the academic context they created.

These secondary language arts teachers all had strong and specific beliefs about the subject area that were well developed and interconnected. The nature of their beliefs, however, varied according to several dimensions that influenced the supports they provided for students with disabilities. Teachers’ beliefs about their subject areas included beliefs about: how knowledge is
defined in the subject area, how knowledge is attained in the subject area, the nature of knowledge in the subject area, and the goals or purposes of instruction.

First, teachers defined their subject area in different ways. Even though they differed, all teachers’ definitions included aspects of the others’; the difference was the degree of emphasis. Maggie and Dan saw language arts mainly as the study of communication skills such as reading and writing. They believed knowledge was gained in reading and writing by practicing those skills. The goals of their classes centered on improving skills by providing authentic reasons for reading and writing. These goals were related to the tasks they created. Students read texts in class to improve reading skills and completed various writing assignments. Both teachers were strongly committed to organizing reading and writing tasks around a “big idea” that provided a real world, authentic purpose for students’ work. Both teachers structured their classes to provide plenty of time for closely supervised reading (Dan) and writing (Maggie) instruction. Knowledge was viewed as definite, unchanging and hierarchical, but jointly constructed by teacher and students.

Nora emphasized literature and vocabulary as well as reading and writing, and her focus was as much on students mastering content as improving skills. She believed that repetition was the way for students to accumulate knowledge, and she structured her class to return to topics she believed were important throughout the year. Goals in her class centered on helping students develop vocabulary, both a general vocabulary and a literary vocabulary, so that students could understand and interpret literature. In class, students read stories aloud together, learned vocabulary words, discussed literature, and wrote essays. Tasks were content-driven and usually could be completed quickly: matching columns of vocabulary words, quick writes, answering
questions on worksheets. Her class was highly structured and teacher driven. Knowledge was viewed as definite and was transmitted from teacher to students rather than constructed jointly.

Monica believed language arts was about experiencing literature and growing to love literature and poetry. The purpose of her class was enrichment through literature and literature appreciation. She believed students learned through being immersed in literature and experiencing it for themselves. Tasks in her class were long-term projects with multiple steps that entailed independent student literary experiences and creation of students’ own literary products. Knowledge was viewed as fluid, changing, and subjective. Students constructed knowledge on their own.

Teachers’ beliefs about their subject area were related to the ways teachers supported students with disabilities included in their classes: teachers’ perceptions of students’ needs were relative to the tasks given in their classes. Maggie and Dan focused on building students’ skills and the supports they provided to students reflected their conception of the subject area as a collection of skills to be mastered. The academic context was characterized mainly by the in-class practicing of reading and writing skills. When students struggled, Maggie and Dan drilled down into component skills of the tasks and remediated them with individual students. For example, when Maggie’s student struggled with a writing task, she said that organizing thoughts before writing was an essential component skill for successful completion of the task. She then helped the student organize his thoughts by working with him on a graphic organizer she quickly sketched on his notebook page. Maggie and Dan believed students needed to practice component skills to mastery to be successful readers and writers and the supports they provided reflected those beliefs. They were also the only teachers to emphasize the use of support staff and
individual instruction, possibly because they were able to target specific skills to be remediated by a support staff person or in an individual session with a student.

Nora’s beliefs about the subject area were also related to the supports she provided. Nora believed that language arts included a great deal of content students needed to master, and the supports she provided were focused mainly on adjusting the amount of the content in a particular assignment or the amount of time the student spent engaged with the content. The academic context included tasks focused on helping students acquire content knowledge on a daily basis. Students with disabilities were frequently allowed to learn fewer words, complete fewer questions, or read a shorter passage. Nora viewed the subject area as consisting of a body of content to be mastered and she supported students with disabilities mainly by requiring them to master less. She was the only teacher to talk about shortening assignments and tests, allowing students to retake quizzes and tests, providing students with study aids such as flash cards and study guides, and spiraling (Bruner, 1960) her curriculum to return to important concepts as ways to support students with disabilities.

Finally, Monica viewed the subject area in a more holistic sense and believed that experiencing literature and creating literary products was the way to learn in language arts. Supports for students with disabilities focused on enabling students to understand how to navigate the projects and tasks. The academic context was that of a workshop: students generally worked more or less independently on one of a variety of projects that were coming due at different times. They worked in groups and alone, and consulted Monica as necessary. Monica used other kinds of class structures, but the workshop format was the most prevalent during my observations. Monica’s supports were mainly procedural; she believed it was important to help students understand how to do the tasks she created because she believed students learned by
having the experiences necessary for completing tasks. She also believed that the flexibility inherent in the tasks – students often could choose process, products and content – was a kind of support for students with disabilities that motivated them to complete tasks and allowed them to use their strengths to be successful. Her supports centered on: a) providing written examples to motivate students and help them understand what to do, and b) helping students understand how to complete projects by explaining directions repeatedly, providing multiple copies of directions, posting directions on her website and enlisting parents’ help to assist students in understanding what to do.

**Proposition 2: The Nature, Strength, Specificity and Connectedness of Teachers’ Beliefs about Students with Disabilities were Related to the Properties of Teachers’ Practices to Support Included Students with Disabilities, Including: The Degree of Responsiveness to Students’ Needs, Specificity of the Supports, and the Strength of the Rationale for the Supports Provided.**

The nature of Maggie and Dan’s beliefs about students with disabilities were that students with disabilities needed specially designed instruction, that students with disabilities gained skills and knowledge through practice, and that it was their responsibility to persevere in trying to find ways to help students with disabilities. The last is a Self-category belief, but it is included here because: a) it is also a belief about students with disabilities, and b) the patterns evident in the nature and properties of teachers’ beliefs about their responsibility to persevere are identical to the patterns in the category of teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities, shown in Figure 5-2. Maggie and Dan’s beliefs about students with disabilities were strong, specific and interconnected. During the interviews, they spoke of how they planned their curriculum with the needs of students with disabilities in mind, incorporated multiple and sustained opportunities for practice, and persevered in finding effective supports. For example, Maggie said she always considered how students with disabilities might struggle with an upcoming assignment and planned how she would provide support. In one instance, Maggie knew some students, including
Timmy, would find it uncomfortable to perform interviews with homeless people at the shelter as part of an upcoming task. So, she had all of the students interview another student that they did not know well in class and write a short summary of the interview to give students a chance to practice interviewing. This support was highly responsive to Tim’s individual needs because he did not like to interact with other people, and this gave him a chance to do so in a more familiar environment. In addition, he had never interviewed somebody before, so this support gave him a chance to see how the process worked. Finally, this support allowed him to practice the skills related to interviewing: crafting questions, taking notes during the interview, and writing a summary of the interview. Maggie said that she was not sure this support would be effective and that she would try something else if it was not or if he refused to do it. Maggie thus provided a support that was specially designed to meet Tim’s specific needs and allowed more opportunity for practice. In addition, she expressed a commitment to persevering in finding a way to help Tim. The support she provided was highly responsive to the student’s needs, highly specific to both student and task, and supported by a rationale that was clear and convincing.

Another example was Dan’s use of the sentence summary frames. Summary frames are sentences that express the main idea or a summary of a paragraph or longer piece of text that have blanks instead of key words deleted by the teacher. Dan’s purpose in using summary frames was to both enhance students’ ability to summarize and provide reminders and reinforcement for summarizing. Dan knew that students with disabilities often had trouble summarizing what they read and he believed summarizing was a fundamental skill that had to be mastered for students to be able to derive meaning from text. He said he believed good readers summarize as they read and if students did not do that naturally, they had to be taught to do it. He therefore had students complete summary frames almost daily, as warm-ups at the start of class or as short homework
assignments. Dan’s use of summary frames was highly responsive to students’ needs: he noticed that students reading in the small groups were unable to summarize a paragraph they had just read. The use of summary frames is also highly specific. Even though this support was not targeted for a specific student, it was targeted at a specific, discrete reading skill. Finally, Dan’s rationale for using summary frames was explicit and convincing: he said summary frames addressed an observed weakness of students with disabilities and struggling readers and they seemed to be an effective way to both have students practice summarizing and remind them to keep summarizing in their minds while they read.

Nora and Monica’s beliefs about students with disabilities were not strong, specific nor connected. They believed that the struggles of students with disabilities came from within the students, that students with disabilities needed basically the same kinds of instruction as other students get with some changes to processes or products, and that students with disabilities have a condition that prevents growth in skills and knowledge to some degree. They did not talk at length about these beliefs and their beliefs in this area seemed less developed than the other teachers’. The supports they provided were less responsive to needs of students with disabilities, less specific, and less supported by rationale. For example, Monica said providing models was a way to support students with disabilities, and I observed several models on her website. However, she provided models for all of her students and not necessarily in response to students’ needs. Providing models, to Monica, was part of good teaching in general. The models she provided were specific to the tasks she assigned, but the goals of those tasks were less specifically articulated. Her rationale for using models was that models helped students understand the task and motivated them to complete the task. This rationale is general; it applies to all students and all tasks. In another example, Nora often shortened assignments for Destiny.
This was a generalized support she used across several kinds of tasks. Nora did not explain clearly how shortening tasks was meeting Destiny’s needs or helping her master the content. Overall, the supports Maggie and Dan provided were more responsiveness to students’ needs, more specific, and had stronger rationales than the supports provided by Nora and Monica. These three properties of the supports teachers provided were related to the nature, strength, specificity and connectedness of the teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities.

**Proposition 3: Teachers’ Beliefs about the Needs of Students with Disabilities were Related to the Kinds of Supports Provided.**

There was a clear dichotomy in the nature of the teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities. Maggie and Dan, on the one hand, believed that students with disabilities needed specially designed instruction. Nora and Monica, on the other hand, believed that students with disabilities needed the same kind of instruction the other students got, but that students with disabilities might need more help understanding a task, more attention while completing a task, or a shorter or less complex task. The teachers’ beliefs about what students with disabilities needed were related to the kinds of support the teachers provided. For example, both Maggie and Dan often had students working in groups. Group structures allowed them to vary the intensity of instruction received by students, and to provide more individual instruction to students with disabilities. Maggie and Dan also were often observed working with students with disabilities individually in a way that was academically supportive during class for ten minutes or more.

Maggie and Dan also worked to involve support staff and others in instructing students, another way to increase the intensity of instruction. Maggie participated in a partnership with preservice English teachers at a local university; the college students worked with her students on their writing in class and online. Both Maggie and Dan solicited assistance from support
personnel, and often had another adult in the room instructing students with them. These structures allowed Maggie and Dan to focus their attention on students with disabilities and struggling learners who needed more individual help. Other adults were present in every one of Maggie’s observations and in half of Dan’s.

Maggie and Dan differed in the behavioral supports they provided in that both spoke of providing a real world purpose for learning as an important way to motivate students. Both structured their courses around a broad question or goal and created projects, assignments and tasks related to that goal. For example, Dan’s big goal during the year I observed was to relate all of the reading and writing assignments to a field trip to a natural spring that took place at the end of the year. Students read multiple articles about the springs, wrote about the springs, and made presentations to younger students about the springs. Maggie’s goal was to increase her students’ capacity for advocacy, and her assignments were structured around that goal. The homeless person interview was one of the assignments related to that goal. Students also read articles about the homeless problem in the town and collaboratively created a book to sell to make money to donate to the homeless shelter.

Finally, Maggie and Dan were the only teachers to emphasize reviewing student progress as a way to support students with disabilities. Dan began reviewing students’ progress for the upcoming year towards the end of the year of this study. He looked for trends in performance and spoke to students’ current teachers about how they were supporting students so that he could consider how he would support them. He also spoke of reviewing student progress systematically throughout the school year to help him decide what was working and what needed to be changed. Maggie began keeping track of targeted students’ records as part of the school’s RTI initiative. She said that she learned so much about the students from doing that that she expanded her
tracking to include all of her students with disabilities and struggling students. She regularly reviewed these students’ progress and noted attendance patterns and whether they were completing and handing in assignments. She kept folders of students’ written work and had a plan to review them systematically.

Nora and Monica provided supports that were largely procedural in nature and were reactive rather than proactive. Their courses were structured to address the needs of most of their students, and they remediated with students with disabilities on the spot as the need arose. For example, Nora was observed helping Destiny one-on-one to help her understand a task and shortening a task for her. These kinds of supports were typical of her support for students with disabilities: most of her supports were provided in class on an as needed basis. Monica emphasized helping students with disabilities understand how to do the tasks she assigned, and she provided directions for completing tasks in several ways including handouts, her website and emails to parents. She also stayed after school every day to help students navigate tasks. Finally, Monica shortened assignments or made them less complex for students with disabilities.

Taken together, there are different patterns of support among the teachers that were related to their beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities. Teachers who believed students with disabilities needed specially designed instruction solicited help from other adults and structured their classes to provide opportunities to work with students individually. They planned with the needs of students with disabilities in mind, tracked students’ progress, and provided students with a real world purpose for learning. Teachers who believed students with disabilities needed basically the same kinds of instruction as other students provided support by adjusting assignments so they were shorter or less complex and providing students help with
understanding how to do tasks. Their supports were reactive rather than proactive, i.e., their supports happened after they noticed a student was struggling.

**Proposition 4: Teachers’ Beliefs about their Roles and Responsibilities (Beliefs about Self) were Related to the Overall Amount of Support Provided.**

Teachers’ beliefs about themselves included beliefs about: instructional roles, responsibility to adhere to policy, responsibility for students’ success and well-being, role in the construction or transmission of knowledge, and responsibility to persevere with students with disabilities. The pattern among the teachers’ beliefs in terms of the construction or transmission of knowledge differed from that evident in the other Self beliefs and is discussed separately in Proposition 5: it appeared that whether a teacher held constructivist or transmissive beliefs was not related to the amount of support provided. Otherwise, the nature of teachers’ beliefs about themselves and the strength, specificity and connectedness of their beliefs about themselves were related to the amount of support they provided for students with disabilities. In the case of teachers’ beliefs about their responsibility to adhere to policy, these seemed to interact with beliefs about student needs: together, these beliefs were related to the amount of support provided. The amount of support provided was determined by analyzing supports for duration, frequency, and consistency: how long or over how long a time period the support was implemented, how often the support was implemented, and how consistently the support was implemented.

All of the teachers had fairly strong beliefs that it was their responsibility to comply with policies and procedures related to struggling students and students with disabilities and they reported that they did comply. Evidence from interviews and observations, however, showed the teachers seemed to comply with varying degrees of fidelity. Teachers sometimes complied with policies and procedures in a superficial way, meeting the minimum requirements. At other times,
teachers complied in a more thorough way: they spent more time, more frequently and more consistently, implementing the policy or procedure. These differences were both within and across teachers and they seemed to be related to teachers’ beliefs about students’ needs: if teachers believed the requirements were helpful to students, they consistently complied. If, however, teachers believed the requirements were not helpful to students, they acted in what they thought were the best interests of the students. For example, the teachers believed the accommodations in students’ IEPs and 504 plans were not always useful or feasible. Monica, for example, said several of her students were supposed to be seated at the front of the room. She questioned the usefulness of that for her students since she rarely lectured or wrote on the board and she usually moved around the room. She furthermore believed that seating students with disabilities and students with 504 plans all together at the front of the room was not advisable and that the students could work more efficiently in an isolated, distraction-free spot. Therefore, she complied with the policy when she thought it was beneficial to students and she devised her own seating plan when she thought other seating arrangements would be more beneficial. On the other hand, as Maggie became convinced of the effectiveness of the check-ins and logs required by the school’s RTI plan for targeted students, she expanded those activities for all of the students she was concerned about. She not only complied with the policy, but also applied it to more students than she was required to because she believed it was beneficial to students. To summarize this point, it seemed that policy was an important way to influence teachers’ behavior because teachers believed it was their responsibility to comply with policy, but they complied in a way that was frequent, consistent and of significant duration only if they already were or somehow became convinced that compliance was helpful or useful to students. In this instance, teachers’ Self category beliefs about their responsibility to comply with policy interacted with
their Student category beliefs about students’ needs and this interaction was related to the amount of support teachers provided for students with disabilities.

Maggie and Dan’s beliefs about instructional roles, responsibility for students’ success and well-being, and responsibility to persevere with students with disabilities were more similar to each other than they were to the other teachers’. Their beliefs in these areas were strong, specific, and interconnected as well as similar in nature. Nora and Monica’s beliefs differed from Maggie and Dan’s, and in some cases, from each other. Nora’s beliefs were closer to Maggie and Dan’s in some areas and closer to Monica’s in others. Maggie and Dan believed strongly and specifically that: a) their roles were multiple and included the provision of individual instruction as well as group facilitation and whole class instruction, b) they were responsible for student success, c) they were responsible for the whole child, and d) they were responsible to persevere with students with disabilities; Maggie and Dan provided a greater amount of support for students with disabilities overall than Nora and Monica did. The best example of the frequency, duration and consistency of the support provided by Maggie and Dan is that both teachers altered the way their classrooms functioned in order to provide support for students with disabilities and students who struggled to learn. The pattern also is evident in Table 5. Maggie and Dan both planned lessons with students with disabilities in mind and incorporated group work on an almost daily basis to allow for opportunities to interact with students individually and in small groups. In this way, they were able to provide support for students with disabilities almost every day that was of significant duration and highly consistent.

Nora and Monica did not believe individualized instruction was part of their role and their beliefs in that area were less strong, specific and connected than Maggie and Dan’s. Nora believed pretty strongly she shared responsibility for student success with students, but her
beliefs were not as strong and specific as Maggie and Dan’s. Monica believed responsibility for student success was shared mainly by students and parents, and her beliefs in that area were strong, specific and connected to other beliefs. She spoke often and emphatically of that belief. Nora believed she was responsible for the whole child; Monica less so. Both Nora and Monica believed students with disabilities will have trouble in their classes no matter what they do, Nora less so than Monica. The only supports Nora and Monica provided frequently, consistently, and of significant duration were those related to motivating students. All of the teachers believed motivation was critical to the success of their students. Nora and Monica also varied the format of instruction and included group work as well as whole class work occasionally, but they did not vary the format as much as Maggie and Dan nor did they include intensive or individualized instruction. Overall, the amount of support Nora and Monica provided for students with disabilities was less than the amount provided by Maggie and Dan and the amount provided was related to differences in teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities.

Proposition 5: The Nature of Teachers’ Epistemological Beliefs about Whether Knowledge is Transmitted or Constructed was Related to: A) The Frequency with which they Supported Students with Disabilities by Allowing Student Choice, and B) The Aids They Provided to Assist Students with Homework.

Maggie, Dan and Monica shared a constructivist epistemological stance; they believed that knowledge in the domain of language arts was constructed by students. Thus, they designed tasks to provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge. Students worked to construct knowledge mainly by interacting with texts and creating their own texts. Nora, on the other hand, had a more transmissive epistemological stance. Nora believed she gave knowledge to the students, and the tasks she provided helped them to remember important concepts. Students received knowledge from the teacher and then worked to remember it, often by learning lists of
vocabulary words or literary terms, completing short answer questions, and answering questions in class.

Teachers’ epistemological beliefs affected the supports they provided for students with disabilities. This was evident, for example, in the difference between Maggie, Dan and Monica providing *opportunities for student choice* versus Nora providing *flexibility with content*. These sound similar, but they are different. Opportunities for student choice provided included the regular incorporation of student choice into lesson plans and assignments. Students were able to choose which stories or books to read. They could choose how to express their knowledge, i.e., by writing an essay or a poem or giving a speech. They could choose to work alone, with a partner, or in a group. Maggie, Dan and Monica consistently provided opportunities for students to choose. Nora, on the other hand, described flexibility with content as an adjustment in the content made in response to students’ interests or needs. As an example, she extended the mythology unit because there were popular movies about mythology in the theaters when she was teaching mythology. Nora sometimes provided choices for students, for example, she allowed students to choose to do a slide show for one assignment instead of an essay. Choice, however, was not consistently woven into her unit plans and assignments as it was for the other teachers.

Another example of the relationship between teachers’ epistemological beliefs and the supports they provided for students with disabilities was the difference between the teachers’ aids for independent work or homework. The constructivist teachers all said they often provided written instructions to help students navigate tasks when they were working independently. The written instructions served to guide students through the experiences necessary to construct knowledge of reading and writing. Nora spoke instead of providing students with flash cards,
both paper and digital, to help students learn terms, concepts, and vocabulary words that they would be tested on. The flash cards contained the knowledge she taught, and provided students with a procedure for mastering it. None of the other teachers mentioned flash cards, and she did not mention providing written guidelines for students.

**Summary**

The grounded theory of negotiating support for included students with disabilities in secondary language arts classes was specified through a visual model and a series of propositions. The model portrayed the relationships among the categories in the grounded theory. The categories were as follows. The Causal Condition was that the student struggled or was expected to struggle within the Context. The Core Phenomenon was Negotiating Support: teachers decided on Action/Interaction strategies to support students in their learning. Teachers’ beliefs about themselves, the subject of language arts, and students with disabilities were Intervening Conditions that affected how they Negotiated Support and the Action/Interaction strategies they chose. Use of the strategies had consequences. Depending on the consequences, teachers either ceased Negotiating Support, or noticed a continuance of Student Struggles and began Negotiating Support again. Each of the categories in the model interacted with the teachers’ beliefs categories in a reciprocal way – teachers’ beliefs influenced the other categories and the other categories influenced teachers’ beliefs.

Five propositions about the relationships among the categories, dimensions, and properties of dimensions were derived from and grounded in the data. They are:

**Proposition 1:** The nature of teachers’ subject matter beliefs influenced the kinds of supports they provided for students with disabilities because subject matter beliefs exerted a strong influence on both the academic context for learning and the perceived needs of students with disabilities within that context.
Proposition 2: The nature, strength, specificity and connectedness of teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities were related to the properties of teachers’ practices to support included students with disabilities, including: the degree of responsiveness to students’ needs, specificity of the supports, and the strength of the rationale for the supports provided.

Proposition 3: Teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities were related to the kinds of supports provided.

Proposition 4: Teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities (beliefs about self) were related to the overall amount of support provided.

Proposition 5: The nature of teachers’ epistemological beliefs about whether knowledge is transmitted or constructed was related to: a) the frequency with which they supported students with disabilities by allowing student choice, and b) the aids they provided to assist students with homework.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about Selves: Roles, Responsibilities, Efficacy</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional roles</strong></td>
<td>Whole group and individual instruction; small group facilitating</td>
<td>Whole group, small group and individual instruction; small group facilitating</td>
<td>Whole group instruction; small group facilitating; individual consultation</td>
<td>Whole group instruction; small group facilitating; individual consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility to adhere to school/district/state policies</strong></td>
<td>Maybe negotiation is a good word for it, negotiating what’s important and weighing out our beliefs of what students need to know and what the state or schools say they may need. The reason why I do it, the first reason why is because I was told to do it.</td>
<td>The work that we do in here pretty much is a result of what the professional development we’ve received.</td>
<td>We still have the state standards and are still supposed to do the reading, the speaking, the writing, the comprehension skills. But there are things that I have been teaching way before the sunshine state standards existed and that I am going to teach them: how to organize, I am going to do vocabulary.</td>
<td>I do look at [state] standards. Most of the time what I think is important to teach is already in there, but I don’t just go by that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility for student success</strong></td>
<td>Timmy is the type of person that I 100% have to stay on. I cannot relieve myself of the responsibility or he’ll do poorly. If they don’t have enough in my class, it’s my shortcoming.</td>
<td>Dan believed it was his responsibility to provide plenty of opportunities to practice skills and to motivate students to engage in that practice.</td>
<td>Nora believed students shared in the responsibility for student success.</td>
<td>Monica believed students and parents shared the responsibility for student success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Selves: Roles, Responsibilities, Efficacy</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility for whole child</strong></td>
<td>I think it’s the most important part of my job, to get to know them and accommodate them, not in the educational way, but as a human: having respect for them, paying attention to what they need and how they react, and if it’s making a difference for them or not.</td>
<td>Dan strongly believed that students needed to be supported in making choices that were in their best interest – to show up for class, to show up on time, to bring the work they were responsible for, and to behave appropriately – because many students were not receiving support in those areas at home.</td>
<td>They need support from anybody that can give it to them. They just need encouragement and the positive feedback if they can get it.</td>
<td>Monica believed it was her responsibility to form relationships with students and help to build their self-confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role in transmission/construction of knowledge</strong></td>
<td>getting them in groups to think how to act, that’s good teaching.</td>
<td>Dan provided opportunities and supports for students to construct their own knowledge of reading and writing.</td>
<td>Nora’s teacher role includes both transmission of knowledge and providing opportunities for students to construct knowledge.</td>
<td>I’m going to be the model, the guide, the cheerleader, the one that leads them in the goals of my course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent learning</strong></td>
<td>My role is not to stand in front of the classroom and tell them everything, but it’s to help them come to their own understanding, and when they struggle, to be there.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monica sees herself mostly guiding students’ construction of knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Selves: Roles, Responsibilities, Efficacy</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role/responsibility to persevere with students with disabilities</td>
<td>Maggie strongly believed it was part of her role to persevere with students with disabilities and find ways to help them be successful.</td>
<td>You’ve got to keep hammering away at it. I believe that everybody is capable of learning everything; it’s a matter of how much time you spend working on it.</td>
<td>Nora was committed to providing the supports she discussed regularly.</td>
<td>Monica provided supports like the website and after school help. She believed that it was the students’ and parents’ responsibility to make use of them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about the Subject Area: Language Arts</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of</td>
<td>The whole world is about what you do in English. That’s how we communicate, by talking to each other, and by writing things down, and by reading things that each other write. Language is how we relate to each other, and it applies to - everything we could possibly ever do involves some sort of communication.</td>
<td>My job is to teach reading, writing. [My class] is all about process and communication.</td>
<td>We’re responsible for many of the skills: the writing obviously, the vocabulary. It’s literature based, always bringing in some vocabulary usage, writing and thinking skills, speaking.</td>
<td>Language arts, reading, writing is not something that you do just to satisfy teacher. Without it, we are just not human. If we cannot express ourselves in writing, if we cannot tell stories, and we can’t appreciate stories and literature, then we’re just not human beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about the Subject Area: Language Arts</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How knowledge is attained within</strong></td>
<td>Kids become good readers, good writers, and good consumers of media by a lot of repetition and practice.</td>
<td>It’s a combination of instruction and practice, and motivation.</td>
<td>You can give direct instruction, but so much of it, you know, it’s not about the instruction that they get, it’s them applying it individually.</td>
<td>[Kids become good readers, writers, and consumers of literature by] practice, practice, practice. It is all practice, and then they need to see examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoying what you’re doing is a huge part, in proficiency.</td>
<td>Individual conferencing and kind of breaking the room into centers and having them work their way through the process.</td>
<td>Proficiency in say, reading and writing, develops by practice, practice, practice. Repetition, repetition, repetition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of knowledge in</strong></td>
<td>I think language arts is a place that gives me a lot of freedom. I just sort of pull from what’s going on, so how I decide is usually by what I’m interested in at the time.</td>
<td>You can teach reading and writing through any kind of content.</td>
<td>In math or science, you have a set of knowledge you can just teach them: this is the fact, these are the things to learn, but in language arts, it’s dealing with the world.</td>
<td>What I think are the wonderful things that all human beings in the world need to know how to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about the Subject Area: Language Arts</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals and purposes of instruction</strong></td>
<td>I think it’s about making them critical thinkers and equipping them to function in the world.</td>
<td>My class is all about process.</td>
<td>One of my goals is making kids think, having them question things.</td>
<td>I want to teach them to be good people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of English</td>
<td>is to learn how to communicate.</td>
<td>That is what it is all about - giving them tools to handle challenging text when we are not around.</td>
<td>There’s always a skill to work on and you can relate anything to what we’re doing in language arts, really.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ways students with disabilities struggle in language arts** | • Reading long texts  
• Organizing writing tasks  
• Understanding instructions  
• Sentence structure  
• Vocabulary  
• Handwriting  
• Spelling | • reading stamina  
• higher level comprehension  
• staying focused. | • Reading  
• finding the meaning  
• interacting with the text  
• remembering vocabulary words  
• takes her longer  
• Organization | If he could just engage in the work and ask questions about it, just enough to get going, he wouldn’t mind it as much. I think he’s just been so reluctant to work for basically his school career that it’s just sort of locked in. That’s who he thinks it is: school is just not something that I do. |
<p>| It’s really hard to know, where does the reading deficit stop and the motivational issues begin? | I believe [students with disabilities] struggle because they don’t have the skills that allow them to take the next step. | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs of students with disabilities</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a student who struggles with his processing time, so I already know ahead of time that I’m going to have to say the instructions slower, I’m going to have to give him a little more time to do it, and I’m going to have to check in with him. And practice, but practice with feedback because if you don’t have any feedback, you don’t know what you’re doing wrong.</td>
<td>• “endurance training” motivation</td>
<td>• more attention and direction, redirection to actively remember to do their best paying “deliberate attention” to individual students’ progress</td>
<td>Of all students, I think they have a great need to feel successful. I just think that success breeds success. check sheet for assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs about Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-----</td>
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<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of ability/disability</td>
<td>There’s so much variation in what you can create and see in language arts that there’s no disability that prevents you from understanding and enjoying what I’m trying to get across; it’s very flexible, very workable.</td>
<td>Kids who have paperwork are just, for whatever reason, they’re just the ones who have paperwork. There’s nothing different about them. They’re all disabled in some way and gifted in some way. background deficit vs. organic problems</td>
<td>I believe they can still pass a class, but not always get the deeper meanings or the higher order thinking that we’d like them to.</td>
<td>The student’s disability affects his involvement and progress in the general curriculum, because of his processing speed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5-2. Practices to Support Included Students with Disabilities Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices/Supports</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain task multiple times, clarify directions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide written instructions or study guides</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check individually that student understands task</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have student explain task in his own words</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start the task with the student</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor progress during task completion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide models or templates</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make parents aware of tasks that are due</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify what’s important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair with stronger student</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize distractions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put directions on website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check in logs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with other teachers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review student progress</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review student attendance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review student behavior</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with parents</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal talk with students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult support staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide reminders on website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices/Supports</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affective/Psychological</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build relationships with students, trust</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for student choice</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with student’s strengths</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for patterns of behavior that might indicated a problem</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay deliberate attention</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect work to students’ lives</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track data to identify problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility with content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide real world purpose for work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide models</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varying intensity of instruction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-spot responsiveness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and Differentiation – vary content, products, process, due date</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten assignments and tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retake quizzes and tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study aids – flash cards, study guides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiraling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of support staff or others in classroom</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of data to build instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/unit/lesson design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of centers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual consultation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide models</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative groupings</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External supports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5-3. Key for Figure 5-3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regular font</th>
<th>Bold font</th>
<th>Bold and underlined font</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Intermittently</td>
<td>Weekly to monthly</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporality</strong></td>
<td>Only during lesson</td>
<td>During and after lesson</td>
<td>Before, during, after lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Brief support</td>
<td>Moderate support</td>
<td>Extended support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistency</strong></td>
<td>Provided intermittently</td>
<td>Provided sometimes</td>
<td>Provided every time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>Support and provision changed</td>
<td>Support or provision changed</td>
<td>Same support, same way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specificity</strong></td>
<td>Generalizable</td>
<td>Somewhat specific</td>
<td>Highly specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsiveness</strong></td>
<td>Unresponsive to student/needs</td>
<td>Somewhat responsive</td>
<td>Highly responsive to needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength of rationale</strong></td>
<td>Weak or confusing</td>
<td>Uneven</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5-1. Diagram of grounded theory of negotiating support for included students with disabilities
Figure 5-2. Photo of chart “Properties of Teachers’ Beliefs.” The colors represent properties: red, strength; blue, specificity; and green, connectedness. The length of the legs corresponds to the intensity of the property: long is high intensity, medium length is medium intensity, and short is low intensity or no representation in the dataset. The center black dot represents the nature of the teacher’s belief relative to the descriptions in the first column. Red legs have nothing at the end, green legs have a ball at the end, and blue legs have a serif.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about Self as Teacher</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am responsible for the whole child.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am mainly responsible for providing instruction.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I guide students in constructing knowledge.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I transmit knowledge to the students.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of my role/responsibility is to persevere with students with disabilities until I find a way to help them succeed.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students with disabilities will have difficulty in my class no matter what I do.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Beliefs about Subject of Language Arts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language arts is mostly learning the skills of reading and writing.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language arts is about mastering content.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language arts is about experiencing literature.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5-2. Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about Subject of Language Arts</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students attain knowledge/mastery by:</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge in language arts is:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite and unchanging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to interpretation and constantly changing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The goals of language arts instruction are for students to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have opportunities for enrichment or appreciation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5-2. Continued
### Figure 5-2. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs about Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Nora</th>
<th>Monica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The struggles of students with disabilities come from:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the students</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The environment</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities need:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specially designed instruction</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some changes to processes or products</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as what other students get, just more attention while doing it</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities can gain skills and knowledge through practice and hard work.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities have a condition that prevents growth in skills and knowledge.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Temporality</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help student understand task</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help student complete task</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of school initiative</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s own initiative</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological and Affective</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vary intensity</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vary format of Instruction</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase explicitness of Instruction</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Aids</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting Process</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting Product</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Instruction</td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
<td><strong>M D N O</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The property specifications are descriptive and are not meant to be interpreted as measurements. The teachers are represented by their initials, except for Monica, who is represented by O (Maggie, Dan, and Nora). The key is explained in Table 5-3.

Figure 5-3. Properties of Teachers’ Practices to Support Included Students with Disabilities
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between secondary Language Arts teachers’ beliefs related to supporting students with learning disabilities included in their classes and the supports they provided for those students. Through interviews and observations with participant teachers, I was able to explore teachers’ beliefs about supporting students with disabilities in meeting the challenges of secondary level general education Language Arts classes, and how those beliefs were related to the ways they helped students with disabilities make progress towards instructional goals.

Research questions included:

1. How are secondary general education Language Arts teachers’ beliefs related to the supports for learning they provide for students with disabilities included in their classes?

2. What are the supports for learning secondary general education Language Arts teachers provide for students with learning disabilities included in their classes?

3. What kinds of beliefs are related to teacher practice in the area of providing support for included students with disabilities?

4. Are there discernible patterns in the relationships among teachers’ beliefs and practices?

To answer the research questions, I analyzed the dataset using procedures for developing grounded theory detailed in Chapter 3. Grounded theory analysis procedures culminated in a theory specified through the identification of relationships among the properties and dimensions of categories detailed in Chapter 5. The grounded theory of negotiating support for included students with disabilities in secondary language arts classes was explained through a visual model and a series of propositions. The model portrayed the relationships among the categories in the grounded theory; the propositions expressed specific relationships. The Causal Condition was that the student struggled or was expected to struggle within the Context. The Core
Phenomenon was Negotiating Support: teachers decided on Action/Interaction strategies to support students in their learning. Teachers’ beliefs about themselves, the subject of language arts, and students with disabilities were Intervening Conditions that affected how they Negotiated Support and the Action/Interaction strategies they chose. Use of the strategies had Consequences. Depending on the Consequences, teachers either ceased Negotiating Support, or noticed the student continued to struggle and began Negotiating Support again. Each of the categories in the model interacted with the teachers’ beliefs categories in a reciprocal way — teachers’ beliefs influenced the other categories and the other categories influenced teachers’ beliefs.

Five propositions about the relationships among the categories, dimensions, and properties of dimensions were derived from and grounded in the data. They are:

Proposition 1: The nature of teachers’ subject matter beliefs influenced the kinds of supports they provided for students with disabilities because subject matter beliefs exerted a strong influence on both the academic context for learning and the perceived needs of students with disabilities within that context.

Proposition 2: The nature, strength, specificity and connectedness of teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities were related to the properties of teachers’ practices to support included students with disabilities, including: the degree of responsiveness to students’ needs, specificity of the supports, and the strength of the rationale for the supports provided.

Proposition 3: Teachers’ beliefs about the needs of students with disabilities were related to the kinds of supports provided.

Proposition 4: Teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities (beliefs about self) were related to the overall amount of support provided.
Proposition 5: The nature of teachers’ epistemological beliefs about whether knowledge is transmitted or constructed was related to: a) the frequency with which they supported students with disabilities by allowing student choice, and b) the aids they provided to assist students with homework.

Discussion

The results of this study are significant for researchers seeking to understand the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices, especially in the secondary school context. Prior to my study, only two studies (Moni, Jobling, van Kraayenoord, Elkins, Miller & Koppenhaver, 2007; Robinson, 2002) examined how general education teachers’ beliefs were related to their practices for supporting students with learning disabilities included in their classes; both studies focused on teachers’ beliefs about inclusion. In this study, several specific relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices to support students with disabilities included in their secondary level general education language arts classes were explained in the propositions, thus adding to the existing knowledge of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. In addition, the grounded theory provides a model for investigating the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices and a vocabulary for specifying the properties of teachers’ beliefs and practices that may be useful in future research. Although there are several limitations to this study, the findings support and extend existing research and theory and have several implications for further research. In the following sections, I discuss links to the extant literature, limitations of the study and implications of the study.

Grossman and Stodolsky (1995) said the school subject is an important context for and influence on the beliefs and practices of secondary school teachers. Other researchers in general education similarly found that teachers’ beliefs about their subject domain were related to their instructional practices (Konopak, Wilson & Readance, 1994; Stipek, Givven, Salmon &
Their findings were supported by the findings of this study and extended to include teachers’ practices related to supporting students with disabilities included in general education classes: teachers’ beliefs about the subject area of language arts were an important influence on what they expected students with disabilities would learn in their classrooms and how they supported them in meeting their instructional goals. Teachers’ subject area beliefs influenced how they structured their classes and hence the demands they placed on students. Once they had placed particular demands, teachers provided supports that addressed those demands. Teachers perceived students’ needs within the context of the tasks or goals they set, and the supports they provided were related to those goals. Furthermore, teachers’ beliefs about how knowledge was gained within the subject domain influenced the supports they provided for students with disabilities, supporting and extending previous research on epistemological beliefs that showed teachers’ epistemological beliefs influenced their practice for general education students (Brickhouse, 1990; Kang & Wallace, 2004; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991; Thompson, 1984).

This study also supported previous findings that general education teachers were favorably disposed to including students with disabilities (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Schumm & Vaughn, 1992; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), and two were even willing to go beyond what they did for other students. Two of the four teachers in this study planned specific supports for students with disabilities and were willing to provide extra support for them, unlike the teachers described in earlier studies (Baker & Zigmond; Schumm & Vaughn). Perhaps things have changed in the 15-20 years since those studies were completed; it is not clear from my data why my findings were different. The difference may be associated with the four individuals that participated in my study, differences in how teachers might perceive their subject, differences in some general
education teachers’ views of their responsibility for students with disabilities, differences in the context, or other unknown influences. It is interesting that of the two teachers who were willing to restructure instruction for students with disabilities, one was a relatively new teacher and the other had a background in reading intervention.

Additionally, the findings in this study support previous research on elementary education teachers working with students with disabilities. Just as Jordan & Stanovich established in their 2003 study, I found that teachers’ beliefs about students with disabilities were related to their practices to support them. Beliefs about students with disabilities in this study were related to the kinds of support provided for them. This study also extends previous research by noting not only the nature of the teachers’ beliefs, but also properties of teachers’ beliefs such as the strength, specificity and connectedness of the beliefs. The properties of teachers’ beliefs were related to the ways they provided support for included students with disabilities. Teachers’ beliefs that were stronger, more specific and connected to other beliefs had clear relationships to their practice.

Schumm, Vaughn, Haager, McDowell, Rothlein and Saumell (1995) reported that general education teachers varied in the degree to which they believed they were responsible for the learning of included students with disabilities. Their assertion was supported by the findings of this study. One teacher believed she was solely responsible and the other three believed students, and in the case of one teacher, parents, shared in the responsibility for student learning. Teachers’ beliefs about the responsibility for student learning seem important to investigate further; in this study, those beliefs were related to the amount of support provided for students with disabilities.
As Pajares (1992) found in his review of the literature on teachers’ beliefs, I also found that teachers’ beliefs seemed to be organized into systems. Beliefs were organized into 3 categories, teachers’ beliefs about: themselves, the subject area, and students with disabilities. Beliefs in each category for an individual teacher had similar properties, i.e., teachers’ beliefs within each category were consistent in terms of strength, specificity and connectedness within each teacher, lending support to the idea that beliefs are organized into systems.

As in past research, interviews and observations seemed to provide an adequate way of gathering data about teachers’ beliefs and practices. The recursive structure of the interviews seemed especially helpful in that it gave teachers multiple opportunities to consider and express their beliefs. In addition, the concept maps were revealing and also provided good impetus for reflection because the teachers talked aloud while they completed them.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. Most importantly, it was not possible to determine how context specific the grounded theory is. First, my study only involved four teachers providing language arts instruction. These same findings may not hold for other secondary language arts teachers or other secondary teachers providing instruction in mathematics, science, social studies, etc. Second, my study took place in one school, and unique features of that school context may make it difficult to generalize findings from this study to teachers in other secondary contexts. Rich descriptions of the teachers’ beliefs and practices were provided to allow readers to judge for themselves how applicable the findings might be to another context.

The propositions detailed relationships between only two of the grounded theory categories: teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ practices. Even though the theory included the context, the students, and the consequences of how teachers negotiated support for students with
disabilities, this study was focused tightly on the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices and did not include extensive data-gathering on the other categories in the model that would enable conclusions to be drawn about relationships among them.

All data were gathered from the teachers’ perspectives, thus excluding the perspectives of other persons who may have significant influences on the model, such as: the special education support staff, administration, students, and parents. A better understanding of contextual influences would have been gained by interviewing more persons. In addition, gathering data on more students per teacher in a more systematic fashion may have contributed to a fuller description of how the students struggled, what their needs were, and what they believed about the ways teachers provided support to them.

There was no examination of how effective teachers’ practices were for supporting students with disabilities. The study focused on how teachers’ beliefs were connected to their practices, and not on whether their practices were effective. The question of how teachers’ beliefs are related to the use of effective practice, however, is an important one for future research.

Finally, this study by its nature forced teachers to carefully consider their beliefs related to supporting students with disabilities. It is possible that teachers’ beliefs and practices were influenced by the study itself. Teachers knew that their beliefs and practices for supporting students with disabilities were being examined. In addition, the interviews required teachers to reflect on their beliefs. Teachers were repeatedly asked to make their beliefs explicit. Finally, my observations - for the express purpose of looking at practices to support students with disabilities - may have influenced their beliefs and practices.
Implications

This study has several implications for future research on the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Most importantly, the findings underscore the importance of looking not only at the nature of teachers’ beliefs, but also the strength, specificity and connectedness of specific beliefs. The properties of the teachers’ beliefs affected how teachers addressed the needs of students with disabilities and investigating the relationships between the properties of teachers’ beliefs and their practices seems to be warranted based on the findings of this study. Similarly, the consideration of teachers’ practices in terms of properties that emerged from my data such as frequency, duration, and responsiveness to students’ needs would enable researchers to provide multidimensional descriptions of teachers’ practice. It is important for researchers to consider not only the nature of teachers’ practices, but also the degree to which they used those practices. Further, researchers should consider some way of establishing the appropriateness of practices for teachers’ goals and students’ needs and how well practices are implemented. The focus of this study was to provide an understanding of how teachers’ beliefs were related to their practices; future researchers should examine the degree to which the practices teachers select are indeed helpful to students with disabilities. This way, links between beliefs, practices, and the effectiveness of practices could be made.

Researchers in special education have focused on developing effective interventions for students with disabilities. Researchers have considered less often, however, how teachers select and implement interventions. Teachers varied considerably in terms of selection and implementation of supports in the data gathered for this study. Research on how to assist teachers in both selecting appropriate strategies and supports and developing structures for implementing such supports for students with disabilities within the secondary general education context seems warranted. The teachers were willing to provide extra help to their students with disabilities, but
they could not always overcome the limitations of the context. More research is needed on how to support teachers in incorporating effective interventions and learning how to do so within a context that traditionally has privileged undifferentiated whole class instruction.

Teachers’ subject area beliefs contributed substantially to the context they provided for teaching students with disabilities. Teachers had considerable latitude in interpreting the goals of their language arts classes, and the differences in their beliefs may have implications for outcomes for students with disabilities. Teachers’ beliefs about the content area differed: two teachers emphasized skills, one emphasized content, and one emphasized immersion in literature. These beliefs affected the tasks they selected and the supports they provided. Investigating how content area beliefs affect supports and outcomes for students with disabilities seems like a promising avenue for research. The teachers’ goals for students were rooted in their beliefs about the subject area, and they supported students mainly in meeting those goals. The two teachers that emphasized skills acquisition in this study provided supports that were more frequent, of longer duration, planned in advance and responsive to students’ needs. Research connecting beliefs, supports provided and outcomes for students with disabilities seems productive, but in order to implement such studies, researchers will need to be able to quantify what are undoubtedly complex belief systems, as well as practices and student achievement.

Why two teachers were able to provide such comparatively comprehensive support, however, was not clear. There are many possible influences on teachers’ beliefs: life experiences, teacher preparation programs, and professional development, for example. Further research is warranted on the role various influences play in shaping secondary general education teachers’ beliefs about working with students with disabilities. On a related note, research is necessary on
how teachers’ existing beliefs might affect how they use what they have learned during teacher preparation or professional development.

Furthermore, teachers’ beliefs about their instructional roles affected the supports they provided. Specifically, two of the teachers believed that the provision of teacher-directed individual instruction that was planned and focused was part of their roles and two did not. The other two teachers took a more reactive approach, providing supports after students had difficulty. Why some teachers believed that they should and were able to take more proactive, planful, and focused approaches to educating students with disabilities is hard to determine based on this study.

Finally, an urgent need in the current educational context is the development of a model for supporting students with disabilities within the secondary context. First, the field needs to come to agreement about what teachers need to know and be able to do to support students with disabilities within the secondary context. Second, structures need to be developed that ensure the systematic provision of that knowledge to teachers in the field and support for implementing it. In addition, the role of the special education teacher is in flux at the moment as more and more students spend more and more time in the general education classroom. Teachers in the study seemed unsure about how the special education support staff could support them or what their roles might be in implementing such support. Research is needed to inform policy decisions about how students with disabilities will be supported in this changing context and what kinds of structures for supporting both student and teacher learning would confer the most benefit to students.
Hello,

I am a student researcher in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida. I am conducting a study to examine beliefs about teaching and learning of teachers for students with disabilities included in general education classes. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mary T. Brownell. I am contacting you because you have been personally recommended to me as a teacher who is working with students with disabilities within a general education secondary Language Arts class.

The investigation of this study focuses on attempting to answer the questions: (a) What are the kinds of beliefs about language arts held by teachers who teach inclusive classes? (b) What are the kinds of beliefs teachers of inclusive classes hold about the relationship between the content and students with disabilities? (c) What are teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities? And (d) how do beliefs shape practice? I am particularly interested in this area because teachers’ beliefs have such a powerful impact on what teachers do and on how they learn.

So many students with disabilities struggle to succeed in the general education curriculum, particularly at the secondary level. We need teachers with a high level of knowledge and expertise to address their needs. Teacher beliefs are important to whether and how teachers use what they know and also to how they learn. I decided to do this study because teacher beliefs about students with disabilities affect both knowledge and practice, but are not well understood.

With your permission, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Here are the details that will help you determine if you are interested in supporting my efforts.

If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

(a) Allow me to observe and videotape 4 or 5 instruction periods in your classroom, and to take detailed notes on the instruction you provide.
(b) Participate in 4 or 5 30-40 minute interviews during which you will be asked questions concerning your beliefs about the teaching and learning of students with disabilities. The interviews will be recorded.
(c) Provide me with documents such as lesson plans, instructional materials, and student work examples.
(d) Draw a concept map that visually shows the relationships among ideas you raised in the interviews.
(e) Complete a checklist, a data sheet, and 2 questionnaires.
(f) Assist in the collection of parent and child consent forms.

You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The interviewer will be taking notes throughout the interview, which will be recorded. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. In order to protect your privacy and the privacy of
your employing institution, all names will be replaced with a code number or pseudonym. Only the principal investigator will have access to the audio recordings of the interviews. These recordings will be secured in a password protected computer and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

A decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw consent for your participation at any time without any consequence. I will be willing to discuss this study with you at any time and will answer any questions. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participation. There is no compensation for participating in the study, but a donation of $100 will be made to your classroom at the study’s conclusion.

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the IRB at 352-392-0433. For other questions about this study, contact:

Mary Theresa Kiely
Department of Special Education
G-315 Norman Hall Gainesville, FL 32611-7050
Phone: 352-392-0701 ext. 282 or 305-304-4988
E-mail: mary.theresa.kiely@gmail.com

Or
Mary T. Brownell, Ph.D.
Department of Special Education
G-315 Norman Hall Gainesville, FL 32611-7050
Phone: 352-392-0701 ext. 249
E-mail: mbrownell@coe.ufl.edu

By agreeing, you are granting your consent to be a participant in this study. Would you be willing to support my efforts?

YES, I agree to be in this study.

__________________________
Participant Signature
Consent Form for Parents

of ____________________________
Student name ____________________________

Teacher’s name ____________________________

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida and I would like to tell you about my research study that involves your child’s teacher. The study is called: The Relationship between Secondary Language Arts Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices related to the Teaching and Learning of Included Students with Disabilities. Your child’s teacher has agreed to participate in this study that will assist me in gaining new insights that may help improve education for students with disabilities.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the beliefs secondary teachers have about how to teach students with disabilities and how students with disabilities learn. I am looking at classroom instruction in order to be able to ask the teacher questions about specific instructional decisions and I will be video taping his/her lessons to better understand the instruction. The videotaping will not interrupt your child’s learning and this study involves no risks or discomforts of any kind. Children involved in our study will not receive any compensation.

Results of this study are confidential to the extent provided by law. No one’s name will be used or appear in any written work. In addition, your child’s participation in the study will not affect his or her grades or treatment at school. Please note that you or your child may withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty.

If you would like to give permission for your child to participate, please sign the attached letter under the word YES. If you wish to refuse participation there is also a space to sign. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Theresa Kiely at G-315 Norman Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611. You may also call (352) 392-0701 or email mtkny@ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about participants’ rights may be directed to UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Sincerely,

Mary Theresa Kiely
Teacher’s Name: ____________________________

I have read the attached letter. I have received a copy of this description and hereby give consent for

________________________________________
(child’s name)
to be videotaped.

YES, I will allow my child to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Date

NO, I refuse to allow my child to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Date
Child Assent Script

Good afternoon, children. Please follow along as I read this form to you.

I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree study at the University of Florida. I am looking at how your teacher helps students learn. To help me understand what she is doing, I will be videotaping her teaching so I can look at it again, and looking at some examples of student work so I can see how she helps students improve. You may appear in the tape, or your work may be selected as an example of student work.

You can decline to participate without penalty of any kind. There is no benefit for participating.

Do you agree to participate in my study? Please circle yes or no, and write or sign your name on the line.

Yes

_____________________________________
(your name)

No, I do not want to participate.

_____________________________________
(your name)
Script/Letter to Solicit Teacher Recommendations

Hello,

I am a student researcher in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida. I am conducting a study to examine the beliefs of secondary Language Arts teachers of students with disabilities included in general education classes.

The study focuses on the following questions: (a) What kinds of beliefs about the teaching and learning of students with disabilities are held by general education secondary Language Arts teachers? (b) What kinds of beliefs do these teachers hold about their roles and responsibilities related to students with disabilities in their classes? And (c) How are these beliefs related to practice?

I am particularly interested in this area because teacher’s beliefs have such a powerful impact on what teachers do and on how they learn. So many students with disabilities struggle to succeed in the general education curriculum, particularly at the secondary level. We need teachers with a high level of knowledge and expertise to address their needs. I decided to do this study because teacher beliefs about students with disabilities affect both knowledge and practice, but are not well understood.

With your permission, I would like to invite teachers at your school to participate in this research study. Here are the details that will help you determine if you are interested in supporting my efforts.

Participating teachers will be asked to:

(a) Allow me to observe, videotape, and take detailed notes on 4 or 5 instructional periods.
(b) Participate in 4 or 5 30-40 minute interviews concerning their beliefs about students with disabilities and the experiences that contributed to those beliefs. The interviews will be tape-recorded.
(c) Provide me with documents such as copies of lesson plans, instructional materials, and anonymous student work.
(d) Draw a concept map that visually shows the relationships among ideas raised in the interviews.
(e) Complete a checklist, a data sheet, and 2 questionnaires.
(f) Assist in the collection of parent and child consent forms.

The identity of the district, school and teachers will be kept confidential. In order to protect the privacy of all concerned, all names will be replaced with a code number or pseudonym. There is no compensation for participating in the study, but a donation of $100 will be made to teachers’ classrooms at the study’s conclusion.

For the study’s participants, I am looking for Language Arts teachers that you or another knowledgeable person at your school would recommend as being a more effective instructor for the students with disabilities included in their general education classes. These teachers do not all have to be in your school.
If you do decide to support my research efforts, I would like to know what teachers you can recommend at your school, or, who else at your school I could talk to for a recommendation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Theresa Kiely

For questions about this study, contact:

Mary Theresa Kiely  
Department of Special Education  
G-315 Norman Hall Gainesville, FL 32611-7050  
Phone: 352-392-0701 ext. 282 or 305-304-4988  
E-mail: mary.theresa.kiely@gmail.com

Or

Mary T. Brownell, Ph.D.  
Department of Special Education  
G-315 Norman Hall Gainesville, FL 32611-7050  
Phone: 352-392-0701 ext. 249  
E-mail: mbrownell@coe.ufl.edu
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview One

The Pathognomic-Interventionist Beliefs Interview (Stanovich & Jordan, 2003)

By the end of the interview, five topics will be covered in whatever sequence they arose in
the dialogue. The interview focuses on the teachers’ experiences and interactions with one
student with disabilities that is struggling with the curriculum. The initial probe is:

Tell me about your experiences over the course of the school year with one of your
students with disabilities who is struggling with the curriculum. The topics are:

1. initial concerns about and assessments of the student, (collecting data and
   observations, gathering information from previous teachers, school records and
   parents, conducting informal assessment)

2. instructional programming, (modifying curriculum, making accommodations in
   instructional and evaluation techniques),

3. monitoring and reviewing student progress, (provisions for formative evaluation,
   working with the in-school team),

4. communication with staff, (whether and for what purpose the teacher collaborates
   with colleagues and resource staff about the student, whether programs are
   coordinated with those offered by resource personnel), and

5. communication with parents (how often and for what purpose the teacher
   communicates with/reports to the student’s parents).

Interviewees will be prompted to provide information about the 5 topic areas as necessary.

An example probe might be:

Were you able to consult with any other school staff about the difficulties your student
experiences?
Interview Two

Interview Two is a semi-structured interview in two parts that will take place after Interview One. In Part One, teachers will be prompted to explain their rationale for selected statements from Interview One.

For example, if the teacher reports during Interview One that at the beginning of the school year she went to great lengths to obtain records and data pertaining to a specific student, in Interview Two I might ask the following questions:

1. Why did you put so much effort into obtaining the records?
2. How did you know that you should get the records?
3. Did you obtain records for any other students? Why?
4. Did you have any past experiences that underscored the importance of obtaining student records early in the year?
5. How/were the records helpful?

Decisions or actions for discussion will be selected based on my assessment of the probability that they will provide a substantial basis for discussion.

In Part Two, participants will be asked about various beliefs. The protocol is as follows:

Inform the participant: “This interview focuses on eliciting your beliefs about the content area and your roles and responsibilities relative to students with disabilities. If at any time in the interview you think of something that seems important, please feel free to interrupt your responses to the planned questions.” Questions:

1. 1. Describe your beliefs about Language Arts. What kinds of statements could you make about your content area that begin: I believe . . . ? How is your content area structured? What does it include? How do you decide what to teach? How do you plan lessons, ie, in terms of time period, selection of content and materials, decisions about pacing?
2. 2. How well are students with disabilities able to perform within the Language Arts curriculum? What kinds of difficulties do they have? How well are you able to help
students overcome those challenges? How might Language Arts be harder or easier for students with disabilities than other subjects?

3. What are your roles and responsibilities relative to the students with disabilities in your classes? How do you figure out the needs of your students with disabilities and how to address them? What steps do you take when a student doesn’t make the progress you were hoping to see?

4. What kinds of supports are available to you to help support your instruction of students with disabilities here at the school? Do you think more support should be available? What form would that take?

5. What experiences in your life do you think have contributed to your knowledge, ideas, or beliefs about students with disabilities?
Interview Three

This interview will concern topics for discussion selected from previous interview and observations for the purpose of firming up (a) the emergent theory, (b) understandings about the teacher’s practice or rationales, and/or (c) the relationship of beliefs to practice. Questions may be framed to investigate any of those three areas or the relationships among them. At the end of this interview, participants will complete the checklist of inclusive practices and the two questionnaires detailed below. Questions about practice might include items such as:

1. On Tuesday, I noticed that you broke the students into several groups. Why?
2. How did you determine who went in what groups?
3. Do students often work groups? Why/why not?
4. Do students stay in the same groups for a period of time? Why/why not?
5. Does this practice enhance instruction for students with disabilities? How?
6. Can you show me examples of the work they did?
7. How did the group technique make a difference for {student}? Did s/he make progress, master the objective? How can you tell?
8. How did you know to use this technique?
9. How is your use of this technique consistent with your beliefs about [communication, etc, something from previous interviews] OR before, you said that you believed individual mastery of curriculum goals by each student is critical to their future success. Is this inconsistent with group work?
10. How do you grade work done in groups? Why?
Interview Four

Interview Four will entail participants’ examination and discussion of my preliminary analysis of the data to ensure I have not misrepresented their ideas. Discussion will center on clarification of the emerging representation of their beliefs. During this interview, participants will draw a concept map to represent the relationships among major ideas elicited in the interviews and observations.
| **APPENDIX C**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TEACHER DATA SHEET</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name and Room #</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Email address</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phone number</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Certification area(s)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Degree areas, levels, and institutions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years teaching (total)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years teaching at your school</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years teaching Language Arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years teaching Language Arts at your school</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Have you taught any other preps or subjects? Please describe.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years teaching in an inclusive setting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>How many courses have you completed related to students with disabilities or special education? Please describe.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How many hours of workshops or professional development related to students with disabilities or special education have you completed? Please describe.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>How many hours per week do you spend in consultation with a special educator at your school discussing your students?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Period</td>
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LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mary Theresa Kiely, PhD, is the Project Coordinator of IES funded grant “The Influence of Collaborative Professional Development Groups and Coaching on the Literacy Instruction of Upper Elementary Special Education Teachers.” Her responsibilities include coordinating the efforts of personnel in 3 states and managing 2 research sites in Florida. She contributed to most aspects of the project, including the development of materials and instrumentation and has developed expertise in managing large projects that involve liaising with school districts, collecting and maintaining large amounts of data, recruiting and collaborating with numerous participants, and coordinating more than 20 personnel. She also contributed to the research aims of the project by working with project personnel and doctoral students to produce papers and presentations, and she is competent in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Mary Theresa has delivered more than 25 presentations at national and international conferences, including: CEC, AERA, PCRC, IRA, and TED and is an author on 5 peer-reviewed publications. Honors include the University of Florida College of Education’s Graduate Leadership Award conferred in 2011. She is a member of the board of the Council for Exceptional Children’s Division for Research. Her research interests include teacher learning, teacher cognition, reading, writing, language arts, and teaching and learning for students with high incidence disabilities.

Prior to her doctoral program, Mary Theresa taught English at Homestead Senior High School and Key West High School in Florida and Evander Childs High School in the Bronx. She studied for her master’s degree in Modern British and American Literature at New York University. Her bachelor’s degrees are in English Literature and Journalism with a minor in Secondary Education from Iona College in New Rochelle.