Creating Opportunities for All: A Qualitative Study of the Reintegration of

Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders to the Mainstream Environment

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Vern and Mary Rinkel, who

taught me long ago that knowledge can change the world and that I can do

anything!

Abstract

Reintegrating students with emotional and behavioral disorders from alternative school settings to the mainstream school environment presents significant challenges. Students are frequently unsuccessful when they return to home districts.

Most researchers address the problem in a variable-centric manner, and explore specific student, teacher, and system attributes that lead to failure. Research needs to focus on the overall process of reintegration and the interactions that create conditions for success or failure.

This study analyzed the perspectives of students, mainstream and special education teachers, administrators, peers, and parents when six middle and high school students with emotional and behavioral disorders moved from self-contained settings to placements in the mainstream environment of two Midwestern suburban school districts. Data were collected over one school year using semi-structured interviews, as well as student records and observations. Data were analyzed utilizing inductive case study and grounded theory methods.

Four major findings emerged from the data. First, the desire of students to fit in influenced their use of the important skills of self-advocacy and self-regulation. Second, having and seeking out an understanding of the student's disability influenced the provision of support to students. Third, parents used advocacy to increase systemic understanding of the student's disability. Finally, attributes of communication within

the system and a lack of understanding of student disability created a problematic

reliance on student self-advocacy.

These findings suggest school policy and practice should be directed toward

improving educators' understanding of student disability, supporting parental advocacy,

and increasing the use of self-advocacy in the classroom for students with emotional

and behavioral disorders.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the major issues in education today is reintegrating special education students into mainstream classroom environments. Students within the special education category of emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) are far too often unable to stay in mainstream settings for a variety of relatively under-documented reasons, yet scant empirical data expressly focuses on conditions leading to successful reintegration and the barriers these students with EBD encounter. The lack of data is concerning because the effects of failing to reintegrate within the school system impacts students as they mature and become part of adult society.

The purpose of this research was to fill the gap in research around the processes that adolescents experience as they transitioned from special education settings to mainstream settings. Five of the six students in the cases were unable to remain in mainstream classes; four of the six were returned to alternative, special education settings apart from their mainstream school environment. One student failed out of one mainstream class, but was able to maintain his second mainstream class. One student was successful in his reintegration and at the end of the study was planning to mainstream full-time.

Federal legislation and policy directed at inclusion has supported mainstreaming special education students and when they are excluded to more restrictive settings, returning these students to the mainstream environment. Under the umbrella of this

legislation, school districts offer a continuum of services to students with EBD which range from highly restrictive, separate environments, to general education settings with little or no restrictions at all.

Educational research provides some support for the efforts to return these students to the mainstream environment. Students educated in separate, special education classrooms are not given appropriate access to general education curriculum; are not exposed to high expectations by their teachers; and are hindered from developing relationships with non-disabled peers (Lewis, 2003; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). In addition, non-disabled peers benefit in gains in social competence from exposure to their peers with disabilities (Snell, 1990).

Students with EBD are excluded from the less restrictive settings at higher rates than those of any other special education category (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). Further, following exclusion, when efforts are made to return the EBD student to the less restrictive mainstream setting, failure is higher than for any other category of special education student (Shapiro et al.; Downing, Simpson, & Myles, 1990).

Research into why students fail to successfully reintegrate has primarily been variable-centered, focusing on separate aspects of the student, teacher, or administration which might account for success or failure. Student variables identified in research include: an internal locus of control, a high academic self-concept, non-externalizing behaviors, and the ability to maintain behavioral expectations in the

mainstream environment (Marsh, Craven & Debus, 1999; Denny, Gunter, Shores & Campbell, 1995; Cartledge & Johnson, 1996; Gable, Laycock, Maroney, & Smith, 1991). Simply stabilizing student behavior is insufficient to ensure success upon reintegration. Some students are successful at transitioning even when behaviors have not improved significantly; likewise, some are unsuccessful at transitioning even when behavior improved significantly in the separate school setting (Downing, Simpson, & Myles, 1990; Schneider & Byrne, 1984; Walter & Petr, 2004). The importance of this finding is profound when one considers that the current model of services is built around the premise that if a student has significantly disruptive behavior problems then the student should be removed from that setting and sent to a special site to learn to change the negative behaviors. The student is then returned to the mainstream environment when behavior has improved. Student factors alone are inadequate predictors of success or failure in the mainstream environment.

Researchers have also explored aspects of the student school environment, including teachers and administrators that might account for success or failure within the mainstream environment. These factors of importance within the student's mainstream environment include: the attitude of the teacher toward inclusion of the student with EBD, competence of the teacher, resources available to the teacher, flexibility in curriculum and policies, and development of a relationship between the teacher and the student (Janney & Snell, 2000; Johns & Guetzloe, 2004).

The literature is unclear about the role of another aspect of the student's environment, the parent. Research has supported the general role of parents being involved in education (Epstein et al., 2002; Southwest Educational Development Laboratories, 2002) and the importance of communication between home and school (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson & Beegle, 2004; Bos, Namhias, & Urban, 1999). Parents have reported mixed attitudes about inclusion of their child in the mainstream environment, and have expressed fears related to the loss of individual instruction and attention that special education affords (Crawford & Simonoff, 2003; Leyser & Kirk, 2004). The research does not suggest how parents' reluctance regarding inclusion might affect the success of reintegration.

While there have been a variety of potentially important student, teacher and environmental factors identified that seem to effect the success of reintegration, no theory exists to explain how those variables interact with particular students and teachers to create success or failure. My review of the research reveals that prior efforts separate the system into parts and then explore each of the parts and their role in reintegration. This approach has not yielded a coherent understanding of the process of reintegration as it has not provided an explanation of how the parts are connected. This study seeks to add to the literature by explaining how the entire system creates conditions that favor or discourage successful reintegration by studying the system during student reintegration from multiple perspectives and attending to relationships between the sub-units of the system.

Purpose

The goal of my research is to develop a theory of the process of reintegration for six students with emotional-behavioral disorders. This study seeks to understand the process of reintegration by observing and involving the perspectives of the active players, and by studying the actions within the system during the reintegration process. My research was guided by the following two questions: What are the interactions that create conditions for successful reintegration of students with EBD? What are the interactions that create conditions for unsuccessful reintegration?

Overview of Approach

Utilizing inductive case study design and grounded theory methods, I completed a qualitative study to begin answering the research questions. I followed six students through a single school year, as they attempted to reintegrate into their mainstream environments. In order to obtain views of the systems in which students were involved, I also interviewed parents, mainstream teachers, special education teachers, and administrative personnel. I completed forty-five interviews. In addition, I performed seventeen observations and a document review of each student record.

Guided by the principles of qualitative research and grounded theory, I developed a theory of reintegration from the six case studies.

Overview of Dissertation

In Chapter Two, I present background information and discuss the significance of reintegrating of students with EBD into the mainstream school environment. I present information I utilized to develop my research questions and focus, including findings from studies concerning reintegration and my personal and professional experience. In Chapter Three, I detail the research methods used in this study, including sampling, data collection and data analysis methods, and then discuss inherent limitations of the study. In Chapter Four, I present the findings and the grounded theory. In Chapter Five, I examine these findings in relation to the research literature; and I discuss its resultant implications on practice, policy and research.

Definition of Terms

Unless otherwise noted by citation, I created the following definitions of terms important in this study.

Students with EBD: Students who meet the federal definition of emotional disturbance and have been identified by their schools to participate in special education programs due to persistent effects on educational achievement. The federal definition is: "A condition in which an individual exhibits one of several certain characteristics often, to a marked extent, and over a long period of time. Those characteristics can be a general inability to learn (not explained by mental or physical difficulties), an inability to construct or keep satisfactory friendships or relationships, inappropriate behaviors or

feelings in general circumstances, a general mood of unhappiness or depression, and a tendency to be afraid or have specific physical symptoms in reference to personal or school related problems. This definition includes individuals with schizophrenia but does not include individuals who are 'socially maladjusted' but not emotionally disturbed" (IDEA, 1997, Federal Register, 42, (163), 42478).

Mainstream teacher: The teacher in the general education environment responsible for delivering the standardized curriculum.

Resource room: A class, provided within the mainstream school environment, for special education students which segregates them from their non-disabled peers for academic and/or behavioral purposes.

Least restrictive environment or setting: A concept, initially included in Equal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), where schools educate students with disabilities to the maximum extent possible with students who are not disabled while also meeting all their learning needs and physical requirements. There is no single definition of what this environment will be for all students.

Alternative school setting: A separate school setting that delivers special education services to students with disabilities in an environment of complete segregation from non-disabled students. In the context of this study, the terminology is used to encompass the day treatment setting and the separate site that provides education services for students with emotional behavioral disorders.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A legal individualized written plan for students who qualify for special education services. This plan includes: (a) student's level of functioning, (b) areas requiring special services, (c) established, measureable goals and objectives for the student, (d) provided adaptive services, and (e) quantitative means of evaluation with specific statements regarding how progress toward goals will be achieved.

Reintegration: Process of transitioning a student with disabilities into the mainstream facility from a more restrictive setting.

Reintegration success: A success in reintegration is generally thought of as a student who is able to receive passing grades in the mainstream classes and not disrupt the education or safety of other students.

Reintegration failure: Failure at reintegration is generally described as a student being removed from the mainstream environment and returned to a more restrictive setting. Failure can result from behavior that is disruptive to other student's learning or failure to demonstrate academic progress, which is typically measured by grades.

Case manager: Person within the special education department designated as responsible for the supervision and implementation of a student's IEP. This person is typically responsible for coordinating the services for each student that is eligible for special education.

Chapter 2: Background and Significance

In this section, I present background information showing how students with EBD who struggle to reintegrate into mainstream school environment remains a significant problem.   I discuss the construct of EBD with attention to general characteristics, as well as long- and short-term outcomes for students with EBD. I review the policy of inclusion that dominates educational planning and delivery of services to students with EBD. I discuss this policy of inclusion as it relates to the reintegration of students with EBD, and focus on the high failure rates.

Emotional-Behavioral Disorders

What is EBD?

Emotionally disturbed/Emotionally-behaviorally disturbed (ED/EBD) is one of several federal disability categories in education: autism, hearing impairment, emotional disturbance, intellectual impairment, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (IDEA, 2004).   Approximately 470,000 youth aged 5 - 18 in the United States receive special education services as persons with ED/EBD (Mooney, Epstein, Reid, & Nelson, 2003). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010a), the percentage of students identified nationally as EBD is 1% of the student population. EBD is a term used to describe a very diverse group of students who exhibit difficulties in behavior, emotion and establishing

and maintaining relationships in ways that persistently interfere with their learning

(Polou & Norwich, 2002). Many terms are used to describe this group of students:

emotionally disturbed, emotionally handicapped, serious emotionally disturbed, and

emotionally behaviorally disorder. Heretofore, the term EBD will be used.

With the variety of qualifications categorizing EBD traits, students with EBD

represent a diverse and variant group. There are, however, some general characteristics

of students with EBD that create unique needs for service providers within the

educational system.

Demographics of the population.

There are significant disparities that exist between the overall population of

students labeled EBD and the general student population such as race/ethnicity,

socioeconomic status, mental health needs, gender, and level of social competence.

These disparities create unique needs for school personnel.

Minority representation in students categorized as EBD is disproportionately

high (Wagner et al, 2005). In 2007-08, the last year data was aggregated by the

Department of Education, African American students comprised 28.8% of the EBD

population while making up 16.6% of the general student population (National Center

for Education Statistics, 2010b). Wagner, Newman, & Cameto also found that one third

of students with EBD live below the poverty line.   Psychiatric disorders have been

shown to be highly prevalent in this population of students (Center for Mental Health in

Schools, 2005; Walker, Shen, & Bauer, 2007; Forness & Kavale, 2001). Greenbaum,

Dedrick, Friedman, Kutash, Brown, Lardierh, et al (1996) reviewed data from the

NACTS, a national data set designed to describe students with EBD, and found that 41%

of students had two or more psychiatric diagnoses. A significant disparity exists in the

area of gender. Males comprise approximately 80% of the EBD population while

representing 51% of the school population (Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein &

Sumi, 2005).

Students with EBD exhibit lower social competence than their peers without

disabilities (Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994; Cullinan, Sabornie, & Crossland, 1992; Gresham

& MacMillan, 1997). Parents of students with EBD rate their child low on a scale of

social skills (Wagner & Cameto, 2004). Only twenty-two percent of parents of students

with EBD report their student getting along "very well" with teachers or other students

at school (Wagner & Cameto). One-quarter of these parents report their adolescent as

getting along "not very well" with other students and teachers (Wagner & Cameto).

Kauffman (2005) found that these social difficulties often result in avoidance on the part

of teachers and peers who perceive these students as annoying and irritating.

Outcomes for students with EBD.

Overall outcomes, short and long-term, for students with this disability are

disheartening. Students with EBD have significant deficits in the areas of reading, math,

and written language (Cullinan, Evans, Epstein, & Ryser, 2003; Mattison, Hooper &

Glasberg; Nelson, Beener, Lane & Smith, 2004). Special education services, aimed at narrowing these deficits, have had little success as these academic deficits continue over time (Mattison, Hooper, & Glassberg, 2002 & Nelson et al.). At the national level, students with EBD have the highest dropout rate of any category of disability (Bullock & Gable, 2006; Davis, 2003; Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001).   Based on a longitudinal study of the success of 8,000 students with disabilities, Wagner (1995) found that 58 % of students who receive EBD services in high school are arrested within five years of leaving high school. Wagner also found that these students have the highest absenteeism rate while in school; produce low GPAs even though they score high on aptitude tests; and are two times more likely than students in any other disability category to later live in a correctional facility, halfway house, drug treatment center, or on the street. This population experiences less school success than any other subgroup of students with or without disabilities (Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003).

Students with EBD require significant attention and resources from the school system. This group of students experiences mental health issues and school failure, such as non-passing grades or dropping out, at a disproportional rate to their peers. Long-term outcomes also indicate a need for societal concern as these failures continue long after the age of 18, the age in which these students are expected to further integrate into society.   Public policy has focused on inclusion as the guiding framework to meet the short-term academic and long-term citizenship needs of students with special education needs.

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Concept of Inclusion

The Equal Education for All Handicapped Children Act was first passed in 1975 (renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990) and mandated public school services to students with special education needs, including students with EBD. The evolution and implementation of this act has significantly influenced the education of students with EBD.   There has been a trend toward inclusion as the primary delivery model for all students, including those with disabilities (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Inclusion generally refers to the effort to provide education to students with disabilities in schools and classrooms with peers not identified as disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate (Cartledge & Johnson, 1996). Inclusion is seen as beneficial to students with disabilities as well as classmates, building social competence and fostering positive relationships within the integrated student body (Snell, 1990). Inclusion is viewed as a social justice issue that meets the intent of equal access to education (Evans & Lunt).

Least restrictive environment.

Educational placements for students with EBD range from hospital/residential facilities to general education classrooms. On a continuum from most to least restrictive (see Figure 1), placements for students with EBD generally follow this order: hospital, juvenile justice, or residential treatment facility; alternative separate day

school; separate classroom in the mainstream school setting; resource room; and general education classroom (Young, 2005).

Figure 1: Continuum of Placement

Most Restrictive   Least Restrictive

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| Residential Treatment Facility | Separate Alternative School | Separate Special Ed. Classroom | Resource Room | Mainstream Classroom |
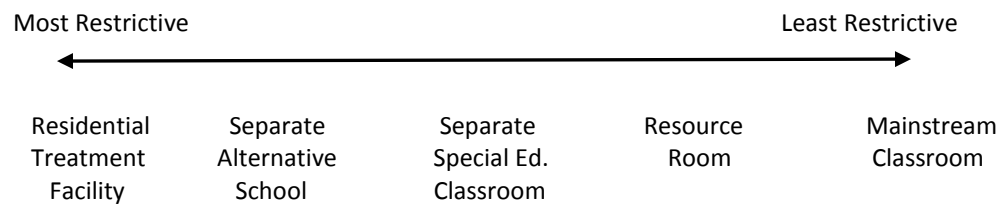
The concept of least restrictive environment is useful in understanding the ranges of placement and the value the system places on moving in one direction along this range.   Least restrictive environment is a value codified in the IDEA that requires students with disabilities be educated to the fullest extent possible with mainstream students, while fulfilling individualized learning needs. This principle directs the planning team and school district to give preference to placement of the student on the least restrictive side of the continuum.

It is important to note that the categories on the continuum are not distinct or separate. It is possible that a student transitioning from one level of the continuum to another exists in two categories simultaneously. For example, as a student transitions into mainstream school from a separate day school, a half-day may be spent at the separate school, a half-day in the mainstream environment. Further, that half-day in

the mainstream school could be split between 2 hours in a special education resource room and 2 hours in a mainstream classroom.

According to the IDEA, educational placement decisions must be made based on individual student need as determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team. This team, consisting of educators, specialists, the student with a disability and family members, determines the student's needs in terms of special education services and placement on the continuum. Every school district defines which options are available along the continuum; some utilize a resource room or special education classroom, while others provide a separate alternative school.

Inclusion debate.

Inclusion and least restrictive environment are principles that continue to be debated within the field of education. One argument made for inclusion is that the general education classroom is the best place for all students to access the general education curriculum. Lipsky and Gartner (1997) suggest that students educated in special education classrooms do not receive appropriate access to general education curriculum; are not exposed to high expectations by teachers; and are hindered from developing relationships with peers not identified as disabled. The only way to provide students with disabilities an education "equal" to their peers is via the general education classroom and full inclusion into the mainstream environment (Lipsy & Gartner, 1997).

The other argument is that general education classrooms are not able to provide the support necessary for students with disabilities to access the curriculum, rendering continued support through special education essential. Students with disabilities included in general education classrooms are not necessarily receiving an effective education according to individual needs. Baker & Zigmond (1995) found that general education teachers with inclusion classrooms were less likely than special educators to implement strategies and accommodations for students with disabilities. They further found that general educators expect students to conform to the instructional style of the teacher rather than adapt their instructional style to the needs of the student. Many students with disabilities do not receive the accommodations and differentiated instruction needed in general education classrooms and are thus unable to make the same academic progress that could have been achieved in special education classrooms (Lago-Delello, 1998; Baker & Zigmond, 1995).

Federal policy in the United States is directed at inclusion as the model to meet the needs of both special education and general education students. How successful has this federal policy of inclusion been for students with EBD?

Reintegration of Students with EBD

In accordance with the principles of inclusion and least restrictive environment established in the IDEA, efforts are made to return students back to the mainstream

setting following exclusion. Students with EBD experience a high degree of failure in

this reintegration. I will present the research exploring the reasons for failure.

Failure for students with EBD.

Efforts at inclusion have been successful for many special education students as

they maintain integration within the mainstream environment. Ninety-five percent of

students with disabilities were served in regular school settings; three percent were

served in an alternative setting for students with disabilities; the remainder in a private

school, residential facility, hospital or correctional facility (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2010).

Students with EBD have not found the same level of success as other categories

of students in special education. This group tends to receive services in exclusionary

settings at higher rates than any other special education population (except those

receiving services for hearing or visual impairment), where they are educated with other

students with EBD rather than their regular education peers (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2010; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). Thirteen

percent of students with EBD are educated in a separate school for students with

disabilities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).   Researchers have found an

increasing trend in the use of exclusionary settings for educating students with EBD

(Furney et al, 2003; Whorton et al. 2000). A student with EBD can be excluded from the

mainstream setting if behavior is disruptive or interferes with the learning of others, or

if accommodations in curriculum and environment necessitate more individualized instruction. Exclusion varies from a single class period per day to absolute removal to a separate, alternative education facility with like peers for the entire school day.

Progress reintegrating these students to the general education setting lags behind that of other special education groups such as students with learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, cognitive disabilities, or other health impairments (Shapiro et al., 1999). At any given time, less than one half of students identified as EBD have been reintegrated for all or part of their education following removal to a separate educational environment (Downing, Simpson, & Myles, 1990).   Ignoring this disparity bears consequences beyond the immediate school environment as these students use the skills, social and academic, gained or not gained in school to make their way as adult citizens (Tootil & Spalding, 2000).

Federal policy is directed at inclusion for all students with disabilities in the least restricted environment. Students with EBD are excluded from the mainstream environment at excessive rates and experience successful reintegration at rates lower than any other category of special education.

Factors affecting reintegration.
Strong evidence suggests that students with EBD have been largely unsuccessful in returning to the mainstream environment in spite of policy that endorses and directs these efforts. Research into reintegration of students with EBD has primarily focused on

identifying the role and contributions of the various actors within the reintegration system such as mainstream teacher, special education teacher, student with EBD, and the administration. Understanding this body of research is useful to develop the necessary conditions within the reintegration process. Next, I present a summary of this research, which has focused on attributes of the student, the mainstream teacher, special education teacher, and administrative policies.

Student attributes.

Researchers have identified a small number of student-specific factors that seem to influence the success of reintegration. In the area of academic ability, there is a link between low feelings of academic competence and low academic ability and high behavior problems for students with EBD (Chen, Ruben & Li, 1997; Jorm, Share, Matthews, & Maclean, 1986; Miles & Stipek, 2006). Researchers have been unable to determine the direction of this relationship; they are unsure whether problems with learning lead to behavior problems or whether behavior problems lead to difficulties with learning (Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008).

Students who are successful at reintegration tend to demonstrate a high academic self-concept and show strong academic skills (Denny, Gunter, Shores & Campbell, 1995; Marsh, Craven & Debus, 1999). Behaviorally, successful students have a lower incidence of aggression and demonstrate ability to meet the expectations in new settings.

Self-regulation has also been linked to improved success at reintegration. Self–regulation is a set of processes student use to direct the beliefs, behaviors and affects necessary in order to attain personal goals (Schunk and Zimmerman 1996). Students who are able to be involved in their learning, set goals, and regulate themselves in order to achieve those goals experience greater success at reintegration as they are able to maintain placement in the mainstream environment (Schunk & Zimmerman; Hayes, 2006).

Teacher attributes.

Much of the reintegration research focuses on the role of teacher attitudes in the success of reintegration. Attitudes of teachers toward reintegration of students with EBD in general and the presence of students with EBD in their classrooms tend to be consistently negative (Avramidid, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Schumm & Vaughn, 1992). Of the special needs categories, behavioral problems are the least tolerated disability within the mainstream environment (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1994). As teachers are faced with the expectation of meeting the needs of the large mainstream group, students with EBD can create an additional burden by exhibiting disruptive behavior. Teachers have reported frustration in several areas: students are sent back "too soon" (Fuchs et. al, 1991); they are not involved in the decision to reintegrate (Hefflin & Bullock, 1999); and they will be unable to meet the needs of the general classroom population when students with EBD are included (Daniels, 2002; Jolivette, Stichter, & McCormick, 2002; Hefflin & Bullock). Researchers have explored the hypothesis that

because mainstream teachers do not want these disruptive students in their classroom, the mainstream teachers create barriers to the student's successful reintegration. Findings have been somewhat surprising; though negative attitudes to reintegration exist; the correlation between teacher's attitudes about having students with disabilities in the classroom and the success or failure of reintegration has not been demonstrated (Avramidid, Baylis, & Burden, 2000; Rock, Rosenberg, & Carran, 1995).

The competency teachers feel regarding an ability to deal with the student who is EBD may also be related to the success of reintegration. General education teachers report receiving little training in dealing with behaviors (Kamens, Loprete & Slostad, 2003; Coombs-Richardson, Al-Juraid, & Stuker, 2000; Downing et al., 1990) and report a general sense of incompetence in dealing with students with EBD (Goodman & Barton, 2010; Rock, Rosenberg, & Carran, 1995).   A sense of lack of support from administration in terms of resources, training, and efforts at collaboration adds to this feeling of incompetence (Goodman & Barton, 2010; Fuchs et al., 1991).

The literature on the role of teacher attitudes also stresses that teachers need to be willing to connect with students on a personal level (Barr & Parrett, 1995; Harris, 1991). Students with EBD need to believe that teachers care about them personally and want them to succeed (Barr & Parrett, Crowley, 1993). In Crowley's (1993) study of six adolescents with aggressive behaviors in mainstream classrooms, students described helpful teachers as establishing personal relationships with them, showing a willingness

to talk things out and a sense of humor. Students need to believe that teachers

recognize their individual strengths and attributes (Parsons, Godfrey, Howlett, Hayden,

& Martin, 2001).

Another teacher attribute linked to successful reintegration was flexibility

(Crowley, 1993). Examples of helpful, flexible academic and class programming include

actions such as providing attractive, engaging lessons rather than relying largely on

worksheets, offering choices in assignments, and permitting students to make up

missed work (Crowley, 1993).

In sum, research findings suggest that teacher attributes are important in

reintegration. These specifically include willingness to engage in a relationship with the

student, having training and a feeling of competence in working with students with EBD,

and flexibility.

Attributes of the system.

Several studies have identified systemic barriers and conditions important to

successful reintegration. Daniels, Visser, Cole & deReyebekill (1998, 2002) completed a

three-phase study which sought to develop an understanding of best systemic practice

for schools in meeting the needs of students with EBD. Through the three phases of the

study the researchers first identified likely criteria for a model of best practices which

were refined using nominal group techniques. They then tested the model on thirty

mainstream schools through interviews, and lastly examined policy and practice in

depth on five primary and five secondary schools. The researchers found that successful

schools had effective leadership which served to generate direction for all staff in terms

of inclusiveness, a critical mass of staff committed to inclusive values, senior

management committed to the development of teaching which matches needs of

students with EBD, and a willingness and ability to access outside agencies for support.

They also found it was helpful if there were key staff members in the mainstream school

who understood the nature of EBD and could distinguish it from "general naughtiness".

Tootil & Spalding (2000) completed a retrospective case study of 26 students in England

and found four indicators of successful reintegration: an explicit understanding stated

on admission to the special school that reintegration was expected as soon as possible,

forging of links between special school and secondary school, developing opportunities

for flexible patterns of attendance with mainstream school, and enabling pupils to

access special teacher to supplement regular curriculum. Parsons, Godfrey, Howlett,

Hayden, & Martin (2001) completed a longitudinal study of 726 case records of students

excluded from the mainstream setting. From that sample, thirty cases were

investigated in depth including interviews with key personnel. The sample was largely

but not exclusively students with EBD. The researchers found the following differences

between successful and unsuccessful reintegration of students in their case studies: the

presence of a concerned adult, flexibility of discipline approach, recognition of individual

strengths and attributes, and changing schools.

This last variable, changing schools, can be understood when one recognizes the role of previous experience or memory in reintegration. This barrier involves the excluded student who is returning to a school that has had a negative experience with the child. The attitudes, which saw the pupils excluded in the first instance, are often the same barriers to their inclusion on their return (Tootil & Spalding, 2001). Parson et al. (2001) study found that for some students, success seemed dependent on the availability of a completely different mainstream school from the one in which the student had the bad experience. For those students, reintegration success was found only when the student mainstreamed in a new mainstream school setting. The authors did not articulate the qualities of the new school that were associated with success.

Relationships between school environments and home-school also seem to have importance. Walters & Petr (2004) reported on a three-year community-based demonstration project that focused on increasing reintegration success when moving from an alternative school to a mainstream school environment. Emphasis was placed on involvement of all stakeholders in the reintegration process. Walters & Petr (2004) found that students who successfully made the transition differed from their unsuccessful counterparts in the quality of relationship between the student, the parent, the mainstream school, and the special education school. The demonstration project expanded the separate school's measure of a student's readiness for transition back to the mainstream environment from relying only on improvement in the student's behavior to assessing the level of readiness of all stakeholders in the transition process,

including the family and the receiving school. The development of positive relationships

between both the mainstream school and the student, and between the mainstream

school and the parent(s) were key to the success of reintegration. In addition, strong

collaboration and communication existed between staff at both schools of students who

were successful at reintegration. Studies indicate the importance of communication

between staff at the separate school and the mainstream school (Tootil & Spalding,

2000; Sugai, Smith, & Scott, 2002), between special education staff and mainstream

staff (Spann-Hite et al. 1999; Hewitt, 1999), and between home and school (Bach &

Keme'enui, 2004; Waller et al, 2007).

Family attributes.

Parents play a primary role in the educational process, and special education

policy reflects this belief (IDEA, 1997). The federal government and all 50 states have

within the past few years prioritized parental involvement and participation (U.S.

Department of Education, 2006). Research has given some credence to this general call

for more collaboration with parents. Correlations between reading level, placement in

special education and parental involvement in education have been found (Miedel &

Reynolds, 1999; Marcon, 1998). Research into the role of parents in the success or

failure of reintegration has been thin.

The one area of reintegration research that gives attention to parents' role is

their attitude toward inclusion. Parents tend to favor the overall idea of reintegration,

but when it comes to their own children, have shown a general reluctance to

reintegrate, with only 14-36% favoring reintegration (Green & Shimm, 1995; Leyser &

Kirk, 2003). Surveys into parental attitudes have found that parents are most concerned

with themes of individual attention, characteristics of special education teachers, and

increased self-esteem that they see their children receiving in special education. They

report fear that this may be lost if their child is mainstreamed (Crawford & Simonoff,

2003; Green & Shimm, 1995; Leyser & Kirk, 2004).   The research does not provide

information to how this reluctance on the part of parents regarding reintegration might

affect its success level.

Reflexivity Statement

Reflexivity is one technique researchers use to evaluate and explicate how the

researcher's empirical knowledge, experience, and values affect all parts of the research

process; from the creation of the research question to data collection and analysis

(Finlay, 2002; Charmaz, 2006). Reflexivity is awareness during the research process of

the multiple influences the researcher has on the research process and how she is

affected by the research process (Gilgun, 2010). This technique acknowledges that the

researcher is involved in the world being studied and brings past experiences with

people, knowledge, and perspectives to the research process (Gilgun, 2010; Charmaz,

2006).

Through the following reflexivity statement I present the influence of my personal and professional experiences on my interest in students' transitional education events from a separate facility to the mainstream environment. I was guided in the development of my research questions by my personal experiences, professional practice experience, professional knowledge developed, and personal values. Reflexivity is not limited to the beginning stage of the research process, but is a process that continues into data collection and analysis (Gilgun, 2010). I will attend to these influences in my discussion of writing memos during the methodology discussion.

My personal experience with my son sensitizes me to systemic failures as well as provides a heightened awareness of the complex nature of academic failure. Though not labeled EBD, he struggled to have his way of learning acknowledged and celebrated. My son experienced much of school as evidence of personal failure, though to this day I cannot point to an individual discrete variable accounting for his lack of academic success. I believe it was a developmental process with many active and inter-connective players, events, and interpretations. Through interactions with the school environment, including but not limited to teachers, peers, principals, rules, and expectations, my son constructed a view of himself as a failure at school. The perception built upon itself and led to behavior such as not completing homework and not studying for tests that perpetuated his difficulties in school, leading to low academic grades.

Social justice in the system.

I also became concerned with reintegration because of my strong interest in social justice, the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. I see the education system as one of the essential battlefields in this pursuit of social justice. When I see persons excluded from the regular educational setting, labeled as failures, with racial disparities in the system; my awareness of an essential need for social justice is alarmingly heightened.

As a school social worker and clinical social worker, I have witnessed many students who fail when they reenter the mainstream environment. In my experience, this happens for a variety of reasons, but most often the student or the student's family is blamed. The standardized model of education seeks to serve the "typical" student, but is unfriendly to the one who does not succeed under its rules.

Experience tells me that the need for flexibility around rules established for the typical student is a necessary condition for successful reintegration. I believe that education and training for teachers in understanding, interpreting, and assisting with emotional and behavioral development are critical components to successful reintegration. For example, I worked with one student who was diagnosed with schizophrenia and on and off his medications. He was easily overlooked and overwhelmed in the maze of his high school of 600 students. Further, I have found that students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder sometimes have difficulty feeling

success in school through typical educational methods. The student might begin

experiencing success in a smaller, alternative setting with a modified curriculum and

increased attention. But when improvement is evident, the student is hastily returned

to mainstream. When we say that the student's behavior has improved, I do not know

whether we are showing whether the student has changed, or whether the student is

successful in a modified setting.

Importance of relationships.

I think behavior is always changing and being created as the student encounters

others. This perspective informs me that by solely studying discrete variables in this

complicated process of encouraging behaviors that lead to success, I may miss

important variables and their interconnections and interactions.

Symbolic interactionism has had a significant influence on my conceptualization of

this research. Symbolic interactionism is the process of interaction in the formation of

meanings for individuals (Blumer, 1969). Human beings are best understood in relation

to their environment and these environmental or social interactions create meaning.

Blumer contrasted this process of meaning making with behaviorist explanations of

human behavior which don't allow for interpretation between stimulus and response.

Through a lens of symbolic interactionism, I surmise that relationships are a highly

significant condition to success in the mainstream environment. One aspect of the

relationship process which I have witnessed is the lack of attention to building and often

rebuilding relationships. Students with EBD sent to a special education school are often

significant transgressors beginning in primary school. By the time the student reaches

adolescence, examples of infractions proliferate. For example, I remember one student

who called in three bomb threats; another student who was in frequent conflict with

teaching staff, being suspended twenty-two times in one year; another student who was

sent away because he was sexually harassing other students; and another student who

had threatened a fellow student (who had been bullying him) with a butter knife.   For

these students, one of the tasks accorded by school authorities was to get their

behavior "under control" or "on track" in order to learn in school; and, maybe more

importantly, to not disrupt anyone else's learning or threaten the physical and

psychological safety of others. The kids that disrupt learning are sent to alternative

school settings.

In the alternative school setting, expectations must be met in order to return to

the former school. The student must: show ability to control problem behaviors, no

longer act as a distraction to others, and have successfully learned social behavioral

training. At that point, the student can make the transition back to the former school.

However, the past may present itself upon the student's return in the form of an

atmosphere of general wariness, a reputation, or hurt relationships.

Minimal attention on repairing relationships seems to be an important barrier to

the student's successful return to mainstream school. The student returns to an

environment of preconceived assumption for failure, where she or he is watched by others who wait for evidence proving that supposition. This prejudgment, coupled with a lack of support provided to maintain positive behaviors learned and changes made, perpetuates systemic breakdowns.

Reintegration Process

Reintegration is understood as the process of returning to general education classrooms those special education students who have been-served in separate programs such as self-contained classrooms or alternative education sites (Shinn, Powell-Smith, Good & Baker, 1997). According to my research review, attention given to the process of reintegration has been limited. A gap I hope to fill with this study is the call for attention to the role of process in reintegration (Mathes, Fuchs, Roberts, & Fuchs, 1998).

Many of the disconnected variables identified in the previous discussion are better understood as processes. A process is a series of actions marked by gradual changes conducing to an end or result (Webster, 2009). Self-regulation, relationship, and coordination can all be understood as processes. Singer & Bashir (1999) describe self-regulation as a co-constructed process imbedded within social interactions. Understanding the impact of self-regulation on reintegration requires not a snapshot of whether or not the student has the ability to self-regulate going into the mainstream

classroom, but instead a description of the construction of self-regulation in that environment.

Similarly, relationships and collaboration are not robustly understood as variables, but rather as processes. Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp and McHatton (2009) call for research aimed at understanding how student and teacher characteristics interact to affect the development of positive relationships between teachers and students.

I utilized this review of the literature, combined with my personal and professional experiences to identify gaps in the current study of reintegration of students with emotional behavioral disorders (See Figure 2). The figure below describes the findings from my review of research literature broken into four categories: student attributes, system attributes, teacher attributes, and parental attributes. Certain variables have been identified which are linked to successful reintegration. However, an exploration of the interactions between these variables and the various parts of the reintegration system is missing.

Figure 2: Gap in Literature Related to Process

Student Attributes
- self regulation
- academic competence
- meet behavioral expectations

System Attributes
- policy flexibility
- communication
- resources
- key staff who understand EBD

Student Attributes

+ ? -

System Attributes

+ ?

?

-?

+ ?

?

-?

Parent/Guardian Attributes

+ ? -

Teacher Attributes

Parent/Guardian Attributes
- communicates with school
- attitude to reintegration

Teacher Attributes
- attitude toward EBD
- training/competence
- curricular flexibility
- relationship
     skills

Summary

This issue of reintegration of students with EBD is a significant issue in our educational system and lacks a working theory to explain how successful reintegration of students with EBD occurs. Researchers have identified a number of factors related to the success of students who are reintegrating; however a description of how the

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variables interact in order to create success is needed.   One area unexplored is the

process of reintegration. This research study is undertaken to develop theory regarding

interactions within the system during the process of reintegration.

Research Questions

The central research questions for this study are; what are the interactions that

create conditions for successful reintegration? What are the interactions that create

barriers to successful reintegration?

Chapter 3: Methods

Overview

The purpose of this study was to develop theory regarding reintegration to the mainstream environment for emotionally behaviorally disordered students. I employed a case study design with use of constructivist grounded theory strategies. The central research questions for this study are: (a) what are the interactions/processes that create conditions for successful reintegration, and (b), what are the interactions/processes that create unsuccessful reintegration? In this chapter, I describe my rationale for utilizing a qualitative case study research design and constructivist grounded theory; the sample; recruiting strategies; and procedures for data collection and management. I also describe my approach to data analysis and the interpretations I used, including techniques to establish rigor.

Research Design

Qualitative research is suited to studying process and eliciting multiple constructed realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As previously presented, reintegration into the mainstream environment is a process that occurs over time and involves many actors. In order to understand this process, it is important to examine reintegration in context.

I chose a qualitative research design because of its suitability in matching my need to consider the contextual elements impacting students while transitioning from

an alternative school to the mainstream setting, account for student's personal experiences during the process of reintegration, provide a systems perspective from multiple views of those surrounding the students, and build theory related to reintegration.

Case studies.

For this research, I chose a comparative case study design. Case studies are intensive studies of a single unit, such as a person, group, incident or community or multiple units with a common focus of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Two, the impacts of interactions between various actors within the reintegration system are not well documented. Case studies are uniquely suited to my aim of uncovering the interaction of significant factors associated with a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009; Cronbach, 1975). Case studies are often used to generate or build theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and discover the content characteristics which shed light on processes (Sanders, 1981). I utilized an embedded, multiple case design as described by Yin (2009). In this design, I developed six separate cases, with the unit of analysis being the process of reintegration within each case. The sub-units analyzed were the roles of the study participants: parents, mainstream teachers, special education teachers, students, and other school personnel. Multiple cases can account for variation of context making findings more robust (Yin, 2003).

Each case provided rich and descriptive data of the multiple realities of the reintegration experience. I followed the students throughout the school year of their reintegration in order to capture the unfolding of the reintegration process. Multiple perspectives of the various actors within each case provided a holistic picture of that experience. In this research, I incorporated methods of grounded theory based upon the work of Charmaz (2000, 2002, 2006), who labels her approach as Constructivist Grounded Theory. These methods guided data collection and analysis of the six case studies.

Constructivist grounded theory.

Grounded theory methods emerged from the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967; 1970). Their guidelines are utilized by researchers to build theory grounded in the data through systematic collection and analysis. Grounded theory holds central the credibility of theory that is derived from the ground up and so in close and constant relationship with phenomena. The constant comparative strategy, an essential tool in grounded theory, is used to compare data with other data, and cases with other cases to find similarities and differences which are incorporated into the developing theory. The product of grounded theory methodology is a theory that incorporates statements of relationships of conditions that can be used to explain a phenomenon (Strauss, 1987). This methodology fits with my desire to develop a theory from the lives and experiences of the students and their surrounding systems that provides a meaningful plan of action for social workers and educators working within the system.

Constructivist grounded theory as detailed by Charmaz (2002, 2006) builds on the work of Glaser and Strauss. Constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the role of the researcher in constructing theory from a combination of the experiences of the participants as well as the experiences and knowledge of the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). A researcher then uses grounded theory methods to form an interpretation of the participant experiences, rather than a precise depiction of reality (Charmaz, 2002). Charmaz contrasts a constructivist approach to the use of grounded theory methods with what she describes as an objectivist stance (2000, 2006). She critiqued the positivist leanings of Glaser & Strauss's classic grounded theory work, which emphasized the discovery of theory as emerging from the data separate from the researcher. In the constructivist approach, theory that is created is offered as an interpretive portrayal of the situation under study.

Important in constructing grounded theory is the use of sensitizing concepts. Charmaz (2006) describes sensitizing concepts as those background ideas that inform the overall research problem, from sampling to coding (see also Blumer, 1969). Sensitizing concepts offer ways to organize experiences. They are what the researcher brings to the process that serves as a starting point to guide the process. My prior knowledge of the reintegration process from my research review, professional and personal experiences served as sensitizing concepts. Sensitizing concepts alerted me to look for certain possibilities in the data and served as points of departure (Charmaz, 2006). These sensitizing concepts were used to form my research question, initial

interview questions, and informed initial coding. I listed some of my initial codes for this project (Appendix G) that came from my sensitizing concepts.

Sensitizing concepts are an important starting point to the research process, but not a good end point (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout my research, it was important for me to ensure that where emerging concepts deviate from my sensitizing concepts, I let the sensitizing concepts go. For qualitative research, it is essential that data not be forced into categories (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, it was important to step back from the data frequently, asking whether my interpretation of that data truly fit its reality (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Other strategies employed to prevent data-forcing were maintaining an attitude of skepticism (Strauss & Corbin, 1998); reflecting via writing memos (Charmaz, 2006); undertaking constant comparison; beginning with line-by-line coding; and consulting with my advisor. I maintained an attitude of skepticism as I began to interpret the data, I regarded all of my interpretations as provisional and used new observations to test my developing interpretations, not just confirm them. I will present other strategies in my discussion of coding.

Grounded theory is not a set of prescriptions to be applied to a research study; rather, it is a menu of options common in qualitative research that are to be utilized to develop theory depending upon the needs of the research (Charmaz, 2006). The aspects of qualitative research and grounded theory I applied in this study were concurrent data collection and analysis, constructing analytic codes and categories from

the data versus preconceived hypotheses, using the constant comparative method, memo-writing to elaborate categories and identify gaps, articulating sensitizing concepts, and theoretical sampling aimed toward theory construction rather than population representativeness (Charmaz, 2006).

Theoretical sampling guided my data collection and served as an important bridge between data analysis and subsequent collection. Theoretical sampling is sampling on the basis of emerging concepts with an aim toward fully exploring the conditions along which the properties of concepts vary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The term theoretical sampling is used to describe both a sampling method and an analytic tool. I used theoretical sampling primarily as an analytic tool. I used theoretical sampling in this manner when I defined and tentatively conceptualized early categories in order to probe with more data and direct further my data collection efforts (Charmaz, 2006). I used theoretical sampling to elaborate the meaning of my categories, the variations within them, and the gaps among categories. As questions arose during my data analysis I returned to the data to answer the questions or gather new data through further interviewing, observations, or document review.

Sampling and recruitment.

My initial sample was derived through convenience sampling (Patton, 2002) of all middle and high school students with EBD in the process of reintegration at two separate, suburban school systems in a Midwest metropolitan area. I used two

inclusion criteria: first, middle or high school students given the special education label

of EBD, and second, middle or high school students who were planning to be in the

process of reintegration for any percentage of time at either school district between the

months of November 2009 and May 2010. One of the assumptions about the sample is

that of naturally-occurring heterogeneity. In order to increase the likelihood of

heterogeneity in my sample, I selected two different school district sites (see Figure 3)

such that they provide variation in systemic variables such as policies, procedures,

school climate, personnel, and pre-transition efforts.

School District Apple / Day Treatment / Sample: 2 Students Reintegrating

School District Banana / Separate Special Education School / Sample: 4 Students Reintegrating
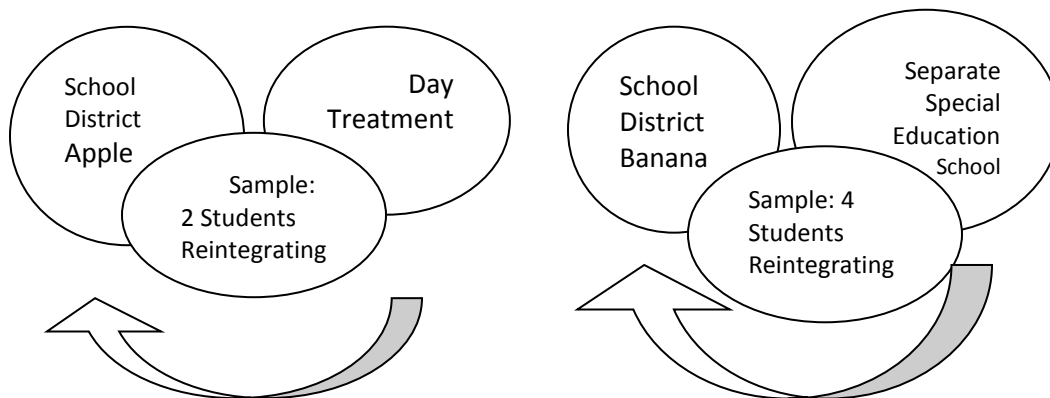
Figure 3: Sample

One site includes reintegration from a day treatment setting and the other from

a special education school, both located within suburbs of a large Midwestern,

metropolitan area. About 2,200 students attend the high school in Intermediate School

District Apple, a fictitious name. Ethnic background within the school population is

reported by the Department of Education (2011) as white: 92%; Asian: 4%, Black: 2%,

Hispanic: 2%, and American Indian: 1%. Students participating in the Free and Reduced

Lunch program are 10% of the student population. The student sample from this site

includes EBD students reintegrating from prior placement in a day treatment program to

the mainstream environment.

About 1,240 students attend the high school in School District Banana, also

fictitious. Ethnic background within the school population is reported by the

Department of Education (2011) as white: 77%; Asian: 5%, Black: 7%, Hispanic: 10%, and

American Indian: 2%. Students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch program

are 25% of the student population. This site includes EBD students reintegrating from

placement in a separate special education school back to the mainstream environment.

Sample description.

I obtained a sample of six students in one month of recruitment. The

participants, five males and one female, ranged in age from 14 to 18. They described

their racial identity as Hispanic (one), African American (one), and Caucasian (four). Two

of the participants were from day treatment school, one transferring back to a senior

high school setting, the other to a junior high. The other four students were from

separate special education sites, but all were transferring back into the same senior high

school setting.

Recruitment.

Following approval from the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB), I sought approval from the school districts participating in the study. I met with school district personnel to identify potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. This initial review process was anonymous with only the school staff knowing the identity of the students. Upon identification of potential subjects, the recruitment letter/informed consent was mailed to parents/legal guardians by the school district (Appendix A). Interested parents were directed to return the consent to me in an enclosed addressed stamped envelope.

I contacted the interested parent/guardian by phone and confirmed student eligibility for the study, went over the informed consent, determined comprehension, and answered any questions. After obtaining consent from the parent/guardian, I contacted the student at school to obtain assent for the study (Appendix B). Only after receiving assent and consent did the student become a participant of the study. Two of the six participants were over eighteen and so provided consent themselves. I identified the teachers in mainstream and at the separate special education site by accessing the Individualized Education Plan and confirming with the Special Education Director. I delivered a consent form (Appendix C) to these school personnel as well as any other school personnel listed on the IEP. If consent forms were not returned by school personnel in 10 days, I made another attempt to obtain consent. If consent was not received then, I made no further efforts to interview.

Data collection.

I designed the data collection process to attend to multiple perspectives in the system such as teachers, students, administrators, and parents. Multiple perspectives were sought for the creation of case studies able to holistically depict the complex nature of mainstream reintegration. Data collection entailed the following sources: interviews, observations, case record reviews, and document reviews in order to construct the six case studies. Each data collection strategy is detailed below.

Interviews.

I relied on the in-depth intensive interview as my primary data-gathering method because they are the preferred method to elicit views of a person's subjective world and explore an aspect of life of which the interviewee has extensive experience (Charmaz, 2006). In order to gain multiple perspectives for each case, I sought to interview students, parents or guardians, mainstream teachers, special education teachers, and administrative personnel in charge of disciplinary procedures (See Table 4). Each perspective added richness to the study of the system as each participant had a different standpoint within the system. Using different perspectives also provided for an opportunity to triangulate the data from other sources.

Table 1:   Data Collection Interviews

	Student Interviews	Parent Interviews	Special Education Teacher Interviews	Mainstream Teacher Interviews	Admin. Interviews	Other Interviews
Mark	2	1	3	2	1	2 – day treatment therapist
Tim	2	2	3	1	1	2 – day treatment therapist
Sharrel	2	2	3	1	2	1 – school social worker
Luis	2	2	3	2	2	0
Jake	1	0	3	1	2	0
Leon	2	2	3	1	2	0

In the beginning of my data collection I utilized interview guides with a few pre-determined, open-ended questions and ready probes that were developed from my initial conceptual framework (Appendix D). The interview guides were not used as rigid instruments but were emergent, consistent with grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2008). As I progressed in my study, I developed interview questions that emerged from the data analysis. For example, an initial category that became apparent in my beginning interviews was the importance of relationship development between teacher and student. As I interviewed teachers later in the study, I asked questions about the strategies that they used to develop relationships with the students.   All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.   Each interview lasted between 20 – 45 minutes. The number of interviews completed on each informant was

guided by principles of theoretical sampling, as I returned to the interview subjects to gather more data (Charmaz, 2006).

Observations.

Naturalistic observations deepen understanding of how individuals respond to persons and other variables in particular settings (Patton, 2006). I tried to obtain observational data for each case from three different settings: the classroom, a public setting such as the cafeteria, and during IEP meetings (See Observation Guide: Appendix E). Classroom observations were completed in order to gather information on issues such as public interactions between the teacher and the student, interactions with peers, and evidence of academic engagement. My role as observer was known to the classroom teacher and the student participating in the study, but unknownst to the classmates. I conducted additional observations in more public settings such as a cafeteria, hallway, or exiting from the bus. Finally, I observed Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team meetings. As most meetings involve all supportive members, including parents, this provided additional data on the process, how decisions are made, how conflicts are resolved, and how members of the team interact with each other. I completed a total of seventeen observations: four classroom observations, two IEP meeting observations and eleven public setting observations. Timing was difficult in completing the mainstream classroom observations as some students failed out of mainstream and were removed from the mainstream classroom before I could complete the observation.

Table 2: Data Collection Observations

	Classroom Observation	IEP Meeting Observation	Public Setting Observation
Mark	2 Completed	1 Completed	Hallway
Tim	None	None	Hallway Cafeteria
Sharrel	None	1 Completed	Hallway – 3 times
Luis	1 Completed	None	Hallway, Cafeteria
Jake	None	None	Hallway, Cafeteria
Leon	1 Completed	None	Cafeteria

I wrote field notes of my observations which included descriptions of the setting and people observed, descriptive text such as non-verbals and tone of voice, and my comments such as my emotional reactions and reflections on the content. The field notes were used as data as part of the coding process and to inform my ongoing interview questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

Document review.

Record review was completed on each student in the study, including the student's IEP, all team meeting notes, all correspondence from and to the team, behavioral intervention plans, suspension records, behavioral assessments, grade record, and any other official documents kept in the student record.   These records were kept at the school and required parental permission to access. I used the student records to find historical details related to disability status and past reintegration experiences.

Data management.

The interview transcripts of each student and their informants, field notes, and memos were kept in separate file folders during the course of the study. Upon receiving the transcripts, names were immediately removed and replaced with a research number by using the 'Find' and 'Replace' function in Word. This was also done on all field notes and memos, which were typed using MS Word. In addition to names of all informants, school district references were similarly 'Found' and 'Replaced'. This replacement allowed for an initial level of de-identification of sources but still allowed the informants to be correctly matched to participants. The MS Word files were kept on two separate jump drives that remained locked up in a fire-proof safe while analysis was being done.

Data analysis.

The data produced in this study included interview transcripts, fieldnotes, memos, and notes from case records. Within the tradition of much of qualitative research and grounded theory, analysis is not a distinct event from data collection, but rather occurs concurrently (Stauss, 1987). My separation of these two aspects of my research in this manuscript should not imply they were distinct stages, but rather is done to allow for a richer description of the process of coding and writing memos.

Case study analysis.

I used the constant comparative method by comparing within and across cases to build theory on the reintegration process. In the constant comparative method data are compared with other data, and cases compared with other cases to find similarities

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and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I used the strategy throughout the research process as I constructed coding categories and collected data, and developed a set of descriptions that were organized into categories.   I employed the constant comparative method in the following ways:

(a) comparing interview transcriptions (successful and non-successful, female and male, students who attended the same school)

(b) comparing within case data (interview, records review, teacher responses, student responses, parent responses, observations on each case)

(c) comparing interview transcriptions across roles (special education and mainstream teachers)

(d) comparing emerging categories of data with each other

(e) comparing emerging categories with prior research.

I developed a Case Study Framework (Appendix H) and utilized this to write-up a narrative description of each case. The first stage of analysis comprised of within case analysis when each case was analyzed as a separate, bounded entity (Yin, 2009). Perspectives of participants in each case were compared to create a holistic understanding of the processes and interactions present in each case.

Cross-case analysis was then completed to look for patterns across cases to create generalizations regarding the process of reintegration (Yin, 2009). It was at this level that connections were made to related research and theory. This is discussed more in coding.

The case study design strengthened my research findings as emerging findings were tested through triangulated sources in order to support and further explain the reintegration process. The sources were student sources, teacher sources, other school personnel sources, parent/guardian sources, observations, case records, and prior research.

Coding: Constructivist approach.

Coding from a constructivist grounded perspective is similar to the approach described by Corbin & Strauss (2008). Charmaz (2006) describes two levels of coding; initial and focused, as compared to the three levels commonly described by Corbin & Strauss, open, axial, and selective. In this section I detail the methods used in coding by description and examples.

Initial coding.

Charmaz (2006) combines the concepts of open and axial coding in her description of initial coding. I conducted a line-by-line analysis of the initial data in order to generate initial categories and suggest relationships among the categories, a technique referred to as open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Coding began approximately two weeks after the initial data collection began. I read each transcript within two weeks of completing the interview. I first read through the entire transcript to get a general sense of the topics important during the interview. I then conducted the line-by-line analysis of the transcript, identifying concepts important to the participant. This line-by-line analysis prompted me to remain open to data early on in

the coding process (Charmaz, 2006). In order to aid in the movement of concrete segments of data in the transcripts to analytic interpretations of the important processes occurring, I used a technique described by Charmaz. When completing my initial coding I tried to see actions in each segment of data and create codes that connoted action. I typed beginning codes from this analysis in the margins of the transcript. I referred to my list of initial codes/sensitizing concepts as I developed codes, and in concepts fit with the data. Sensitizing concepts alerted me to look for certain possibilities in the data (Charmaz, 2006). For example, one possibility I looked for early in the coding process was the presence of interactions between school personnel and the student when the student attempted self-regulation strategies. As I coded, I wrote memos about emerging ideas or theories. These memos helped to establish beginning analytic directions from my interpretations of the data (Charmaz, 2006). I continued to do line-by-line coding on each transcript even after my analysis moved into more focused coding. This allowed me to notice negative cases, or when the data did not fit the codes and categories that I was constructing.

Table 3: Initial Coding Example

Feeling support – mainstream teacher. Positive feedback from teacher. Doubting abilities to succeed. Experiencing success –	S: And my geography teacher is really nice and he's really supportive also. He's been complementing me for about a week saying, "I've been really impressed with you. You've been doing your work. You haven't been distracting others." And I'm like, wow. You know. I didn't think I could do it at first. And we actually did a big sheet. He gives a sheet about hurricane Katrina on it. And you had to write stuff on the front and on the back and you had to get it on the laptop –

academics. Surprise	the information. And I couldn't do that before at all. I wouldn't have finished it. R: Why? What would have gotten in the way before?
Not reach out in past. Not understanding in past. Experiencing change in ability to understand. Intent to seek help if needed. Fear of looking stupid. Desire for good grades outweighs fear of looking stupid.	S: I didn't get it and I wouldn't ask questions about it. But now, I just get it and I don't really need to ask questions. But if I don't get it I'm going to have to ask questions. Because before I didn't really ask questions, I thought they were stupid questions. Now I am going to start asking them, I mean I don't care if kids think "well why doesn't he get that?" I want to get a good grade.

Focused coding.

The second phase of coding under Constructivist Grounded Theory is focused

coding. This level of coding allowed for the separation and synthesis of large amounts

of data and represented the patterns and meanings that I interpreted in the data

(Charmaz, 2006). As I continued to compare data and account for differences within the

data, I developed tentative analytic categories and recoded for those categories.

Categories are conceptual elements in a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Focused

coding is aimed at developing these tentative analytic categories by clarifying what they

consist of and the relationship between the categories (Charmaz). I utilized the

constant comparison method during focused coding by comparing incidents within the

text of each case study across settings, people, and time, and looked for similarities and

differences.   I then compared transcripts across cases and finally, I examined data within informant categories, such as students with other students. Some of these early tentative analytic categories included experiencing problems in communication, seeking help, and feeling supported. As holes were recognized in the categories, I reviewed the transcripts or collected new data in order to more fully develop the categories.   As I engaged in focused coding, I developed a list of codes based on my previously constructed codes. I then began synthesizing codes, collapsing codes that related to each other or were repetitious. I revised this list of codes as I continued in analysis (Appendix G).   I used clustering and diagramming to assist with the coding process by creating visual representations of the data; this assisted in determining the connections between the categories (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

I paused halfway through my data collection and analysis to review the research literature such that I could make connections between previous research and my developing concepts. Some of those concepts were self-advocacy, skill generalization, reconstructing identity, and classroom culture. I used the information that I gained through the literature to inform questions as I continued in my interview and coding processes. I continued to review the literature throughout the remainder of the research process.

The tentative analytic categories I developed may or may not have sub-categories which can be developed by describing the properties and dimensions of the

category (Charmaz). I developed the named categories in terms of their properties and dimensions in order to enhance the explanatory power of my developing theory by accounting for the variations I found in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe properties as the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category and dimensions as the location of a property along a continuum or range. Dimensionalizing seeks to account for the variation of the properties within the category and the patterns of variation.

The product in this research is not simply a list of themes, but a theory that helps explain the process of reintegration. I used diagramming to define relationships between my tentative analytic categories (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I continued to synthesize and revise my diagrams in order to construct the grounded theory of the process of reintegration. Theoretical saturation was reached when no new properties or dimensions emerged from the data, and the analysis had accounted for much of the variation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I eventually identified four theoretical categories for reintegration; developing supports, school personnel understanding of disability, parental advocacy, and student getting needs met. These theoretical categories formed the final Grounded Theory of the Process of Reintegration. These categories and the related grounded theory are further detailed in the Findings and Discussion chapters.

Memos.

Memo writing is another strategy common in qualitative research that was integral during my data collection/analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Gilgun, 2001). Memo writing is a technique that is helpful in making the connections from raw data to the abstractive level that effective data analysis requires (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008). Memos were used to explicate my ongoing informal analysis as I collected data by observing and conducting interviews. Memos were also used to direct analysis. This process helped me to monitor my interpretations and coding rationale. Two examples from early on in the research process are:

1/2/10: Dilemma of self-advocacy vs. advocacy

This was an interesting discussion with the case manager. I think that I can also find this in my parent interviews and it also arose with the other three special ed teachers. Case Manager talks about her overall plan to help kids learn to self-advocate. Another case manager also talks about the long term view of kids having struggles that will exist beyond the school environment into adulthood and them needing to learn how to self identify needs and advocate for themselves. Having that as a characteristic/skill they want to build in their students leads to interventions that encourage self-advocacy. This strategy seems to run into some problems in the implementation stage as the student runs into barriers (Within self? Fear? Within system that is resistant to change?) and numerous instances of the student not doing anything different – not talking to the teacher, etc. I need to return to the text and look into this more. Is generalization important here?

Later in the coding process the memos became my primary method of analysis as I worked through the synthesis of categories. While working on synthesis of categories involved in focused coding, I wrote a memo about a subcategory that I was seeing again and again across categories. In this memo I found this common

thread, and reprioritized the presence of attitude in the developing theory and elevated it to an organizing property.

7/6/10: Attitude toward accommodation as lens

These student specific abilities (self-regulation, self-advocacy, and making changes) interact with the environment through the level of understanding of disability. From the student's standpoint – the dimension of understanding of disability interacts with the ability to self-advocate and self-regulate. It also directs the self-analysis necessary to make changes. The level of understanding of the student's disability that the environment has (teachers and administrators) leads to variation in the level of support the student receives in using self-regulation tools or self-advocacy efforts

Study limitations

Applicability of findings.

The findings and related analytic generalizations I made in this study are intended to account for the students and their support systems who participated in this study, not all students experiencing reintegration. This does not diminish the importance of the findings. These findings may illuminate other situations of reintegration and give direction to practice, educational policy, and educational program development.

Only one geographic region, one state with its own unique laws, service, and mandates was a focal point of the study. Applicability to another state with differing laws or policies toward issues such as inclusion would need to be determined by the reader. This study included many aspects of the system during the process of reintegration; however, I only explored one segment of the entire reintegration system

from the point of transition to the mainstream school environment for a period of several months. The complete process and system of reintegration might include identifying students who require special education, points of exclusion, the efforts at the alternative school, and the time following this study when maintenance occurs. Suggestions from this study likely impact the other parts of the reintegration system, but were not the focus of this study and so generalization to those should be made cautiously.

I engaged in several efforts to provide the reader with the information necessary to determine the fit of my findings to their particular situation. I included information about the sample including school circumstances, background information of students, and how cases were selected. In addition, I included raw data from the interviews to allow the reader to consider the accuracy of my interpretation and create alternative interpretations. I also provided information about myself and my background.

Though my research questions focused on the conditions and barriers which account for the success or failure of reintegration, only one student in my sample had unqualified success in his reintegration. My findings, therefore, are much more instructive of barriers encountered than conditions which led to success. Caution should, therefore, be exercised in extrapolating from the experiences of these six cases to describing the process of success in reintegration.

Triangulation.

I utilized triangulation as a method to improve the validity of findings. One challenge to my triangulation of methodology and data (Denzin, 2006) was due to the timing of my observations. Some of the students enrolled in the study discontinued their mainstream class before I could complete observations (two out of six students). By conducting observations, I intended to gather information about ecological issues in the classroom, triangulate data about student-teacher relationship, and learn about the role of peers in the process. When a student discontinued the mainstream class before this information could be collected, I substituted hall/lunchroom observations and completed additional interviews with student and teacher.

Another limitation in the area of triangulation was the lack of parental interviews for one subject, Jake. His parents did not return my phone calls and did not participate in the study. Perspectives from their standpoint were limited.

As does any research method, constructivist grounded theory and case study research have certain limitations. I have provided the reader with a highly contextualized qualitative study which explored the process of reintegration as it emerged in six case studies and from multiple perspectives. The information from this study is useful in any school setting.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study examines six cases of student transition from alternative education into the mainstream environment. In this chapter, I present my findings. I begin by introducing the grounded theory I constructed, the Process of Reintegration, through this analysis. I then provide support for this theory via presentation of each case and analysis of within case findings. Four of the six students were returned to their alternative school setting and did not succeed in the mainstream environment. Much of the within-case analysis explains processes which contributed to each reintegration success or failure. I then present overall findings related to the processes and interactions constructed from cross-case data analysis. I found three processes regarding reintegration important: first, the process students seek to meet needs through self-advocacy and self-regulation; second the process of developing supports from education staff through relationships and classroom adaptations; and third the process of advocacy by parents or guardians. The student's desire to fit in interacted with use of self-advocacy and self-regulation. The staff's lack of understanding of the student's disability interacted with provision of important support. This lack of understanding also related to educator's unrealistic expectations regarding the student's capability for self-advocacy.

Grounded Theory of the Reintegration Process

Several findings in this study are consistent with previous research directed at important variables in reintegration. Both students and teachers credited several

factors in aiding successful mainstream reintegration. Some of the assistive

components identified by participants and found in research on reintegration included:

adequate levels of student skill at self-regulation and behavior-expectation

management, development of a relationship between the teacher and student,

adequate resources, and curricular and disciplinary flexibility. Participants identified the

two components of self-regulation and the ability to manage behavioral expectations

within the new environment as important. One student credited his success to changes

in his ability to self-regulate; all those involved with that student agreed it was a primary

reason for his success in the mainstream environment. Further, he was the only student

in the sample who experienced categorical success during the reintegration process.

The focus of this research study was on the interactions which influenced the

process of reintegration (refer to Figure 2: Gap in Research Literature from Chapter 2).

Based on the findings of this study, there is a greater understanding of those

interactions. There were three findings, not found in prior research, which illuminated

the effects of interactions and influences during the reintegration process and formed

the basis for my grounded theory. The first finding is that the student's desire to fit in

influences use of self-advocacy and self-regulation skills. Students reported the desire

to fit in interfered with the use of self-advocacy and self-regulation skills. The second,

comprehension on the part of school personnel of the student's disability influences

provision of support to that student by mainstream teachers. Conversely, lack of

understanding creates greater reliance by school personnel on student self-advocacy.

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Lastly, parents utilize advocacy to increase system-wide understanding of the student's disability.

Figure 4: Grounded Theory of the Process of Reintegration
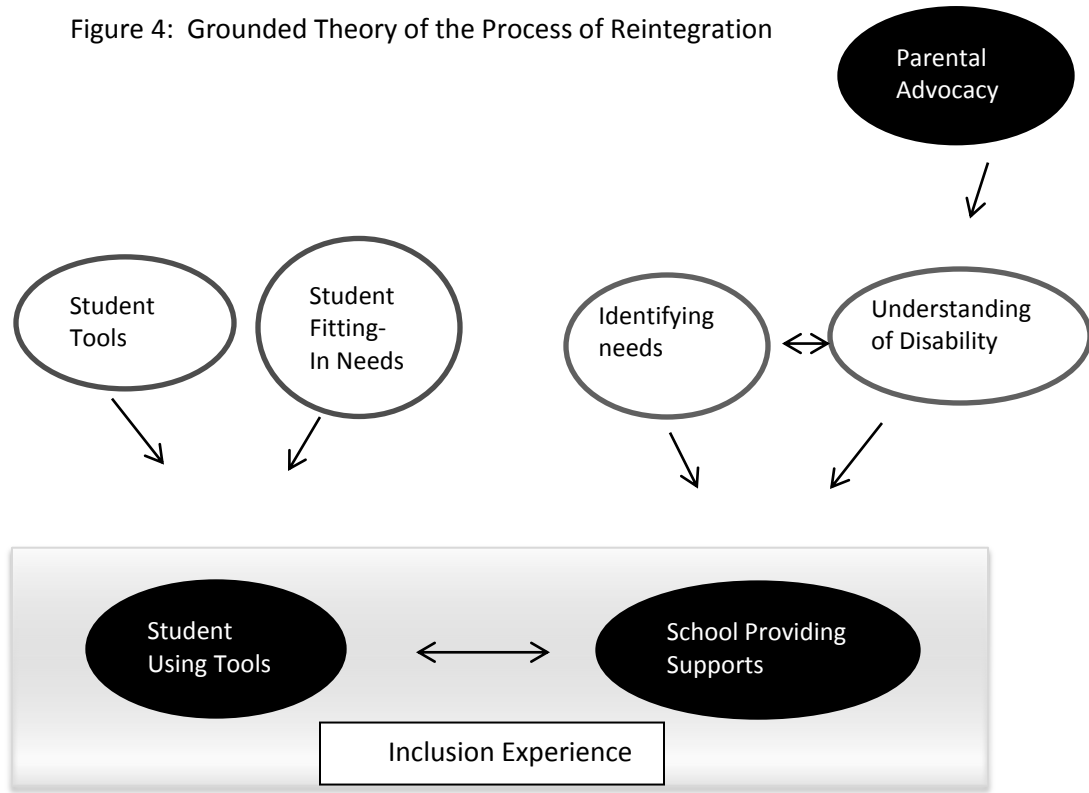
The three key processes of reintegration are represented in the diagram by black ovals: student using tools, school providing supports, and parental advocacy. The first process is the student using the tools of self-regulation and self-advocacy. Beginning at the far left of the diagram, a student enters the mainstream environment with certain self-regulation and self-advocacy skills. Students have differing levels of skills and strategies in the areas of self-regulation and self-advocacy. Students also have differing levels of openness to development of a relationship with the teacher and relationship

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development skills. The student's desire and need to fit in interacts with those skills to

create varying conditions for the use of the tools in the inclusion experience. Those

conditions further impact the methods of engagement available to the student, should

problems arise. One of the decisions a student can make is to reach out for help when

experiencing the problem of academic frustration.   Another decision is to avoid

reaching out for help. These variations in the decision to use self-advocacy skills, for

example, are impacted by both the level of self-advocacy skills a student has as well as

the desire of a student to fit in and not stand out by asking for help. Further examples

of these conditions will be described later in the within and cross-case analysis.

To the right of the diagram is the process of providing supports. The school

environment provides varying levels of supports to reintegrating students.   These

supports can range from the support of a non-judgmental relationship with a special

education case manager who listens when the student is frustrated to modifications of

testing requirements that are listed in an IEP for a student who is easily distracted when

taking exams. Providing supports involves identifying the needs of a student, having

flexibility and creativity to devise strategies to address needs, having resources

available, and implementing those supports. The level of understanding of the student's

disability by those in the environment influences this process of providing supports. For

example, one decision a teacher makes is whether to seek out understanding of the

student's disability. This can include investigating accommodations required on the

student's IEP, contacting the case manager concerning the student's needs, or engaging

in conversations with the student or the student's family to understand needs. This decision leads to the capacity of awareness of problems early in the process of reintegration. It also provides opportunity for teacher intervention, regarding identifying the need for possible accommodations, implementing IEP accommodations, and supporting use of the student's self-regulation and self-advocacy skills. My results show that teachers who do not pursue this understanding are more apt to rely on standard protocols, which have not been adapted to the needs of the reintegrating student. These teachers are also more likely to rely on the student to communicate any special needs. This hands-off approach often leads to discovering problems late in the reintegration process.

The last process is of parental advocacy. Parental advocacy is the process of engagement by parents/guardians to influence the supports given to the student. These efforts are often directed at changing the level/kinds of support by changing the understanding of disability by school personnel.

It is important to note that every student in this study experienced some sort of problem during the reintegration experience. The theory I developed assumes that problems will arise as part of the reintegration process. The manner by which these problems are approached determines the amount of reintegration success. The student experiences a level of success when the problem is resolved and the student proceeds

with reintegration. The student experiences further distress as the problem continues, which often leads to reintegration failure.

Support for my grounded theory is found in my within-case and cross-case analysis. I will first discuss the findings specific to each case study and describe the process of reintegration for each student.

Case Studies

Tim.

Background information.

Tim was a 15 year old 9th grader who was in day treatment. Tim had a diagnosis of ADHD. He had been prescribed medications, but both he and his parents reported he was inconsistent in his use of the medication. He entered day treatment after a difficult school year. He was failing in his middle school and had been sent to an alternative site, but struggled there. Behaviors seen at school included refusal to complete work, not turning in homework, being off task, disruptive in class by talking to other students, shouting out in class, and being disrespectful to teachers. He fell further and further behind academically as his behaviors kept him out of class more and more. He was suspended on multiple occasions.

Tim was the middle child born to his parents. His older brother did well academically and was in the same high school in which Tim began his reintegration

mainstreaming. In the beginning of last year, Tim's parents divorced. Tim reported he

adjusted well to the living arrangements after the divorce; his parents set up two

households and determined custody arrangements. He split his time between the

houses. He reported a close relationship to both of his parents. They both attended

school meetings and appeared to problem solve together around Tim's needs.

Tim's parents reported Tim did not present the same behavioral challenges in

the home environment as he did in school. Both parents described him at home as

respectful to adults, following directions, and completing tasks he is assigned.

Tim's parents reported seeing his struggles with peers as he is on a hockey team

and had problems with fighting and bullying. Tim's mother described him as having a

hard time getting along with peers since he was a young age and she believed he

overcompensated by being overly aggressive with them. His mother described his

difficulties with peers as one of lack of competence. Tim described his problem with

peers as him bullying peers.

Tim was placed in special education in 2nd grade under the category of non-

verbal learning disability. The label of EBD was added in 5th grade.   He struggled early

with learning to read. His mother told the story of being shocked when a second grade

substitute teacher asked if she knew that her son wasn't reading. Tim's academic

abilities were not very different from his peers as reported by his teachers and

document review. He reported that he struggles in math and was a little over one grade level behind.

His mother reported seeing a connection between his behavior problems and his early struggle to read. He had low self-esteem because of struggling in school, didn't feel confident enough to ask for help, and so caused behavior problems instead.

Tim had been in day treatment for a year when this study began. His case manager described some of his behaviors in the beginning of day treatment as being off-task, not listening to staff, blurting out a lot, making noises in class, liking to get approval from peers, and not accepting redirection. Staff decided he was ready to transition back to the mainstream school after a year in day treatment. His special education teacher reported he was able to ignore a lot of behavior of his peers and was able to maintain a level of behavior that is expected from a student in a regular school setting.

Summary of reintegration process.

Tim began his reintegration experience with two special education classes at a high school he had not previously attended. His special education teacher reported that for the first two weeks he did well; Tim was undistracted by his peers, focused on his work, responded well to redirection, and met his academic requirements. This teacher also said that she noticed a small change in his classroom behavior when the trimester ended, approximately two weeks into his transition.   The special education class for the

new trimester was comprised of a larger group. The teacher stated that she had

fourteen students, as compared with six the previous trimester. This larger environment

complicated Tim's reintegration; he displayed uncontrolled impulsivity by blurting out

questions and loudly demanding special considerations. While he continued to respond

to redirection, he appeared influenced by the increased chaos of the larger classroom.

He persisted with schoolwork completion and achieved good grades in both classes.

Tim and his special education teacher both reported one particular strategy to remain

focused. He asked to be allowed to sit in a space separate from his peers to reduce

distraction. Tim and his parents reported that Tim's decisive and consistent use of

ADHD medication was a major factor in his successful transition.

After approximately two months of success in the mainstream special education

environment, the IEP team agreed Tim was ready for the next step. Two mainstream

classes were added, Earth Science and Health. Tim did well in both; he handed in

assignments, displayed no behavioral problems, and completed both classes with good

grades. His science class contained two other special education students. The three

shared a paraprofessional who provided additional support in the science classroom.

His science teacher described that Tim fit in well, asked questions and participated,

remained on task, and established positive relationships with other students in the class.

Tim explained that he enjoyed the science class because the teacher took time to

explain things very well. While Tim did not report feeling this strong connection with

the health teacher, he stated that it was less important because most of the work in

health class was easy to understand. When I observed Tim in the classroom, he remained on task and engaged in the work. Upon occurrence of unstructured class time, his tendency was to observe conversations rather than actively participate.

When Tim began the two mainstream classes at the high school, lunch was also added to his schedule. During his first few lunch hours, he sat with students he knew from the prior year's special education classes.   The assistant principal pulled Tim aside and briefly discussed finding better options for friends during lunchtime. The next day Tim found kids from his neighborhood, and sat with them. He observed that he was less likely to get into trouble when sitting with this new group of kids.

Tim's parents reported that they had learned and began using new tools for advocacy with regard to Tim's education. Tim's mother moved from a role in which she received information from the school and disciplined Tim accordingly to a role in which she contacted the school regarding Tim's needs. If the school did not make essential adaptations, she began "pushing to make it happen."

At the end of the school year, Tim received a "B" average for the four classes he completed in the mainstream high school setting. When the IEP team met to review his progress, they discussed Tim's tendency to match his level of behavior with peers, whether that be to rise or to fall. The team then reviewed options in scheduling for Tim's upcoming school year. Tim advocated for fulltime mainstream enrollment; the

team agreed.   The team decided that Tim would begin the year with all mainstream classes, with provision of one special education class for support.

Case analysis.

Tim was able to make significant gains at self-regulatory behavior in the mainstream setting, including isolation and the use of medication. His parents actively supported his efforts to self-regulate. Tim's understanding of his disability was moderate. He found increased ability to focus upon consistent use of his medication, a recent revelation for both Tim and his parents.

Tim was able to form positive connections with pro-social peers. He developed limited connections with school personnel, but received redirection well when it was offered.

Tim showed moderate ability to self-advocate. He reported feeling heavily influenced by a fear of "looking dumb," preventing him from seeking help in mainstream classes. He was able to find and utilize assistance from his special education teachers and his parents. He reported very little academic frustration, and was able to meet his academic needs without use of self-advocacy in the mainstream environment.

Tim's mainstream teachers displayed a level of effort toward personal understanding with regard to Tim's abilities and disabilities. The science teacher was aware of Tim's special education status, had access to a paraprofessional in the

classroom for additional support, and had researched whether classroom adaptations would be necessary.

Tim was successful in his reintegration, receiving passing grades in his mainstream classes and having a plan for full participation in the mainstream school in the fall.

Mark.

Background information.

Mark was a 15-year old student who was used to failure at school and struggled for years in both the mainstream and resource room environments. Mark received special education services since third grade. Diagnosed with anxiety disorder, panic disorder, Asperger's disorder, and ADHD; his last year in mainstream junior high school was spent primarily in the special education resource room with no mainstream provision. He received all Fs on his report card during his last two quarters at the junior high school. Behaviors which led to alternative school placement included verbal aggression toward teachers and peers, refusing schoolwork, hiding under desks, and yelling out in class.   He was experiencing significant anxiety attacks on the way to, and at, the junior high school, as well as at home.   He was on the waiting list for day treatment for about one school year and transferred to a day treatment setting in the beginning of his eighth grade year.

Mark lived with his mother, step-father, sister, and step-sister in what had been described by school staff, Mark, and his mother as a high-conflict household. The relationship between the student and his step-father was especially contentious; Mark clearly stated his desire for his mother to leave the marriage. The family stress, and his inability to set it aside during the school day, was one of the triggers Mark identifies. Mark's mother expressed feeling frustrated with him. She worked as a flight attendant, and was out of town often and frequently with little notice, which limited her ability to consistently maintain his behavior. Both day treatment and mainstream school staff expressed an awareness of a lack of consistent accountability between school and home regarding Mark's education.

In the middle of his ninth grade year, the team decided to mainstream Mark into his junior high for one class per day because he was exhibiting increased self-control over his problem behavior, completing school work, and taking redirection from teachers. Anxiety had diminished to the point that Mark stated "I don't have it anymore." The staff at the day treatment center initiated the transition, believing that though his positive behavior was still inconsistent, he was ready for one mainstream class. When Mark began mainstream, every member of the team interviewed was hopeful. Mark had made a lot of progress around his anxiety by becoming able to employ anxiety-reducing techniques making success in mainstream a possibility. He presented well in the transition meeting, clearly articulating the progress he had made and committing to a positive try in mainstream. His mother was cautiously optimistic, at

best. She had experienced many false starts with Mark. She felt unsure whether he was ready to go back to the junior high, wondering if anything in Mark or at the junior high had really changed at all.

Summary of reintegration process.

A typical mainstream reintegration between this day treatment and the mainstream school begins when the student with a disability is enrolled in one special education class. If the student is successful in that, the established pattern dictates addition of a single mainstream class. For Mark, however, the process began atypically. Instead of a special education class, his reintegration began with his being enrolled in one mainstream class; geography. The reason for the variance is unclear; there was a notable absence of many of the typical key staff at his transition IEP meeting. This was reported by two staff members who typically attend these meetings but were absent at Mark's meeting. The absent staff was those who had worked directly with Mark at the day treatment and special education staff at the junior high.

For the first few weeks, the reintegration appeared to go well. The mainstream teacher stated that he did not make modifications or adaptations, believing Mark had already been told of the expectations, and the necessity to comply with them. The teacher reported making some efforts to integrate Mark, to both pull him in and "get him to like the class." One effort the teacher made was letting Mark communicate with his father via Skype, stationed in Iraq. Mark verbalized that he liked his mainstream

teacher, stating that his teacher explained things in a way Mark understood. He was

excited about a video project on which students worked in small groups during class. He

talked about changing his reputation with peers from a "goofy clown who people laugh

at," to someone others saw as cool and funny.

Six weeks into the mainstream reintegration, problems became apparent to

others. Mark's mainstream teacher reported "subversive signs of disrespect," such as

eye rolling during lectures, and not copying the class outline into his notebook. The

teacher initially sought out the mainstream special education case manager, who had

not previously met Mark, for consultation. The mainstream teacher verbalized that the

culture within his classroom was precarious, and that a student like Mark could "tip the

class the wrong way." Mark reported that he wasn't getting the support he needed,

that the teacher was no longer explaining things, and that when he asked questions the

teacher was "being smart" with him. He had failed two tests and was no longer handing

in his assignments. The teacher reported that he was handling Mark differently than a

typical student in that he was not maintaining standard discipline strategies, such as

confronting the student, or calling the parents. He stated that he didn't have the time

to utilize those typical strategies. Also, because Mark was being monitored by day

treatment staff, it was his assumption that someone else had already addressed

classroom accountability. Day treatment personnel, however, had no knowledge that

the situation had become problematic. Their primary source of information regarding

Mark's progress was Mark himself, who repeatedly stated that everything was fine.

During my observation of Mark in geography class, I became aware that his behavior was notably different than fellow classmates. When the teacher directed students to take out their notebooks, Mark did nothing. During breakout time in class, as students were working on small group projects, Mark approached the teacher seeking potential extra credit. The teacher stated simply that the time for that had passed. Mark then returned to his seat and gazed into a corner for the remainder of the class period.

An IEP meeting was scheduled approximately two weeks after day treatment staff initially became aware that Mark was experiencing difficulties with his reintegration. This was, in fact, eight weeks beyond the first recognition of conflict experienced by the mainstream teacher. The decision was made to add a resource room class in the mainstream school to offer special education support during his transition. After four days in the resource room the decision was made, largely by the teacher of that class, that he would not be successful there. The special education teacher reported the other students in the class were struggling with behavior problems and Mark exhibited no ability to separate himself from them and would not be successful. He was immediately placed in a second mainstream class, Biology, instead. It is important to note that the decision to begin the mainstream biology class was not one made by his IEP team but instead by the mainstream school.

After this IEP meeting, when a resource room was added, Mark's geography teacher decided he would "pull the gloves off" and begin holding Mark accountable for misbehavior through confrontation. During the reentry meeting, the team agreed that they would also hold him accountable, and remove Mark from mainstream upon failure to meet classroom expectations. The teacher reflected that he waited skeptically to see whether the IEP team would carry through as promised. The teacher also described feeling an increasing sense that Mark was "a negative for me."

Mark's behavior in the recently added mainstream biology class was reportedly satisfactory. However, the IEP team decided they would end his mainstream reintegration two weeks into its addition, because Mark continued to struggle in geography class. He had failed a third test, was neither completing nor submitting homework assignments, and had adopted a general air of noncompliance in geography class. Mark explained the failure as a lack of support in the classroom.

Case analysis.

Mark showed limited understanding and usage of self-regulation strategies throughout his mainstream reintegration. He described that the primary method he applied was to "hold it together" until he returned to the day treatment setting. Mark stated that the special education staff at the day treatment facility helped him process through the events of each school day. Mark also explained feeling motivated to "hold it together" in mainstream as a result of his desire to fit in and feel liked by classmates.

In this manner, Mark was successful. He exhibited none of the behaviors that might set him apart from his peers. This behavioral development was significant as compared with previous years.

Mark faced significant academic frustration in his initial mainstream class. This geography class was later described to the IEP team as being the most challenging class mainstream ninth graders would encounter. Rather than independently seeking help when he became frustrated, Mark repeatedly assured everyone that he was doing well and had "everything under control." Mark engaged in very little self-advocacy, stressing the importance that he "not look dumb" to his peers.

As his academic frustration increased, some of Mark's negative behaviors became apparent to the mainstream teacher. These behaviors would not be categorized as aggressive; instead, they could be described as passive resistant. By the time the special education staff was informed of the problems, reciprocal negativity was an established factor in the relationship between Mark and his mainstream teacher. Mark did not develop a single positive adult relationship in the mainstream school environment; however, he did report feeling some positive connections with adults at the day treatment site. When Mark chose to access these relationships, he felt they provided both time and space in which he could address his anxiety regarding his school work.

Mark's teacher in the mainstream setting demonstrated some level of understanding in terms of Mark's disability. The teacher displayed awareness to Mark's anxiety problems, his history of difficulties, and his special education status. This comprehension did not lead to engagement with Mark as a student regarding potential adaptation and modification opportunities. Instead, the mainstream teacher believed that successful reintegration for a student with a disability was for the student to rise to both the academic and behavioral levels the teacher expected of every mainstream student. Possible supportive adaptations, such as modified testing, could have been utilized, but were not identified or brought to the attention of the IEP team as possible additions to the IEP.

Parental advocacy was limited; Mark's mother reported feeling "powerless." She explained that she relied on the day treatment staff to identify needs and communicate them to the mainstream school.

Mark failed at his reintegration attempt, returning full time to the day treatment site.

Jake.

Background information.

Jake was an 18 year old in his second senior year. His IQ was tested in the borderline range. Jake reported chronic problems understanding and completing schoolwork, and especially struggled in math. Jake's mother and teachers reported a

long history of impulsivity and distractibility, and trouble managing unstructured time at school. His mother reported the presence of conduct problems at home, school, and in the community. Documentation indicated that behavioral problems, which set Jake apart from other students, began in elementary school. These problems included an inability to stay on task and follow directions, as well as a propensity to fight with peers.

In seventh grade, Jake was placed in an alternative school setting and had made multiple, unsuccessful attempts to return to a mainstream setting. Behaviors identified at school included peer conflict, incomplete school work, disregard for school rules, and truancy. Jake described difficulty managing his anger and frustration. School personnel described a trigger for his negative behavior to be perceived discrimination; he was concerned about fairness and was sensitive to possibly unfair treatment toward himself or his friends.

Jake reported learning more successful means to control his anger and frustration at school. He reported being able to maintain personal calm and dismiss things which previously had angered him. Jake demonstrated many positive social skills; he was well known at his school by students and teachers, and he was personable and friendly while maintaining a tough guy image. He had formed positive relationships with all of the school administrators by greeting them in the halls, stopping in their offices to chat, spending time with them during disciplinary meetings. Jake played on both the senior high football and basketball teams, with a significant portion of his identity in

school linked to athletics. He associated with athletic peers, socialized with coaches, and hoped for an opportunity to play in college.

Jake had a self-reported history of activity in gangs since elementary school. He served probation for criminal behavior, including theft and underage drug use. School personnel expressed that he continued to exhibit some of that "gang mentality," such as loyalty to peers no matter what and disrespect for authority. However, Jake reported he no longer allied himself with the gang, having left that part of his life behind. He reported this was a difficult decision to make, but one he believed necessary to meet his goal of a productive life. Jake was able to use his identity as an athlete as a tool to distance himself from gang participation. He described probation as a positive event as it resulted in formation of a strong connection with his probation officer, who mentored him on instigating changes in his life and gaining control over his anger.

I was unable to interview any of Jake's family: his mother and father did not return my phone calls. All information about his family was garnered from interviews with Jake, examination of his academic records, and interviews with school personnel. Jake was the youngest and only child remaining at home, and he lived with both parents. Because Jake was 18, he was able to make his own decisions regarding school; but his mother still attended meetings, and was still called if issues arose per his choice. Jake described his mother as his strongest support, always in his corner and encouraging him when he wanted to give up. She advocated for him at meetings. When his IEP team was deciding where to place Jake, who did not want to be placed at a particular

alternative site, she voiced those wishes to the team and fought for a different alternative placement. He described his dad as the more serious parent; conversations regarding school were business-like. He explained that his dad used tough love as a means to impel Jake to do whatever was necessary. Jake's case manager described his mother as "enabling", that her behavior did not hold Jake accountable. For example she noted that at times when Jake was skipping school, his mother met with the principal to deter the school from assigning Jake a truancy-derived lowered grade.

Summary of reintegration process.

Jake started the school year with a unique plan. Half of his classes took place in the special education resource room, half in the alternative learning program within his high school. The latter half included mainstream physical education class and lunch. This allowed him to be full-time in his high school, but not in mainstream classes, where he had a long history of failure. If Jake earned his credits in those two programs for the three trimesters of the school year, he would graduate with a high school diploma at the end of the year.

Jake was on the football and basketball team. He had strong connections to his primary teacher in the alternative learning program, his coaches, administration, and his special education case manager. He felt that his case manager, who had worked with him for about four years, genuinely cared about him.

The day I first interviewed Jake reveled much insight into his reintegration. Scheduled to meet with him at 10:30, I went to his classroom to find he was not there. The teacher was unsure of where he was (there were about ten students in the classroom). One of the students reported Jake and another student went to the office. The office secretary confirmed that Jake had been there. A custodian I passed reported he had just talked to Jake. I finally sat down in the room where I was to interview him. After ten minutes he wandered in, with two young men walking behind him and stated "I heard you were looking for me."

Jake struggled throughout the school year with attendance and work completion. During first trimester, he earned only three credits toward graduation and, as his case manager reported, was "down to the wire" as to being able to graduate that year because of not completing his work. Jake exhibited some behaviors atypical of his peers such as wandering the halls during class time and not handing in a large percentage of his school work. These behaviors were not to the level where he was suspended during the school year. He was not aggressive.

In February, there was an anonymous threat made to students at the school. The threat suggested there would be violence at an upcoming school event. The school administration took quick action when it found out the source of the threats and suspended/expelled a number of students. Jake became involved in the incident by making comments in support of the disciplined students. Jake was confronted about the

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comments and administration wanted him expelled. The district held a manifestation

meeting to determine whether the reason for the expulsion was related to his disability.

If a determination was made that his behavior was related to his disability, he couldn't

be expelled. The behavior was found to be a manifestation of his disability. The

administration, however, refused to allow Jake back into the school and demanded that

an alternative placement be found. The IEP team decided to allow Jake to be home

schooled, with monitoring by his special education case manager. If he completed the

required work, 8 credits, he would graduate in the spring and continue with his plan to

enroll in a community college in the fall. He was not allowed to be on school property

for the rest of the year, play sports, attend games, nor attend the prom.

Jake was somewhat confused by the whole incident. He couldn't understand

why everyone "freaked out about it." He stated, "Why would I hurt the place where all

the people are who made me who I am today?" At the end of the year when I checked

in with his case manager, he had not completed any of the work he was supposed to

complete in order to graduate.

Case analysis.

Jake had many positive connections with school personnel. These connections

seemed to give him a great deal of flexibility around policies at the school. There

seemed to be a general attitude toward Jake that was permissive of his mild rule-

breaking as long as he was not disruptive. He was able to follow this expectation until

an incident that was deemed to endanger the safety of the student body. Jake, who

was used to flexibility, seemed surprised it was not extended to him again. Jake had

improved self-regulation over past years, but still struggled with impulsivity. Jake had

some understanding of his needs and was at times able to utilize supports, primarily

school personnel relationships. Jake failed in his reintegration effort, being removed

from the mainstream school setting.

Leon.

Background information.

Leon was an 18 year old senior with a past diagnosis of ADHD and depression,

and was not currently taking any psychotropic medications. Both Leon and his mother

believed that the encephalitis he contracted as an infant was a significant factor of his

life-long learning difficulties. Leon reported that because of the illness, "It takes me

twice as long to learn anything as everybody else." Speech difficulties prompted receipt

of special education services before Leon entered kindergarten. Early testing revealed a

below normal IQ, while later testing determined him to be in the low-normal range.

Leon had a very low performance IQ in math, an area in which he struggled most

significantly.

Leon was in special education as EBD and Learning Disability, with primary

behavioral difficulties described as truancy, avoidance, and shut-down. His mother

described him as hyperactive, having depressive symptoms and problems with conduct

and aggression. Leon had a history of displaying mild aggression at school, stronger

aggression at home. His problems with aggression had decreased as he matured. Leon

described his primary problems at school to be schoolwork incompletion, frustration

from his own incomprehension of material, and truancy.

Leon believed he had gained strategies in dealing with his frustration, "I am

better at just setting something aside when I get frustrated, and then I can come back to

it." Seeking help was another strategy he employed, though with mixed success. He

received maximum benefit when a teacher slowly explained or demonstrated

something, breaking it down in ways he could understand.

Leon reported he had friends at the high school, despite never having attended

this particular one.   He gravitated toward kids with similar struggles. Many of Leon's

friends no longer attended school, either as a result of dropout or graduation. He stated

that this factor could sometimes act as a barrier to his school attendance as he at times

preferred to spend time with his friends than attend school.

Leon was the eldest of two; his parents were divorced and rarely communicated

with each other, according to Leon. Leon lived with his father, a relatively recent

change. When Leon became physically aggressive toward his mother, the family

decided he would move in with his father instead. Leon reported he and his mother had

a good relationship. She acted as primary communicator with the school until last year,

when Leon moved. His dad began attending meetings when necessary. Leon conferred

participation in the research to his mother, not to his father.

Summary of reintegration process.

When Leon entered the study he was mainstreaming in transportation technology and physical education with the remaining classes in a special education resource room of his mainstream high school. He struggled with attendance during the trimester, but completed enough of his work to earn a passing grade. He successfully passed both mainstream classes and special education classes. He was described by his mainstream teacher as respectful, "coming into class ready to learn." His teacher reported he asked for help in class, was able to ignore other students' negative behavior, and followed all of the safety guidelines in class. This teacher approached his relationship with Leon as he would any other student in his class. He made efforts to talk with him inside and outside of class, gave him a lot of choices and responsibility around his grade, and acted as a "guide." He did not read Leon's IEP or modifications before he began his class. His general approach is that he likes to give all students a "fresh start" by not letting the student's history determine his or her relationship or behavior in his class. He consulted an IEP or a case manager only when problems developed to find out possible reasons for the problems or suggestions. This was not necessary in Leon's case as he did well in class.

His special education case manager predicted that Leon would be successful in his reintegration. She saw him as very motivated and focused on what he needed to do to graduate. The administrator also predicted success based on his interactions with Leon. He described him as being able to "see himself after high school" and that focus

would help him. He gave an example of how Leon responded appropriately when confronted about behavior in school. He saw Leon with a pack of cigarettes, which are not allowed on school grounds. He told Leon that even though he is 18 and legally can smoke, the cigarettes are banned on school property. He asked Leon to turn them over and not have cigarettes on him again. Leon apologized, turned over the cigarettes, and was not caught with them again.

Leon struggled with attendance throughout the school year, but was able to consistently make it to school an average 4 out of 5 days per week. He was able to complete his work. This acceptable pattern changed in April. He missed two weeks of school in a row. He reported in the beginning of the two weeks, his lack of attendance was because he was tired in the morning and couldn't wake up. After missing so many days he decided it was hopeless going back to school as he knew he had missed more than the school policy allowed.   He decided not to go back and just start again next year. His mother and father advised him to go in and talk to his case managers, but he refused. His father went to school and met with his IEP team, explaining his son's situation.   The team gave Leon another chance with the stipulation that he make up the work and not miss any more days. If he was able to do this for the remaining five weeks of the school year, he would still graduate. He returned to school.

One week later he took his road test for his driver's license and failed. He skipped school the next day, "because I was totally let down." He returned to school

and was told again, if he missed any more days, he would be unable to graduate. His

mother was concerned that the school was sending Leon the wrong message, but felt

conflicted because she also wanted him to get his diploma. Leon did not return to

school and plans to go back next year to finish.

Case analysis.

Leon had good ability to self-regulate his behavior. He was generally successful

in his course work. He reported a great deal of chronic academic frustration that he

learned to manage by taking short breaks and frequently changing what he was working

on in order to stay focused. He formed limited connections at school and had many

friends who had already graduated or dropped out. He was able to ask for help when

needed in his mainstream class and special education classes. Leon failed at his

reintegration attempt. He dropped out of school following lack of attendance and

resultant loss of credits. He plans to return to school in the fall.

Luis.

Background information.

Luis was a 16-year-old junior who entered the special education in second grade

under the EBD label. He was diagnosed with ADHD, bipolar disorder, and depression.

Luis was not taking any psychotropic medications, though he had in the past. He

described himself as a "Minnesotan, ADHD- teenager, who loves music." He also noted

that he was "evil in the past, disrespectful and disruptive." Luis identified a previous

internal barrier as his moodiness and irritability, a frustration expressed through acting out or shutting down. Along with the fact that he felt less moody, Luis noted a newfound ability to seek and find that space sometimes necessary to reestablish his stable mood. Luis credited his most recent alternative school placement for newly-learned control over problem behaviors. He believed this particular environment created so many frustrating situations he felt driven toward finding an impetus for change. He "hated the whole experience", including the internal school dynamics and the staff directly involved with his case. His biggest lesson was that personal anger should not distract him from his goal despite ever-occurring impediments.

Psychological testing completed in second grade placed Luis's overall intelligence, both performance and verbal, in the High-Average to Superior level. Retesting in eighth grade showed continued High-Average verbal intelligence, while performance dropped in math, reading, writing, and comprehension.   Academic records indicated this was likely a result of his behavioral disruptions, and management thereof, on his overall learning. Luis and his mother described writing as very difficult for him. He was much more apt to produce in a class when reading, followed by verbal discussion, was typical to curriculum than in a class that simply required students to read and record their answers on a worksheet.

Aggression in kindergarten was the first sign of difficulties in school, Luis's mother stated. He was a very late reader, requiring special tutoring and a special

teacher to develop that interest. Luis had been enrolled in alternative education sites

exclusively since third grade. He was placed in a resource room during each of his third,

fourth, and fifth grade years; he struggled with attendance, aggression toward peers,

and assignment completion.

Luis had regularly struggled with maintaining peer relationships. In elementary

school, he was described as overly aggressive. In middle school, outward identity set

him apart from peers through the hairstyle, body piercings, clothing, and music he

chose. Luis described many peers as afraid of him because of an assault incident during

which Luis broke another student's nose. He also stated that people thought he was

"weird because he was hyper from ADHD."   Over the past school year, Luis had

developed more friendships because his peers now understood ADHD and other

disorders, and "know that everyone is a little weird."   His mother concurred with this

assessment and acknowledged an increase in friendships due to a combination of him

"changing a bit, growing up a bit, and not acting out so much; and that everyone just

seems to be a little more accepting."

Luis lived with his mother, father, older sister, and nephew.   Luis reported a

good relationship with both parents. He explained being similar to his father because

they both like to learn interesting things and work with their hands. He reported being

close to his mother, and enjoyed spending time with her. He spoke a lot about his

family and the fact that they were proud of him for the changes that he had made this year.   Luis's mother attended every school meeting.

Summary of reintegration process.

When Luis entered the study he was in two mainstream classes; creative writing and transportation technology. The remainder of his schedule was in the special education resource room at the high school.   Luis had just recently made this transition to the high school from an alternative school.

Luis experienced a generally positive transition to his high school from his alternative school site. During his participation in the study, from November through May, he was not suspended, a success of which he was especially proud. His special education teachers noted a focus in him this year that was absent last year as he now seemed very determined to graduate and remain at the high school. One teacher noted that his "being motivated by his own goals has given him some strong skills in handling negative situations."

His mainstream teachers approached Luis in the same way they approached any student in their classrooms; they explained the expectations and tried to establish a relationship under the limits of time with at least twenty other students in class. Both were aware that Luis was in special education but neither aware he had recently returned from an alternative setting.   Neither had any communication with the case manager in the beginning of the trimester. Both approached the IEP with reluctance,

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one stating that he "didn't want to know a lot about the student before he came into class, like a clean slate." The modifications in Luis's IEP included having extra time for completion of assignments, breaking down of assignments into small chunks, and the ability to leave class when he is frustrated. Neither teacher reported they were aware of these modifications.

Luis formed positive connections to both special education teachers and the dean of students. All three reported they were able to give Luis feedback that he received well. One example was when Luis and the Dean of students spoke about Luis' desire to get a job during the school year. The Dean told Luis that he should think about cutting his Mohawk as it was just one more reason for an employer not to hire him. Luis responded "you might be right" and the next day came to school with his hair cut. The Dean contrasted this response with his perception of how Luis would have responded to feedback last year when Luis would have been furious and felt that he was being treated unfairly.

Luis demonstrated improved ability to regulate emotions, but continued to struggle with avoidance and shut-down when frustrated, angry or overwhelmed. He sometimes woke up feeling frustrated and was unable to overcome it all day; those are times he noticed little things really annoying him. Other times he woke up in an "okay" mood, but became frustrated by actions of others and had a hard time disregarding the problem. Avoidance presented through isolating himself in the classroom, placing his

head on his desk, refusing to participate, or walking out of class; as well as skipping school. Luis continued to experience bad days during the year, days he called "funk days." On those days his special education teacher would notice that he put himself away from his peers and told others "I just need a little time to myself."   Luis expressed belief that his special education teachers understood his mental health condition and were able to honor his requests for time to get himself back on track. His peers also allowed Luis those breaks and maintained a relationship with him, ready to reconnect when he was able. Luis's plan for self-regulation of his mood seemed to work well in the special education resource room setting.

There were two episodes when this plan was not as successful, one in creative writing and one during an extended period of absence from school.   Luis took a creative writing class because he thought it would be interesting to write a story. Although his mother thought it a bad idea for her son to take a mainstream writing class given writing was an area of disability for him, the team honored Luis's request. Document review revealed that other members of the IEP team believed his interest in the class was a strong indicator of potential success. The class began with some writing examples and work around identifying elements of fiction. Luis remained interested, attending class and completing work. His teacher described him as a loner in class, talking only a few sentences to a few students each day. One remark Luis made in the beginning of the semester stood out to the teacher.   Luis, in talking with another student, said loudly enough that the whole class could hear that he had been in treatment. This was one of

the few times he shared about himself and the teacher thought this was not received well by his peers.

The main academic product of the first half of the trimester was a 10-page short story. Luis reported to the teacher early on that he had a hard time with what he called "writer's block" or writing down what he was thinking. The teacher reported that he discovered the problem by approaching Luis, as Luis did not ever ask for the teacher's help. The teacher said he would sit down with Luis, try to come up with some ideas, and leave Luis to work.   Luis's topics for the story were deemed inappropriate by the teacher, involving killing or drug themes. Luis believed that he was the only one experiencing problems writing his story in class. He brought his problem of writer's block to his special education teachers who talked about the process of problem solving with him. His special education teachers helped Luis identify what the problem was and explored options with him. One option suggested was a piece of hardware that he could take to class to help him write. He refused the device, saying "no one else was using one."   Other options were to ask students around him for help or ask the teacher. Luis did not implement these options. About one week after telling his special education teachers about his struggles in the class, Luis made the decision to drop the class because the project was due and he didn't have his done. He was transferred to the resource room for a writing credit class. His special education teacher saw this as a good step as Luis was able to identify when he couldn't succeed and appropriately withdrew from the class.

Luis reported another difficulty in this class as the level of disruption from other students. He described some of the kids as loud and annoying. The teacher reported he allowed discussion while writing because it helped spur on the writing process. Luis reported that for him it was hard to write during those times. He reported on one occasion he decided to leave the classroom because he was getting frustrated. He packed up his materials and left. The teacher stopped him in the hall and asked him what he was doing. Luis felt disapproval from him that he was leaving and walked away, upset that he wasn't letting him take care of himself. The teacher reported he didn't know why Luis had left the class.

The second difficulty Luis experienced during his reintegration process was a period of seven days when he did not attend school. Luis reported that he was "in a funk." He didn't want to go to school and was unable to identify the triggers. His mother contacted the school, was told they would be filing for truancy if he didn't make it in and that his credits for the year were in jeopardy. She explained to the school that he was experiencing mental health problems. She talked to Luis about the consequences and in frustration told him that she had called the school and told them he "was dropping out." He became very angry that she would tell the school "such a thing" and smashed the windows out of the car he was supposed to get for graduation with a baseball bat. The next day he returned to school. When he described the incident, he reported that he was in a down mood and even though she frustrated him, his mother confronting him helped snap him out of the mood.

Luis passed his transportation technology mainstream class and a later added mainstream weightlifting class. He continued to remain in the special education resource room for his remaining courses. He called his academic year "the best one yet" and expressed pride that he was able to remain in his mainstream high school for the entire school year.

Case analysis.

Luis had made significant gains in his ability to self-regulate. He continued to experience mental health difficulties that impacted his school performance in terms of attendance and incomplete work. However, these difficulties did not escalate into acts of aggression or withdrawal. Luis made many positive connections with school personnel, which allowed for flexibility, feedback, and compromise when needed. Luis showed moderate ability to seek out and use resources when needed. He struggled to reach out in the mainstream classroom, but was able to access assistance in the special education classroom. He was able to succeed in the two mainstream classes with more hands-on work and reported very little to no academic frustration in those classes. He reported a great deal of academic frustration in his other mainstream class. He was able to identify when a mainstream class was too difficult and find a way to withdraw from the class that allowed him to continue to be enrolled in the high school. His mainstream teachers had limited understanding of his abilities and disabilities. Efforts were not made to explore his unique needs until he began to show problems in class. There was no knowledge of the adaptations that were present in his IEP. His mother worked to

advocate for Luis by explaining his unique mental health needs to the school and intervening to gain flexibility for him.

Luis had mixed success in his reintegration experience. He was able to successfully remain in the mainstream school setting in spite of failing two mainstream classes.

Sharell.

Background information.

Sharell was a 16-year-old junior, receiving special education services under the EBD label since kindergarten. She had mental health diagnoses of ADHD, depression, and anxiety and was on medication for her ADHD. She had been hospitalized for suicidality in the past, most recently two years ago.

In general, Sharell reported doing well academically. This was confirmed by document review. She was ahead of where she needed to be in terms of earned credits for graduation. She reported having difficulties breaking down large projects and becoming overwhelmed in such situations. Sharell described her behavioral problems as having difficulties with focusing and impulsiveness. Her mother described Sharell as having to be in control of her environment at all times and being very oriented to her peers, being overly concerned with what others are thinking of her. At school Sharell had struggled with not following directions, being disrespectful to teachers, not completing work, and becoming easily involved with negative behavior of her peers.

Sharell failed to reintegrate many times. She tried mainstream settings on multiple occasions since kindergarten. These placements had ended, typically, because of a significant incident that had led to the conclusion that she was not safe in the mainstream environment or flagrantly violated the rules of the mainstream. She was described by her mainstream teacher, mother, special education teacher, and administrator as being eager to be liked by her peers and would put this goal above others.

Some of the problems with self-regulation that Sharell exhibited include difficulties managing frustration and anger, impulsivity, and difficulty focusing on her long term goals. Sharell reported that she wanted very much to be in the mainstream because she wanted to be around her friends. Her mother described her as wanting to be normal and fit in and that was what motivated her to remain in mainstream classrooms.

Sharell was the younger of two children born to her parents. Her older brother had the reputation in school and within the family as the star. He was a very popular athlete in school, did well academically, and was well liked by teachers and staff. He was in his second year of college. Sharell's mother was very involved in Sharell's schooling; she attended school meetings, initiated frequent contact with the school, and was an active member of the IEP team.

Summary of reintegration process.

Sharell began the school year with two classes in her high school, one mainstream and one special education. After success for one trimester, she added two more classes, returning to the alternative school setting for the remainder of the day. She had Health and English in the mainstream setting. When I first tried to set up a meeting with her, I had a hard time finding her. She was supposed to be in her special education class, but was not there. Teachers didn't seem to know where she was. When I met with her, it became clear she had been skipping her special education classes for about a week, and instead was sitting in the library. She stated the reason was because she didn't see the purpose of the special education classes. She didn't need help with class work, she needed to practice being with people in bigger classes and getting along with people. She soon returned to her special education classes. She was motivated by worry that if she continued to skip, "they" would hold it against her and not let her add mainstream classes in the future. She missed eight days of class in the beginning of the trimester, but was able to make up the work.

In her special education classes, she was described by the teacher as someone who just wanted to get her work and be left alone to complete it. She didn't like to participate in classroom discussions. She used her special education teachers and class time to help with some of her projects in mainstream classes. She had a major health assignment that had many parts to it. She was able to let her special education teacher know about the project and work with him to complete it.

In her English class, Sharell left the class without telling the teacher. When the teacher confronted her about this and told her to ask permission before she left class, Sharell responded by saying "OK" and did not repeat the negative behavior. She did not complete most of the assignments in this class. Her teacher reported she didn't know Sharell was in special education until she began noticing behavioral problems. When the teacher investigated, she found she was in special education and had an IEP. The teacher stated that it is school policy to give the mainstream teacher a sheet listing accommodations from the IEP, but she did not see one on Sharell and assumed it was because she was attending an alternative school. The mainstream teacher emailed the case manager to report that Sharell was not completing her work and leaving class. When these problems came to the case manager's attention, he instructed Sharell to talk to the English teacher about obtaining make up work, reporting that he wanted Sharell to work on her self-advocacy skills. Sharell did talk to her teacher and received online make up work.

During the span of a week, half-way through the second trimester, Sharell was involved in two separate incidents which caused concern for the school administration. One involved meeting an older man off campus whom she met on the internet. The next school day she was sent to the principal's office after she and another student announced loudly in English class that they were taking drugs, Percocet. There was some discrepancy between reporters whether Sharell told school personnel that she had indeed taken Percocet. She stated she did not say that as she thought she was just

taking aspirin and they were joking about it being drugs. The dean of students stated

that she told him she had taken six Percocet.

The school made the decision to suspend Sharell for ten days. At the end of the

suspension the IEP team decided to end Sharell's placement at the high school and

return her full time to her alternative school setting. The decision was made because

Sharell demonstrated she could not be safe in the mainstream setting.

Case Analysis.

Sharell struggled to get her needs met in the mainstream setting. She attempted

to develop her own support system in the mainstream setting by modifying herself to

satisfy each individual, especially her peers. Her connections to school staff were

limited. Her understanding of her disability was poor, she saw it more as an

inconvenience than anything else, just another way she was made to seem different

than everyone else. Sharell reported her mother was supportive and advocated for her

needs. There were numerous examples of this reported by school personnel during the

school year. Sharell lacked the understanding of how her disability complicated her

learning and how she would need to find ways of adapting around those complications.

Sharell saw school in a social aspect only and showed little motivation to complete her

schoolwork.

Sharell's mainstream teachers both had reputations for being flexible and "good

at working with special education students." However, neither read the IEP nor were

aware of the modifications necessary to work with Sharell. The mainstream teachers

sought help after behavior problems developed with Sharell.

Sharell's effort at reintegration failed and she was returned full time to her

alternative school setting.

Cross-case Analysis

Cross-case analysis was completed and theoretical categories developed which

reflected the primary processes found to be important during reintegration. The

inclusion of multiple participant comments has a threefold purpose, meant to

demonstrate "thick description," offer transparency of my analysis, and present the

variety of individual participant's experiences. I constructed four theoretical categories

to express the experiences presented by the students, the parents, and the school

personnel: *Student Using Tools, Providing Supports, Understanding of Disability, and*

Advocacy (Table 4).

Table 4: Theoretical Categories of Reintegration Process

Theoretical Categories	Sub-categories	Properties/ Dimensions	Definitions
Student Using Tools – process of student using tools to support reintegration and deal with problems that arise.	Barriers encountered	Academic	Difficulties students had understanding curriculum and assignments.
		Connection	Difficulties students experienced feeling connected to their new community
	Self-regulation	History	Long history of struggles with self-regulation, mental health issues with students.
		Having tools	Tools developed, typically during alternative school placement.
		Using tools	Students reported different strategies for utilizing tools and variations in responses to their efforts to self-regulate.

	Self-advocacy	History	Students had varying experiences when they utilized self-advocacy in the past. It is likely this affected the use of self-advocacy.
		Developing skills	Efforts by teachers to teach self-advocacy, belief it is a necessary lifelong skill, how taught
		Barriers	Students report variation in the success of their self-advocacy efforts.
	Experiencing needs conflict with fitting in	Asking for help	Feeling that asking for help conflicts with need to fit in.
		Using special education	Feeling that using special education conflicts with need to fit in.
Developing supports – supports given to the student to improve fit in classroom and chances of success, these supports were relationships and making adjustments.	Relationship development	Student experience of support	Students described feeling of support as going the extra mile, being there even when there are problems, understanding, and being liked.
		Strategies staff utilize	School personnel listed various strategies they utilize to develop relationships with students.
		Effects of relationship	School personnel described various effects of having a relationship on the student such as allowing the student to ask for help when needed, and applying context to confrontations.
	Making adjustments	Importance of flexibility	Flexibility and adjustments are identified and made based on understanding of student's disability.
		Need for balance	Parents sought a balanced approach to flexibility as being flexible but not pushing the student through.
		Barriers to implementation	Barriers to implementation of supports were identified including lack of resources in the system and policy implementation failures.
		Variation among school personnel	School personnel described flexibility as a fixed trait of teachers and so required matching.
Understanding of Disability by School Personnel	Attitude of fairness		Belief on the part of many teachers that the best way to educate is to treat all students the same and not let past interfere.
	Interactions with provision of supports		Interacts with the efforts teachers make to develop relationship with students and provide accommodations.
	Interactions with self-advocacy		Interacts with self-advocacy by over-relying on student advocacy of needs. Creates barrier of finding out about problems too late.
Advocacy	History of		Varying experiences families have had with advocacy and the school system.
	Used to increase understanding of disability		Using advocacy to impact attitudes of school personnel by giving information about student.
	Barrier of no news is good news		Barrier in communication of assuming that "no news is good news."

Theoretical Category 1: Process – student using tools.

This category encompasses the processes students engaged to face and overcome challenges within the mainstream environment. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators all emphasized the importance of student agency on the success or failure of reintegration. At the beginning of the reintegration experience each student spoke about his or her determination to make the reintegration work. I conceptualized this process of making reintegration work as the student using tools. The process involves steps of identifying strategies, developing strategies, and implementing the use of those strategies. Tools students utilized fell into two broad categories: self-regulation and self-advocacy.   I used the term self-regulation to describe the strategies students utilized to manage their thoughts, emotions and actions promoted meeting their goals. I used the term self-advocacy to describe the strategies student utilized to express and get their needs met in the school environment. These terms are further defined below as I detail these two processes.

Students identified a variety of barriers encountered during the process of reintegration. These hurdles are distinguished as either academic barriers or barriers to connection.   A significant barrier encountered by students was the conflict between getting their academics needs met through accessing available resources, with the desire to fit in and connect to people within their environment.

Academic barriers encountered.

Students gave numerous examples of academic barriers encountered during the reintegration process. These include insufficient comprehension of material, inability to express personal ideas, and undeveloped knowledge of methods for fragmenting assignments into manageable chunks. The barrier of academic incomprehension was expressed by two students.

> MARK: We started talking about religion. It flew off me; I didn't even know what it was. I know it was geography, and I don't know why we were talking about religion. Then we had to name the religions of every country and I didn't understand it.

> LUIS: German is *learning a new language*[emphasis added]: pronouncing things, remembering some of the words. It was - you'd have to learn genders of some of the words and if it's er and something. It was like – Whoa! That class was hard. I just didn't understand it at all.

Despite seeing himself as a "creative guy," Luis described another barrier he faced, this time in a creative writing class. At the start of the quarter, Luis was excited by the prospect of a mainstream writing class. When assigned the composition of a 10-page short story, Luis encountered a barrier he described as internal.

> And for me, I have a hard time writing things. I can write; but [I find that with] certain things, it's iffy. It was an "in the head problem," like writer's block. I wanted to write something. I wanted to, it was *in there* [italics added]; but I just couldn't write it down.

One student spoke of her struggle to fragment assignments into approachable pieces. There was an accommodation in her IEP which detailed that problem, and required all assignments be broken down for her. This student described the difficulty she encountered with a mainstream health class assignment, one which required the inclusion of a video component. The teacher suggested a number of methods students could choose to complete the assignment. Despite that, the student stated, "I just didn't know how to do it. I didn't know what he [the teacher] wanted really."

Connection barriers encountered.

Another barrier encountered by students was a lack of connection in the mainstream environment. The two areas of disconnection students reported were to peers and to mainstream teachers. Some students described that a lack of peer-connectedness became problematic during reintegration. For Sharell, this lack of connection contributed to the negative behaviors which put her at risk of losing her mainstream classes. She described one interaction, "Well, they're just making fun of me and [their teasing] gets on my nerves. So I ended up yelling at them; and then I got in trouble for that."

Luis explained the effect of these rejections by peers. "Some kids here act like I'm the *worst* [italics added] thing; in the halls, in class, anywhere. Like, if someone asked me for help I would help them. But if I asked one of these people for help next week, "no, no you're the devil. I'm not helping you now." This student went on to

describe how this lack of connection led him to not asking help from his peers when he didn't understand an assignment in class.

Another barrier to feeling connected students described was based on perceived dislike by the mainstream teacher. A sense of frustration toward teacher's negative attitude was communicated by phrases such as, "He just doesn't understand me"; "He was giving me attitude"; "She didn't care what I had to say". One student expressed his belief, "I think that [the mainstream teacher] is just looking for reasons to get me kicked out." Mark, another student, described an episode during an IEP meeting which began with Mark feeling disliked by the teacher:

At the meeting, Mr. M. comes storming in and says, "He's not copying the outline." I'm not going to write it down if it's on the board, and that's what we're going to do today. I'm not going to bring it home and study it. The point is *to look at it and do it* [italics added]; not to write it down in the notebook. He got mad at me for that; then I started getting mad at him. I started not liking him at all. I was really mad because that's what he was saying. I'm like, "You are such an idiot." I literally walked out.

Students reported experiencing both academic and connection barriers during the reintegration process. Students spoke about two processes used to deal with these barriers: self-regulation and self-advocacy.

Process of self-regulation.

The concept of self-regulation comes from developmental psychology and describes well one of the reintegration processes that became evident during data analysis. Self- regulation is generally understood to be the ability to manage one's actions, thoughts, and feelings in adaptive and flexible ways across a variety of contexts (Saarni, 1999; Masten, 2007). I constructed three dimensions of self-regulation to describe this process: history, having tools to self- regulate, and using the tools.

Self-regulation history.

Within the context of education, students in this study described a lengthy history of difficulty maintaining self-regulation. A problem with consistent self-regulation was cited by all participants as one of the reasons they transferred schools; for one student, a total of thirteen times. Jake explained, "I would let my anger get to me and I would react wrong. That's what got me switched to different schools 'cause they didn't know what to do about my anger." Luis stated, "I've always had a hard time sitting still and just being a little wild. That's why I got kicked out when I was little."

Every parent whose child participated in the study described a long history of the child's self-regulation problems. Many of these students' behaviors indicated self-regulation difficulties including mood swings, depression, anger outbursts, hyperactivity, impulsivity, anxiety. Mark's parent stated:

Well this is, since he has been very, very small there's – I knew there was something wrong. And we've gone through the school and psychologist and this and that. And now that we've gotten into the junior high, his behavior just got

out of control. He's hiding under desks, um, just a lot of things to get himself into trouble.   And he had severe anxiety too. He had problems, always, controlling behavior and even controlling his thoughts.

Luis's parent recalled similar experience:

It all started out in the second half of kindergarten; then aggression started appearing, and that increased by the time we hit first grade. He seemed to be distracted, angry. Either he would fly off the handle or shut down.

Mental health issues such as anxiety, impulsivity, depression, explosive anger, and bipolar disorder complicated the ability of these students to self-regulate. Mark suffered from panic attacks and anxiety. He reported having "blow-outs," times he would leave the school, "I just had to get outside," or hide under desks. Luis experienced depression. At school, during one of his depressive cycles and feeling overwhelmed, Luis acted out by kicking over a trashcan and spitting in the teacher's classroom window while walking by.   Sharrel reported that her ADHD and impulsivity created problems, "Whenever I get mad, I used to act out on it." Tim described having similar problems with anger control, "I just yelled at people a lot, teachers and kids. If they get me mad I'll go off on them, I guess." Leon would walk out of class upon feeling overwhelmed by subject material, "I just used to get up and leave, whenever [the work] was too much."

Having tools to self-regulate.

All of the students reported developing tools of improved self-regulation during their alternative school placements. The tools they identified include: focusing on goals and consequences, walking away to calm down, isolating self when in need of it, using prescribed medications, and holding it together to process later. These tools were typically developed and practiced in the alternative school setting. The acquiring of such self-regulatory tools allows students means by which to meet behavioral expectations of the mainstream environment, a significant condition of success for reintegration.

Luis stated that being placed at the alternative school helped him build better skills to manage his frustration. These lessons were not taught through direct curriculum; rather, Luis learned to self-regulate by maintaining control over his goals to succeed. He explained:

I hated it at the other school, but it was actually a good thing. At first it was hard to know what would make me mad. But it made me realize I just can't be doing that.   I think the teachers kind of pushing the buttons a little made me realize it. Because, I swear they would just put me on a Level one for no reason or just because I was liked. Or small things they would do. So eventually I was like: 'Whatever, I can't let that bug me.' I've got to do what I've got to do to get out of here; get my grades good. I just try and stay calm and do what I've got to do.

Another tool Luis spoke of using was to leave the situation that causes him frustration. This was a common self-regulatory tool identified by the students. Tim

talked about using the strategy to physically move his desk away from other students who were distracting him.

Because of Mark's limited development of self-regulatory tools, his special education manager instructed him to "hold it together" in mainstream for one hour. The rest of his school day, which was spent at the alternative site, would provide opportunity for the student to process issues as they arose. Negative self-talk caused this student tremendous anxiety and contributed to the complexity of effectively learning self-regulation. The staff at the alternative school site found it helpful, while time consuming, to calm and support the student after each incident; then helps him understand and accept his ability to deal with the issue.

Parents also reported noticing gains in their child's ability to self-regulate during the time of placement at the alternative setting. For example, Mark's parent said:

> Since he's been gone to the day treatment they've been working with him, with this mood and anger, and how to deal with situations where he gets very frustrated. And he seems to be doing much better with controlling himself in situations.

Likewise, one of Tim's parents stated, "He's doing much better now, able to focus when he needs to; turn things on and off."

Two of the six students talked about medication as a means of helping them develop self-regulatory behaviors. One student, who took his medication off and on for

the past five years, recently realized that medications helped him "focus and not jump on people as much; so I take them all the time now."

Three separate parents reported that a recent change to the medication routine of their child has been helpful toward their child's ability to self-regulate. Tim's parents reported that a change made in their own awareness regarding their child's medication resulted in a noticeable improvement to his behavior. "We've never really been consistent with it and we're really trying this year. We all really think it's helping a lot." They connected the change they made in consistently ensuring their son took his medication and the improvements this had on his ability to self-regulate to his success at school.

Using tools.

The ability to successfully implement the tools of self-regulation was related to the level of success experienced by the six students in this study. All six students reported experiencing many difficulties using tools of self-regulation. Improvement in self-regulation ability by Tim was directly attributed to his successful reintegration. Students reported experiencing varying levels of support from persons in the environment when they attempted use of developed self-regulation tools.

Three students experienced problems with using tools of self-regulation when they experienced competing demands. For Leon, this came toward the end of the school year when his goal of finishing school competed with his desire to sleep in and

spend time with friends who were not in school.   For Jake and Sharell, the competing

demand was the desire to fit in with others. Jake made a decision to fit in with his

friends who were threatening the student body. Sharell made the decision to violate

school rules in order to connect with someone off school property.

Mark had limited self-regulation skills when he entered the mainstream

environment which was quickly taxed. Luis had significant mental health issues which

were intimately connected to his use of self-regulation skills.

Students most often spoke about receiving support from special education

personnel in processing and problem solving. Jake explained, "If I need help- like, if I

need to figure it out, I just go talk to Ms. L." Luis: "If I'm in trouble for something, like a

teacher is jumping all over me, I'll talk to my case manager. He'll hear me and my side

of the story. We'll figure out what to do."

On a more intensive level of processing, Mark utilized processing with staff at

the day treatment site to help him regulate his behaviors and interrupt chains of

negative thinking. Mark's day treatment therapist told about the ongoing application of

self-regulatory tools staff uses with him.

> We process things, like the constant attitude adjustments he has to make
> throughout the day. If he comes into group and I'll ask if he wants to talk a little
> about the argument he had with the teacher last hour, he'll just look at me and
> won't respond. I'll say, "This is the kind of behavior that makes it difficult for you

to succeed in mainstream, because you cannot behave that way toward a teacher. When they are asking you a question, you need to figure out some way to respond." We work through that.

One student described his strategy of frequently changing tasks to prevent becoming overly frustrated with an assignment. When asked how his teacher responds to his need to shift mental gears, he stated, "She doesn't care how I get it done. Just so I get it done." He perceived this as support of his use of this self-regulation strategy.

One of the ways teachers attempted to support the use of self-regulation tools was by offering the student redirection upon appearance of inappropriate behaviors. Many teachers did not report a no-tolerance policy regarding disruptive behavior. Teachers did state that the student's ability to respond to redirection was essential. One mainstream teacher expressed this, stating "When I call attention to what he's doing, he needs to respond. He does that."

Another special education teacher described:

When I talk to him he usually corrects himself. I give the kids a formal warning, a couple shots; before I send them to the office. When I told him he got a warning, he'd correct himself. So I haven't had to do that. As long as he's responsive to my corrections, I don't call parents or refer them for discipline. He is good at responding.

One administrator explained that use of strategies of self-regulation is "the essential accommodation we make in mainstream; allowing them to use strategies to

calm down and get back on track." This administrator talked about self-isolation as an important self-regulation strategy: "the ability for a student to exit a classroom is a primary one. That's the biggest adaptation made for a student, the ability for the kids to remove themselves from a situation that could get negative."

Students report varying experiences when using self-regulation strategies in mainstream. Some tools students utilize are invisible to observers, such as a medication regime. Some tools are intrinsic, an example of which is the use of self-talk, learned internal cues which reinforce reason and the need to retain focus on the goal. Some tools for self-regulation are systemic, and require a markedly different approach. These external means are less subtle and frequently necessitate adaptations, which further emphasize differences between the students within the classroom. These modifications are likely to be noticed.

One teacher described her reaction when a student asked to remove himself from others he found distracting. She hesitated at allowing the use of isolation as a self-regulation tool. She decided to allow it, later explaining:

He sets himself back, isolates himself. I think that's how he deals with it. From what I understand, if he were sitting with the kids he'd be off-task more, and would be worse. So he's asked and he always goes and sits in the back away from everybody.

Researcher: Okay; that seems like a positive strategy?

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Well, it's better; he said he needs to do this. I guess it's okay if he knows he needs to do it. But I don't know if it's the *best* strategy.

Another student reported experiencing resistance when he tried utilizing self-regulation strategies. Referring to his mainstream teacher, Luis explained the difficulty,

He didn't understand; he didn't grasp the concept that there are days where I'm frustrated and must leave the room. He didn't grasp that. I'd start to pack my things up; all cool and calm, and just walk out. He tried stopping me; told me to get back in the room. It's like, "You don't understand Mr. G; I have to leave right now because I can't be in this environment right now." He's like, 'Whatever. Blah, blah, blah.'

The type of experience Luis described was verified as typical by his case manager.

Another big thing we find is we don't get calls; a general [education] teacher won't call. I only get called or emailed when there's a big problem, like they walked out of class. The teacher gets offended when the kids can't handle it and walk out. They don't understand these kids.

These examples all demonstrate self-regulation to be an important process during the student's reintegration. For these students, mental health was shown to be a complicating factor in practicing methods of self-regulation. Students in this study all experienced significant difficulties in mainstream when lacking self-regulation techniques. Each of the students developed some level of skill for self-regulation at their alternative schools. Alternative sites assisted with development of these skills,

sometimes without intention. Knowing and practicing skills of self-regulation is important to success within the mainstream environment. Students reported varying experiences when implementing tools they had learned, ranging from supportive to challenging.

Self-advocacy process.

Self-advocacy is defined as the ability to vocalize one's need in order to have the need met.   Through the lens of special education, self-advocacy is seen to be a student's ability to vocalize that need within the mainstream environment. Self-advocacy is a concept often linked to self-determination, maintaining control over one's destiny. Historically, self-determination has appeared in literature as pertains to social work, psychology, political science, and various others. Its presence within study of special education came via the disability movement and the principle of normalization. It was first used in 1972 by Nirje, who described self-determination as twofold: self-determination captures both the rights of a group of people (persons with disabilities) and a call for personal self-governance over one's life. The concept of self-determination continues to hold the dual focus of a movement, and a personal attribute; different theorists emphasize different aspects. Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer (1998) defined self-determination, in connection with education:

> [Self-determination is] a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations, together with a

belief of oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults in our society. (p. 2)

Self-advocacy, a component associated with this model of self-determination, is described as a skill that serves in achievement of self-determination (Field et al., 1998). Self-advocacy was a factor identified by educators in the study I conducted, a probable result of its establishment in educational nomenclature. Subthemes of self-advocacy I constructed are: developing skills, history, and barriers.

Developing self-advocacy skills.

Students learn to use tools of self-advocacy in their alternative school settings, then continue practicing these skills in mainstream special education resource classrooms. A mainstream special education case manager spoke of Luis, saying, "He had to learn to ask for help for things that have to do with academics; that was a big piece we worked with him on." A common aspect of curriculum in the alternative school sites is teaching the student's proper use of self-advocacy through direct instruction, then reinforcing its use by providing help as needed. A case manager at the day treatment site described the approach taken by staff there.

We practice it here; talk [to students] about the need for it, how important it is; how to reinforce for themselves their own self-esteem and help them feel good about themselves. [We are] reinforcing the idea that it isn't a lack of

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smarts, but that they're learning a new skill and might have questions; but can't learn the new skill without asking questions.

Students described successful experiences using the skill of self-advocacy in the special education settings, both at the alternative school and in the resource rooms of the mainstream environment. Teachers responded positively to the student's request for help, resulting in clearer understanding of material, alteration in the assignment, or the successful use of self-regulation strategies. Luis reported, "They really get us up here (in special education resource room). They say whenever you need help, just ask for it. And they mean it!" Every student in the study talked about receiving help whenever they asked for it, in the special education classroom.   An important component of the development of self-advocacy was this experience of experiencing success when utilizing the skill or asking for help.

Special education case managers also work with the student one-on-one, presenting means for successful implementation of these self-advocacy strategies in the mainstream classroom. Case managers clearly expressed the importance of learning this necessary "lifelong skill" in application now, and as the student moves into adulthood.   To further this, when the student describes a dilemma from his or her mainstream environment, the special education case manager may act in the role of problem-solver. This means of engagement with the student typically helps the student arrive at a point of identification of a specific self-advocacy strategy that can be used in the problematic mainstream setting. The case manager then encourages the student to

practice that strategy in the mainstream class. An example of this specific method

presented when the student, Luis, was experiencing problems in his mainstream writing

class. Luis's case manager described a time that Luis spoke with special education staff

members:

> When he talked to us, we gave him some strategies. Writing isn't his
> strength, so we talked about options such as an Image Writer [printer with
> capability to print text and images]. He didn't want that, so we talked about the
> stumbling block. We talked through it and asked questions. He said he gets
> writer's block, can't think of what to write or how to get started. The options
> were: to ask kids around him, or ask the teacher while he's there.

Another situation arose when Mark was experiencing problems in his

mainstream social studies class. Mark's day treatment teacher explained:

> [We found out] he's failing the class because one of the tests he took, he
> didn't pass. I suggested to him to talk to the teacher. I told him that he needs to
> ask for extra credit because the teacher has indicated that he is open to extra
> credit.

Influence of history of self-advocacy attempts.

Another dimension to the use of self-advocacy by students is the previous use of

self-advocacy, and its level of success therein. Students have a lengthy history of

seeking help in the mainstream setting, and have formulated an understanding as to

whether any assistance will be provided. When asking for help, some students reported

experiencing past rejection from both peers and teachers. One student, diagnosed with

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a significant learning disability, asked a teacher for help in finding an answer to a question in the textbook. The teacher answered, "Go find it yourself; I am not going to do your work for you." Absent from class, another student asked a classmate for clarification on a given assignment, this student was ignored and avoided. These rejections can be interpreted as personal rejections. One student reported, "If someone asked me for help, I would help them. But if I asked them next week, 'No! No! You're the devil. I'm not helping you now.'" Past attempts, followed by assistance or rejection, affect a student's likelihood of seeking help in the future.

Barriers experienced.

Close examination of the self-advocating subthemes elucidated that those students with previous trials at self-advocacy were continually impacted by the success or failure of such attempts. Therefore, it is also necessary to present that history as one of the barriers to successful use of self-advocacy.

Some of the students expressed a lack of success when assistance was sought of peers and teachers. In turn, this lack of success acted as a barrier to further attempts at using self-advocacy as a tool toward successful reintegration.

Earlier, I briefly reviewed a situation that acts as an example of unsuccessful self-advocacy. When Sharell struggled with the required inclusion of a video component in a health assignment, she presented her dilemma to a special education case manager. This case manager worked with her to complete the assignment on an iPod. When

Sharell attempted to hand in her assignment one week late, the mainstream teacher stated that it was presented in an unacceptable file format. Because of that, the teacher refused to accept the health assignment as submitted. Frustrated by perceived rebuttal, Sharell reported giving up and received an "F" as the grade on that assignment. This student made efforts to get needs met by asking for assistance, but when she ran into further barriers, she gave up. The self-advocacy was unsuccessful at getting the assignment accepted.

Another student recalled an occasion in which he asked the teacher to explain the topic more clearly. "I asked him what it means and he wouldn't give me a clear answer. I still didn't understand it at all." This attempt at asking for help was unsuccessful for the student. The student reported he did not ask for help in this class again.

The student vocalizing his experience with writer's block stated, "There was no help [from the teacher]. It was either [*sic*] that we had to find information on the elements on fiction. That was easy. But when he had us start writing, he wouldn't- He wouldn't help in any way that really did [help me]." For this student, asking for help did not result in any benefit.

Learned techniques at self-advocacy in special education do not necessarily translate directly to success upon seeking help in the mainstream classroom. Students are acutely aware there are factors which determine the available amount of assistance.

One student, Tim, concisely described some of the constraints he recognized. "At mainstream, teachers don't explain everything good because they don't have enough time to help every student understand everything."

Mainstream teachers acknowledged the impact of limited time for establishing individual relationships with students which acts as a barrier to seeking help. This is exemplified by a teacher who stated, "I've got 36 in first hour, so it's tough making relationships with all the students."

Self-advocacy was a process initially identified by school personnel to be important for success during reintegration. Special education teachers described the process of teaching self-advocacy to students through direct instruction in the special education classroom, and by working with the student directly on problems that arose as a way to generalize to the mainstream classroom. This generalization typically followed a four-step process: student identification of a problematic mainstream issue; student presentation of that dilemma to case manager; provision of assistance to student by case manager regarding successful strategies toward resolution; implementation by the student of chosen self-advocacy strategies. Students reported mixed histories upon utilization of self-advocacy, perceiving a continuum from failure to assistance. This history has a potential impact on student use or non-use of self-advocacy skills, further explained through examination of expressed barriers. These barriers included unsuccessful attempts at self-advocacy in mainstream classes, and lack

of available time provided for help by their mainstream teacher, as perceived by the student.

Experiencing needs-conflict.

I constructed the subtheme of needs-conflict based on research of experiences described by students. Students illustrated the desires to accomplish both academically and socially. While students explained wanting to use tools of self-advocacy to further successful mainstreaming, they also recognized its confliction with any ability to successfully blend with other students. This conflict of needs presented in two different areas, asking for help and using special education.

Asking for help.

Asking for help from educators or peers often involves standing apart within the mainstream classroom. As a result of that element, use of this process seemed highly influenced on a student's desire to fit in with peers. Some students talked about a fear of "looking stupid" by asking questions, some referred to a sense of being "the only one who wasn't getting it." Tim stated that his comfort level can sometimes dictate use: "Asking for help depends on what it's about. If it's something easy, I'd be okay to ask. But if it's something most people understand, I wouldn't ask. Or I'd wait until they get up, and I'd ask after class." When discussing whether she seeks help to better understand material, Sharrel said, "I don't ask. I am not going to give them [my peers] more to say about me. I figure: I'll get it sometime."

Some students discussed intent to change a pattern of avoiding seeking help, but later revealed difficulty implementing that intent in actual practice. In his first interview, Mark stated:

> If I don't get it, I'm going to have to ask questions; because before I didn't really ask questions. I thought they were stupid questions. Now I am going to start asking them; I mean, I don't care if kids think, "Well, why doesn't he get that?" I want to get a good grade.

However, at the follow-up interview, the same student reported he did not ask questions during class "because everyone else understood what he [the teacher] was saying. I was the only one who didn't get it." This student was prevented from implementing his strategy to ask for help by the perception that he was the only one who didn't understand the material.

Despite reporting a lack of understanding regarding some of the material and assignments, students described that they were still unlikely to seek help in the mainstream setting. There was some variability with this in relation to the classroom setting. Students reported experiencing success in asking for help in the special education setting. Teachers responded to the request for help and students became better able to understand the material, receive alteration in an assignment, or were able to use self-regulation strategies.

Variation regarding use of assistance-seeking between different mainstream classrooms was also noted. One classroom I observed during this study maintained a culture in which questions were encouraged, and students actively engaged in questioning. This classroom was a woods shop class with approximately 20 students. The curriculum in class was largely project-based, student work occurring in small groups. The teacher circulated throughout the class from group to group assisting students with projects. This appears to create a class culture by which students are comfortable asking for help; this is possibly due to less peer observation regarding any individual help-seeking. Within this specific classroom construct, Leon stated, "I've asked him a lot for help. He's good at explaining things to me in a way I understand."

Using special education.

The second conflict regarding getting needs met during reintegration I constructed was the student view toward special education. This category is defined by the extent to which the student views special education as a resource or as a barrier. Some students viewed involvement in special education and the connection to their case managers to be a significant resource. However, there were two students in this study who spoke about special education services acting as a barrier. These students spoke of rejecting special education provision in an attempt to fit in with their peers. One student, consistently truant from the two classes held in the special education resource room, maintained perfect attendance in the two mainstream classrooms. When I questioned this student regarding causality for the absences, the student

described a determined belief that special education acts as a barrier to the possibility

of fitting in full-time in mainstream. Sharrel explained,

> To me, I'm not learning nothing [*sic*] in there [special education classes]. It's
> not helping me. I'd rather be out with people over here, and learn how to be
> with more people in my classes, and stuff. That's really what I need to work
> more on: getting along good with people out here, not in there. I don't need to
> get along with them.

Mark expressed a similar rejection of special education as he reported "not needing

those classes anymore [because] I'm done with all that. I'm OK now. I can be just like

everyone else here now."

Students encountered varied extents of barriers to connection and to academic

success during the process of reintegration. Students responded to the different

barriers they encountered with efforts at self-regulation and self-advocacy. These

efforts were met with varying degrees of success, and varying responses from persons,

in the mainstream environment. The student's individual desire to fit into the ecology

of the classroom further interacted with these processes.

Theoretical Category 2: Developing supports.

The process of developing supports for the student within the school

environment was important during reintegration. Two assistive supports found were

through the support of relationships, and support through making adjustments.

Relationships were an important support identified by all represented roles within the

study. These relationships served the function of assisting with self-regulation and self-advocacy skills, as the presence of a positive one-to-one relationship was seen as aiding the use of those skills. Teachers reported various strategies used to develop these relationships with students.

Making adjustments is defined as the process of identifying the unique needs of the student and adjusting standard protocol to meet those needs. These adjustments can be formal as in making an IEP based accommodation or informal such as excusing a tardiness that would typically be unexcused. Adjustments which aimed at improving access to mainstream curriculum provided even greater success.

Influences and barriers to the presence of beneficial relationships and assistive adjustments were found to exist in all of the reintegration experiences. Making adjustments was influenced by the trait of flexibility within each specific education system.

Developing relationship supports.

Feeling support from and connection to school personnel was defined as important by students. Students described feeling that support in various ways: school personnel willing to 'go the extra mile'; staff remaining available, even in problematic situations; perceived sense, on the part of the student, of being personally understood and liked.

Many students spoke about support received from the special education case managers. One student expressed, "She's always looking out for me; like, going the extra mile, you know." Others spoke about similar experiences of important support provision. One stated, "She found credits that I didn't even know that I had. She didn't have to, but she did." Another explained, "He went to the dean and talked about the whole thing, explained how it wasn't how everyone thought. He really went to bat for me." A third offered, "She drove all the way to the juvenile detention center for a meeting because she wants me to change and she wanted me to do good. And, like, she's shown that she wanted to be a part of how I changed, going out of her way to help me."

Some students expressed an experience of support which was slightly different. This non-judgmental support was through perceived sense that the person was going to support them even when the student made mistakes. Referring to his case manager, Jake told how she "has always been there for me. Like-- even when I was having problems, until today-- she's still here. She's never been against me. It's been her against all the principals before, for me." Luis explained, "The Dean is good. He listens to what I have to say before, like you know, jumping [on me]. Even when I mess up, his door is open and he listens to what I have to say."

The sense of being understood as a person was another way support was experienced. Sharrel revealed,

I guess my best teacher right now is Ms. K. She understands kids, she's really

cool. You can tell because she goes slow [*sic*], she talks to us like normal people,

she doesn't freak out. She just understands us, I think.

Luis explained the support he receives in the special education department as

follows:

They understand us up here. They try to help us as much as possible. If I

have a lot of work to do and I'm like, "Hey, is it alright if I get excused from your

stuff to work on this?" And they are like, "Okay, you can work on that." They

understand we have a lot [that] we are trying to get done.

The last area of support students reported experiencing from school personnel

was the feeling of being liked as a person. Tim reported, "Mr. L and Mr. S [school

administrators], they all enjoy me. They are all glad I am here full time." Leon, referring

to the special education case managers, stated, "They like us up here."

Strategies for relationship development.

School personnel established one-on-one relationships with reintegrating

students as a means for expressing support. While teachers utilized various strategies in

developing personal relationships, each described benefits students gained.

Mainstream and special education teachers described that students able to develop

one-on-one relationships with staff presented themselves as feeing supported, as better

able to seek assistance, and as more willing to accept confrontation by authority.

Both special education and mainstream teachers described developing and

utilizing various strategies to form personal relationships with special education

students. Techniques used by the teachers include, "Not singling them out, but [still] making sure you check in"; "Being friendly outside of class"; and "Showing interest in what they are interested in." One mainstream teacher explained the process simply, "Just being able to be open, just talking. Sometimes you find out a little bit about them just by chatting, checking around, seeing how things are going. They seem to open up a little more and start talking." Many school personnel articulated strong belief in the importance of relationship development.

Effect on students.

As described above, teachers and students both expressed the opinion that personal relationships are beneficial to the process of successful reintegration. Some of the administrators also reflected similar belief. One administrator stated, "Relationships are probably what it's all about. The key in the whole of working with kids as we find the level of support they need."

Two teachers explained the connection between having a relationship with the student and the student being able to ask for help. A mainstream teacher stated, "If you have a relationship, they'll ask the questions and understand it a little better. Or if they don't understand, they'll feel more comfortable getting help to figure it out." A day treatment therapist, while discussing a particular student, defined the importance of establishing individual relationships.

We've also set him up with a person at the school that he can go to and ask. If I'm right, they have a home-base person, and a case manager that he knows. He can go ask, "I'm struggling with this, and I need help maneuvering the system."

One of the administrators spoke of another aspect of relationship-building, the means by which relationship applies context to confrontation. While discussing one of the reintegrating students, this administrator stated, "He's also developed some relationships with us, gotten to know us better. So when we confront him on things, he knows we care about him and aren't just yelling at him."

The presence of an established relationship conveys a sense that the school system supports the reintegrating student. A special education case manager emphasized the importance of her role.

One of the biggest things for me is to continue to believe in them; and help them learn to believe in themselves. They don't believe anything good will happen. I try to help them learn to believe in themselves and to be a constant. No matter what, I will always be here and always support them. Being here for them is the biggest part of my job.

While discussing aspects of relationships within the school dynamic, one staff member revealed,

Regarding administration, I think most of our kids, in general, have a pretty good feeling about being in our school – even though they might not say so! They'd almost like to spend time in the Dean's office rather than the classroom!

They don't think administration hates them or that administration is wrecking

their lives. I think it's a group that really likes kids, understands that it's really

their role to serve all kinds of kids.

One barrier to relationship development school personnel noted was limited

time to build these essential relationships with students. This barrier was articulated

primarily by teachers in the mainstream environment. One mainstream teacher stated,

"I just don't have the time to build the relationships that I would like with the kids, with

him. I have 36 kids in that class." This difficulty was confirmed by an administrator.

"It's harder to develop that [bond] in mainstream because teachers have so little time to

do that.   But it seems that as long as it's not a negative relationship with the

mainstream teacher, it's okay."

Developing supports – making adjustments.

A second sub-category of support given by interviewees was adjustment-making.

Adjustments seen were both formal and informal in nature. Formal adjustments are

often referred to as accommodations. Accommodations refer to approaches whereby

the student's academic environment is modified to promote learning. Focus is placed

on adapting that environment, or the academic requirements, so the student may learn

despite disability (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). These accommodations

can include modifications in instructional techniques, in administrative and disciplinary

practices, and/or in academic requirements. The IEP team decides what

accommodations to use and writes them into the IEP; therefore school personnel are

required to follow them. Informal adjustments were also seen as important to success.

These adjustments to standard protocols were typically not decided by the full IEP team

but were made between the student and the school person involved whether

mainstream teacher, special education teacher, or administrator. Special education

personnel described that making adjustments acts as a primary support to reintegrating

students.

The process of making adjustments had two dimensions: the importance of an

attitude of flexibility, and barriers to implementation. Flexibility was an initial code

arising from my review of the research literature as one of the potentially important

elements of successful reintegration. It presented in student, parent, and school

personnel data with variations between the groups. Students spoke of the importance

of experiencing flexibility. Parents agreed to the need for flexibility, but advocated for a

balanced approach. The issue of flexibility emerged from the school personnel data in

two ways. There is the presence of standard protocols applied to all students (a general

lack of flexibility), and the effort to carefully match flexible mainstream teachers with

reintegrating students to promote adjustment making.

Making adjustments – importance of flexibility.
Students gave many examples of school personnel who provided flexibility. They

described it as an important condition to their success. Students reported receiving

flexible treatment from administration regarding policies of attendance and school

lunch. Teachers allowed students flexibility regarding assignments, due dates, and modifications to work environment. Leon explained how greater flexibility in a classroom environment personally impacts him:

> [The special education teachers] just don't question everything I do. If I need to stop working on something for a bit and work on something else, because like I am, like it's just too much, they are good with that. Not all teachers are like that.

Luis, another student participating in this study, also described teachers willing to show flexibility:

> If I have a lot of work to do and I'm like, "Hey, is it alright if I get excused from your stuff to work on this?" And they are like, "Okay, you can work on that." They understand we have a lot we are trying to get done.

Making adjustments – need for balance.

Parents reported that flexibility within the school system was an important factor to their student's success at reintegration. However, parents did not advocate the child receive complete flexibility; rather, they cautioned against that. They voiced concerns with a system which pushes the child through too quickly, without teaching important academic and moral lessons.

Parents reported classroom flexibility to be an important condition for success, with regard to teaching style and adaptation of assignments and school policies. One parent stated, "Some of the teachers are great at changing assignments, giving him a

chance to redo it. Some just won't do that." Another parent discussed how helpful it

was for the administrators to show flexibility regarding attendance policies. "I don't

know what the deal was, but I'm very grateful to [the assistant principal] for not

suspending him when he was truant. When he learned about that [lack of suspension],

he decided to keep going."

Parents also spoke with concern that at times the school was too flexible, and

was pushing through their child through school without meeting educational needs.

Parents expressed differing opinions as to the occurrence of flexibility: lack of school

resources, personnel actually giving up on the child, or an unawareness of how best to

help. Parents expressed concern that the child's academic needs were not being met

because of too great a flexibility, or that an important moral lesson was not being

taught. Mark's parent spoke of how the relaxation of academic standards for Mark also

resulted in systemic disregard for handling his issues.

> The school – it's been a struggle with the school. I think that they just didn't
>
> know what to do with him after a while. And I felt like they were just pushing
>
> him through; that's how I felt. And, you know, I felt like he missed out on a lot of
>
> learning-- because he's hiding under the desk or in the office-- because of the
>
> anxiety. Stuff like that. I don't know.

Tim's parent also referred to the problem of too much flexibility in regard to

meeting academic standards. "He wasn't reading. He hated it, so he would act up. He

lost so much because he was out in the hall because of his behavior. Yet they just kept

graduating him, pushing him on."

One parent explained that flexibility in the school's attendance policy was

teaching her son he wasn't being held accountable.

It's like sometimes he doesn't get that [he is accountable]. He figures he'll

sneak by. And it usually works for him; to not do what he's supposed to, and

people will bend the rules and let him sneak by. Now I feel the school is, "Let's

push him through; let's get him through." Even though -- like now, he missed

yesterday. Are they going to, "Okay, you can still graduate"? I mean, it's hard,

because I want him to graduate, too. But what did he learn from that?

Making adjustments – variation of school personnel.

The views expressed by school personnel presented a variation in understanding

of flexibility. Flexibility was understood as being a trait a teacher either did, or did not,

possess. Rather than interpreting flexibility as an attribute of the entire system

necessary to work successfully with special education students, interpreting flexibility in

the manner described by personnel created an emphasis on the individual teacher. I

provide evidence for this variation through discussion of two subthemes: presence of

standard protocols applied to all students (a general lack of flexibility), and the effort to

carefully match flexible mainstream teachers with reintegrating students as a way of

finding flexibility.

Mainstream teachers discussed standard approaches or protocols to behavior and instruction applied to any student entering their classroom. Some teachers had what they referred to as a built-in flexibility in their approach. Their approach to special education students was no different than any other student. Strategies for success that were identified by these teachers were having a variety of choices for students, provision of optional extra credit, and giving extensions upon good cause. Luis's mainstream teacher gave an example of the flexibility in his classroom, "I gave students options; the assignment was a 10-page story but I'd take two 5-page stories or five 2-page stories if they wanted to do that."

The study found that difficulties were experienced upon attempts at adjustment to protocol. Adaptations in educational procedures were problematic, and the impediment thus created, was one source of problem for the students. A special education case manager described this barrier as teacher inadaptability.

I don't know if they single out our kids; or, that they haven't learned how to adapt their teaching styles to help our kids. I've had to send our staff to classes to help a student, because the kids aren't getting it. The teacher won't adapt to different learning styles.

One adaptive method the school system applied was an attempt to find a complementary match of mainstream teacher and reintegrating student. Recognition of varied application of flexibility on the part of teaching staff was made throughout the interviews. Both administrators and educators agreed that there are some teachers

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with a more flexible approach to classroom learning. Teachers with more adaptability

were sought to match the flexibility needs of the reintegrating student. An

administrator described the placement process in one school:

> There are certain teachers that a case manager will not even bring up. Or, if
> they do, I'll shoot it down right away because you know it's not going to work.
> Why try? It comes down to those personalities who are rigid, and not willing to
> change what they do.

A mainstream teacher explained the process from a more personal angle:

> Some teachers are known to work well with these kinds of students. I know I
> have that reputation; and, sometimes, will get more of those types of kids. At
> times, that can be overwhelming and it seems unfair. Some teachers are less
> tolerant. It's a hard deal for some of the kids to be in those mainstream classes.

A special education case manager acknowledged the difficulty in finding a

successful match between teacher and student.   "We spend time trying to match the

kids with teachers who aren't too rigid. That never works [putting students with EBD in

classrooms with rigid teachers]. These kids with those personalities will power struggle

every time."

Placing students in classrooms with a more flexible approach was a way to build

some flexibility into the environment of reintegrating students. Matching students and

teachers with regard to adaptability of learning was a means for providing flexibility to

the reintegration environment.

Parents also recognized the importance of matching a flexible teacher with their child. Sharrel's mother spoke about the need to place her child with teachers who show flexibility.

The special ed. teachers worked closely with the regular teachers to figure out whose class to put her in. If there's [*sic*] teachers who are by the book and there's no bending the rules, they steer her away from them. These are teachers she won't get along with. The upper level ones that say, "This is what it's like in college, so get used to it now." They steer away, that's not a teacher for her; she needs-- she needs someone who is flexible and can change what they usually do to meet her halfway.

Barrier to making adjustments – policy implementation failures.

One barrier to making adjustments was noted in the area of failing to make or meet IEP accommodations. At times teachers reported being unaware of a student's needed accommodations. One teacher reported that all IEPs are available on the school computer system and a mainstream teacher is given access when a student is enrolled in their class. However, this school had recently had a change in school personnel and so no one was making the IEPs accessible to the mainstream teachers. One special education administrator reported that mainstream teachers in their school district had decided that they only needed access to the needed accommodations and a basic summary of needs. Due to this request by the mainstream teachers, a worksheet had been developed which listed this material. The worksheet was supposed to be given to the mainstream teacher when a special education student was enrolled in the class.

One teacher reported she had not received this accommodation sheet. Two teachers reported they might have gotten one but hadn't looked at it. In these instances it was apparent that policies developed by the school district to inform mainstream teachers about the educational needs of these students were not working.

Barrier to making adjustments -lack of resources.

One barrier to making adjustments described by parents and school personnel was a lack of necessary resources. Parents voiced awareness that scarce resources within the schools influenced available methods of making adjustments for their child. One parent stated: "I think they use their words wisely because they don't want to put themselves in a position where they will commit to: 'Yes they will do this for him'; because then they have to pay for it." Some parents described accommodations or adjustments they sought for their child, but believe were denied as a result of inadequate resources. Luis's parent elaborated on the difficulty she experienced upon seeking that provision for a Paraprofessional is written into his IEP.

> I've been saying for years, years: 'Can we now put a Paraprofessional on him for a little while here and there, for different classes? Put a Para in with him in the mainstream class; someone he has a good rapport with.' I don't know, I wonder if they couldn't help him; draw his attention, keep him focused. I know they cannot tell me there's nobody there to do that. However, I know that's the bottom line. I've tried to bring it up before in the past; gotten cautiously-worded excuses why they won't. I've got a friend who's a teacher who says, "If that's

what the IEP comes up with, that's what they have to do." Of course they're geared away from that cost measure. I really think that would've helped.

School personnel also reported that lack of both resources and options created a barrier for reintegrating students. One therapist in the day treatment facility explained that the unavailability of general programming options was a reason for the student's failure.

> The reason it [reintegration] didn't work? The main reason is that it felt like they [mainstream school staff] were telling us there weren't any special ed. options for him. And he needed that. He couldn't make it in mainstream without the addition of a resource room.

A special education case manager described the effects of insufficient resources and options. When the reintegrating student experiences anger and frustration in the mainstream classroom, the special education teacher's role is to help the student process those feelings. Reduction in staffing allows less time for each student. Without individual guidance to process the difficulties, the student is set up to fail at mainstream reintegration. While discussing one student's case, the special education case manager explained:

> He's a kid who needs a lot of time to process, to get back on track. In that setting, there just wasn't [sic] the personnel; no one he could go to and talk things out, and get back to what needed to get done. He isn't able to do that on his own.

Another case manager illustrated how limited funding places strictures on

available options:

One of the biggest problems with administration is the cuts. Our options are

very limited in terms of support. We don't have the ability to pay for

transportation for the ones that want to go to [the work program]; which would

work well for some of our kids. Our budget gets continually cut.

A source of support, developed by persons in the student's learning

environment, consisted of establishing supportive relationships. Ability to

accommodate different learning styles was also a means of success. Students, teachers

and administrators all described relationships as an important condition of successful

reintegration. Teachers utilized a variety of strategies to develop relationships and

described numerous effects of a strong relationship with a student. Making

adjustments in order to meet the learning needs of the student was another support

discussed as important during the process of reintegrating. Parents saw flexibility and

the resulting adjustments as important for their child's success but wanted balance with

accountability. School personnel described flexibility as a fixed trait of some teachers

and not others.   Flexibility was a trait seen as a part of specific teachers rather than as a

part of the system responding to each student's needs.

Theoretical Category 3: Understanding the disability.

The third theoretical category I constructed was *Understanding the Disability.*

Two sub-categories were the attitude of fairness on the part of school personnel that

justified not seeking understanding of the student's disability and the interaction

between school personnel having an understanding of disability and other key processes

in the system; self-advocacy, relationship development, and making accommodations.

Two variations were found: one between special education and general education

teachers and the other was a singular case of one mainstream teacher who believed the

student was the problem.

Attitude of fairness.

Many teachers reported their interactions with students were guided by an

attitude of fairness that included treating a reintegrating student like a normal student

and not seeking information to understand their unique needs. Five out the six

mainstream teachers that were interviewed expressed this belief (the sixth neither

confirmed nor denied this belief). Teachers spoke about "treating the student like every

other student" until there was a reason not to do so. For many teachers this was about

being fair to the student with a disability. One teacher explained the philosophy to "just

treat them just like anybody else; not like they're coming in with anything against them.

[It gives them] a fresh start." It reflected an attempt to disconnect the student from

their past behaviors. Some teachers referred to this approach as providing the student

with "a clean slate."

Luis's mainstream teacher: All I knew was that he was in the Level 3 program where contact is only about attendance issues. Not hugely aware of his background and I like that clean slate when class starts.

For these teachers, treating the student like a normal student was perceived as a benefit to the student. One mainstream teacher explained: "It's kind of a Catch-22, because it goes back to that argument that if I already know before they come in, I might make some snap judgments that aren't fair."

Effects on timing.

These teachers did not seek out information about the student or their disability until problems started to develop. Problematic issues acted as a signal that the student might have an atypical need. Leon's mainstream teacher described this: "I had one student in class who is struggling on some math stuff and I checked his IEP and he's very poor in math, so I kind of exempt him from the worksheets in math." Sharrel's mainstream teacher described noticing behavior problems: "It wasn't until I started having behavior issues and started, kind of, looking into what was going on, that I realized, 'Okay. I wonder if she has an IEP.'"

One problem that arose through the approach to treating all students the same, even when mainstreaming students with disabilities, was that of reactivity rather than proactivity. Students needed to actively demonstrate some form of problematic

behavior before the mainstream teacher sought means by which to better understand and adapt the classroom setting.

There was variation in this theme between mainstream teachers and special education personnel. Special education personnel spoke about the need to understand the disability in the beginning of the relationship with the student. One of the day treatment therapists described it as "the whole point of an IEP is to say they haven't done well typically so let's remake this and do it differently. Right away let's do it differently." A special education administrator spoke about the error in not treating special education students differently. "So even if they have that philosophy of trying to be fair, trying to treat each special education kid like every other kid, it's not quite the right philosophy for kids with disabilities.   They need something different."

A key to successful reintegration is that school personnel have an understanding of the student's disability. This view was expressed most frequently by special education personnel participating in this study. Further, one explained that this understanding of the disability on the part of personnel may then lead to necessary classroom adaptations and modifications.

One case manager stated:

I think more information is helpful. So if I have a student that's struggling with reading, maybe there's a variety of reasons. Maybe they are so ADHD it's hard for them to focus; or processing difficulties where they can't spit information out. Maybe they're audio learners and not visual. Maybe none of

those things. In order to reach that kid, teach that kid, you need to know what their disability is.

Interactions between understanding the disability and provision of supports.

Willingness to understand a student's disability was linked with the provision of support that student received. This connection was established through relationship development and the process of making adjustments. Creating connections between understanding the disability and awareness to the adjustments necessary to meet the student's needs is the most essential provision to reintegration success, according to special education personnel. The ability to identify and make adjustments is predicated on an understanding of the unique needs generated through the student's disability. One administrator described this:

I want to add that you don't treat special education kids the same as everyone else. The reason they're special ed. is because what worked for everyone else doesn't work with them. We are doing something different with them, than the typical population.

Another administrator connected understanding the disability with formation of a relationship with the student. "There are very good teachers out there who aren't good with EBD kids. It's not that they aren't good teachers; but it's because they don't understand the disability, and thus aren't willing to form that kind of relationship."

A lack of understanding of student disability correlated with disregard for provision of adjustments/accommodations. This connection was most clearly conveyed, through both behavior and language, by one of Mark's mainstream teachers participating in this study:

> It was clear after there were several assignments that he wasn't really doing the work. Then he didn't do well on a test. So his grade, he had, in the last assignment, out of 25 he gets 10; it's a basic map, he colors the map. He got 31 out of 58 on the first test, 19 out of 48 on the second. So he's not doing the work. This proves it! He's not doing the work.

Rather than seeing the poor test scores as a need for possible adjustment or accommodation as his special education case manager did, this teacher saw the scores as further evidence of the student's work refusal.

While no other teachers voiced a similar interpretation of the reintegrating student, this variation in perception is important. It is likely there are other teachers who hold beliefs similar to those expressed by this mainstream teacher. This attitude conveys a belief that the student's environment is not potentially problematic. One behavior which conveyed this interpretation was an assumption that poor performance on tests or assignments was strictly because the student was non-compliant. Conversely, a behavior indicative of belief of the environment as part of the problem, would be seeking possible accommodations in teaching methods or assessment procedures.

Belief that the individual student is the root of the problem in mainstream

reintegration was also expressed. While further discussing the reintegration of Mark,

the same mainstream teacher expressed his opinion regarding student responsibility.

This teacher tended toward a general characterization of the student as the problem;

and connected the student's behaviors to the student's actual character.

> Well, he's becoming a negative force, drawing people the other way. So this
> negative undercurrent; that is really just this negative force that's pulling kids
> away from the direction I'm trying to pull them. Nothing where he's getting mad
> at me; nothing where I kick him out.   I'll just keep spending more time with this
> guy who is, if anything--he's a negative;--that he's a problem for me.

The teacher went on to explain:

> So if I were to try to give a picture of him of what I'm seeing, if he's a kid in
> my class who's been here all year, he's a kid who I would question what he's like.
> I'd question whether he wants to be here; what kind of a person he is. I view him
> as a kid who's kind of got a bad attitude.

The final indicator expressed by the mainstream teacher in this interview was

triggered by his lack of awareness of causative impact on student success.

> The negative stuff that I see, I've been a little lenient and I have not gotten to
> the point where I've spent much energy disciplining him. Really because, number
> one: I'm super busy. And two: because of that, I figured, his discipline is taken
> care of. I don't have to even worry about that because anything that he does

wrong, he's out of here. So I haven't done some of that stuff that you work on normally with another student.

When the day treatment school personnel were alerted to emergence of Mark's negative behaviors in the mainstream environment, they became aware of his test-taking difficulties in mainstream, as well. Mark was graded an "F" on two tests. His special education case manager explained her interpretation regarding reasons for its occurrence:

> He probably has test anxiety. His explanation to me was that he knows what he did wrong without even seeing the test. He was supposed to copy certain things from somewhere else, but he copied them off the computer. He must've had to color in certain things and he chose the wrong color. I think it's a bit of anxiety, and, him hurrying through stuff rather than taking his time. Probably, [it's] the pressure of getting done when all the other kids got done; so all that is anxiety.

She then articulated possible means of resolution to Mark's test-taking difficulties.

> What do we do about that? Maybe he needs to have testing modifications; maybe to use notes and have a separate place that he goes to take the test. Maybe he needs a Para (professional) that sits down with him when he's taking a test, to make sure he is reading and understanding each question, and completely answering each one. The schools have a variety of things they can do to help with that. I intend to bring it up at the next meeting.

By the time the team rejoined, the issue of Mark's negative behavior in the classroom dominated discussion at the meeting. As a result, the topic of determining means for better testing was not addressed; accommodations were not made. The student failed in the mainstream environment, and was returned full-time to the alternative special education setting.

Interactions between understanding the disability and self-advocacy.

I also constructed another interaction from the data: the interaction which occurs between self-advocacy and insufficient understanding of the disability. This interaction presented in the form of two barriers to communication: reliance on the student to communicate, and the related issue, belated discovery of problems.

Relying on the student.

There were numerous instances of reliance on the student to communicate occurrence of both progress and problem, while in the midst of mainstream reintegration. Special education teachers reported their dependence on the student for implementation of the student's developed self-advocacy strategies. They also voiced expectancy that the student report back, regarding its implementation. Alternative school personnel expressed reliance on the student to regularly report on his/her status in mainstream; plus, condition of possible homework responsibilities. When asked about forewarning or pre-cognizance to the extent of one student's difficulties in mainstream reintegration, one alternative school staff member stated:

I think he seemed really excited about mainstream; presented as, "I can do this!" That was also a function of why we were a little bit unaware things weren't going that well. He was reassuring both ends, "I've got this covered." There may have been a little naiveté that he's doing fine.

Mainstream teachers reported reliance on the reintegrating student to communicate when individual assistance was needed. This pattern of dependence, that the student communicates, was a barrier when the student misrepresented the situation or was unable to convey the need. Mark's day treatment therapist described this connection:

I think he was in denial about the fact that things weren't going well. He overtly lied when we asked him how things were, and whether he's been getting his work done. We would ask him every day, "Do you have homework? How are things going?" "I don't have homework; things are going fine." There was a level of him fully knowing that he was missing assignments. And then lying about it for whatever reason; whether because he feels overwhelmed, or, he doesn't feel like doing it. It could be a combination of the two.

Another barrier occurred during times when the case manager instructed the student to talk to the teacher, and to self-advocate; then failed to follow up. Presentation of this barrier is exemplified by a portion of an interview with a case manager regarding Luis:

Special Education Case Manager: The options we worked out with him [regarding means by which to problem-solve academic difficulties] were to ask kids around him, or, ask the teacher while he's there.

Researcher: So you established those options. As far as you know, did he do that?

Case Manager: When we asked him, he said he did. But we haven't heard. We just looked at grades last week, because it was midpoint of the trimester; and he's not doing so well.

Hearing too late.

Special education school personnel reported problems which arose from belated discovery of the students mainstream difficulties. One case manager refers to that barrier of delay as "the point of no return." This barrier arose when attention to the presence of a problem was made too late for modification; either to the team as a whole, or to an individual member. Initial communication by both mainstream and alternative education sources was typically instigated *after* occurrence of a problem or an issue. Three mainstream teachers expressed similar mindsets. "I contact them [special education teachers] when what I normally do isn't working." Another stated, "I wait until there's a problem, and then, give them a call." The third said, "I don't have the time to check in, unless there's really an issue going on."

The point of no return was a barrier which particularly arose in one case. By the time the case manager and the student had an opportunity to sit down and problem-solve, the student's relationship with the mainstream teacher had grown negative. Implementation of the discussed problem-solving skills was thus unsuccessful. His special education teacher reported, "[We learned] he's failing the class because one of

the tests he took, he didn't pass. I suggested to him to talk to the teacher. I told him that

he needs to ask for extra credit." By that point, the relationship between Mark and his

mainstream teacher was strained; any interaction was guided by negative expectations,

from both parties. In one of our interviews, the mainstream teacher characterized Mark

as, "a kid who's kind of got a bad attitude." The teacher reported, "It doesn't help to

have him in this classroom." The point at which the mainstream teacher sought out the

junior high case manager, to inform her that Mark was struggling, the teacher-student

relationship had already begun deteriorating.

Teacher and staff comprehension of disability proved a significant influence

during the process of reintegration. Support options offered to the student were

affected by different interpretations of that disability occurring within the system. The

level of effectiveness of any subsequent support option was primarily based upon the

timing at which an understanding of the student's disability was sought.

Theoretical Category 4 – Process of advocacy.

Advocacy was described by parents in many ways such as "fighting for,"

"speaking for," and "sticking up for." The *Process of Advocacy* was the primary means

by which parents participated in reintegration. Many parents reported a long history of

advocacy usage as a tool with the school system. Advocacy was used by parents to

promote further school staff awareness of the student's disability. Parents described

communication as an important factor in the efficacy of advocacy use.

History of advocacy.

Parents described different experiences related to use of advocacy. Most parents discussed a lengthy history of advocacy with the school system, championing access to resources and address to the child's needs. For these parents, acting as an advocate was one of the primary roles mentioned in relation to school. Luis' mother reported "I did a lot of advocating against– the school, their plans. It was exhausting. But I fought for what I thought my son needed." Leon's mother stated, "I would always be pushing; trying to get him the help he needs. I was worried he was falling through the cracks." Mark's mother described the long-term role advocacy sometimes requires.

> We spent so many years trying to get the school to do something. I knew he needed more help, but it was like there wasn't anything else. I would ask, "Well, what are *you* [italics added] going to do with him? It's your responsibility, too! You need to do something with him because he is not functioning in the regular school."

Tim's parent entered as advocate later; a result of bearing witness to the effects of insufficient prior advocacy use. She described the change in her advocacy level:

> I wish we would've asked for more help earlier; and, had seen more options through the school, than just getting him through. Why is my ninth grader at a fifth-grade level? How did he get that far? And, why didn't somebody stop this

process? Why didn't we stop this before and say, "There has to be something

done, and school has to offer more here. "

She sees herself entering a different role now:

I think my role needs to be, now, to ask more questions through high school.

'How can we get him the help he needs; to get more learning in his education?' I

want to ask more how we can help; push more, ask more– 'what else is there?'

This parent described the change in roles as one who was "reported to" by the

school, to one who asked the school to do more to help her son.

Advocacy as a vehicle to increase understanding.

Use of advocacy as a tool was most often directed toward increasing others

knowledge of the student's disability. Parents spoke of doing this by working in a role of

intermediary between their child and the school. Parents also saw themselves as chief

conveyors of information, acting in the role of translator. Each parent participating in

the study reported occurrence of communications with school personnel. These

communications sought to explain the disability, as well as offer possible explanations

for questionable behaviors.   One parent discussed a meeting with her child's teacher.

The parent found it necessary to explain to the teacher that her child was having a

difficult time learning the boundaries around when it was proper to be lighthearted with

a teacher. What the child saw to be "joking around," the teacher perceived as the

student showing a general level of disrespect.

I told him that I think the line between friend and someone in charge is blurry for her; more than other kids. She doesn't understand that you can joke around one minute, and later, you have to listen to the person. That happens with me even as a parent.

Another parent referred to her son's cyclic moodiness. She worried that if she was witness to these variations at home, he was certainly exhibiting behaviors in school. She questioned what effect that moodiness could be having on her son's school work. She decided to establish contact with the school and relay her concern:

> He has those moods. I can tell when it's coming on at home. You can see it escalate. We still don't know what to do when he gets in those moods. He'll get to the point where he's not going to do it; can't do it; refuses. I wish there was a way I could do something. But what I do is let the school know, so they understand why he might start doing his 'refusing thing.'

She found her role as advocate to be active and interpretive. She felt it helpful to maintain an open dialogue with school staff to remain current and assistive.

Barrier of "no news is good news".

One communication pattern that acted as a barrier for parental advocacy was a perception of "no news is good news." This phrase is used to describe a belief by parents that not hearing from the school must mean that there are no problems. Five of the six parents described a belief that "no news is good news" when they discussed communication between home and school. Statements expressing this belief included: "I haven't heard one thing from them, so I think it's going well." Similarly, "It seems to

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be going well because I haven't heard anything negative." Also, "I haven't heard a thing;
I assume, 'no news is good news.'"

Most parents relied on the school to contact them upon occurrence of any
problem. However, one parent described using a different approach with school
personnel, a result of insufficient communication in the past.

I try to talk to them at least a couple times a week. I know they'll try to
contact me if there's a problem. But if she is doing well, I want to know that;
like, if she's doing well, working hard. I've learned from the past that you don't
always hear about problems right away. So I call them to check in.

Parents reported contact from the school regarding problems occurred late in
the intervention cycle.   This created frustration on the part of some parents; by the
time they were notified, intervention options appeared limited.

One parent reported an incident when her child was skipping classes, and then
explained her frustration with the approach taken by school personnel.

Yeah, I didn't know she wasn't in class until she didn't go for a whole week.
And they called me. [The case manager] called me; that she hasn't been in class
for 4th hour. I was, "Why are you calling now? If she's not there the first two
days, you should be calling and saying she hasn't been showing up." When they
called, it wasn't, "What do you recommend? What do you think?" It was
[already], "This is too much. After the break, we need to have a meeting to
maybe pull her back [full-time at alternative school]." I feel like, "Okay. Why am
I being notified after a week? Why do we instantly pull her back?"

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Another parent reported a similar event, also a result of poor attendance. "Then, all of a sudden, a couple weeks ago we find out he didn't go to school for *two weeks* [emphasis added]! We were like, 'Why; why didn't anyone call us?'''

Parents reported that one of the difficulties arising from late discovery of problems was that negative behavior become more entrenched and difficult to unravel. This was demonstrated by the child through development of disrespectful patterns of interaction with the mainstream teacher; as well as increased conflict with classmates. Despite the frustration parents expressed, many continued to maintain the attitude that "No news is good news." They did not report intent to modify existent communication patterns with the school.

Parents utilized advocacy to engage with the school system, and to impact staff's level of understanding of their child's disability. This advocacy was influenced by a communication barrier, an assumption on the part of parents that the school's lack of contact automatically equaled successful reintegration.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

     In this study I conceptualized influences on the process of reintegration for six student systems. I used these findings to develop a grounded theory of the process of reintegration (see Figure 4). This chapter contains discussion of my findings as it relates to current research literature. The chapter continues with exploration of the potential implications of this study for education and social work in the areas of practice, policy, and research.

Figure 5: Grounded Theory of the Process of Reintegration with Sub-processes
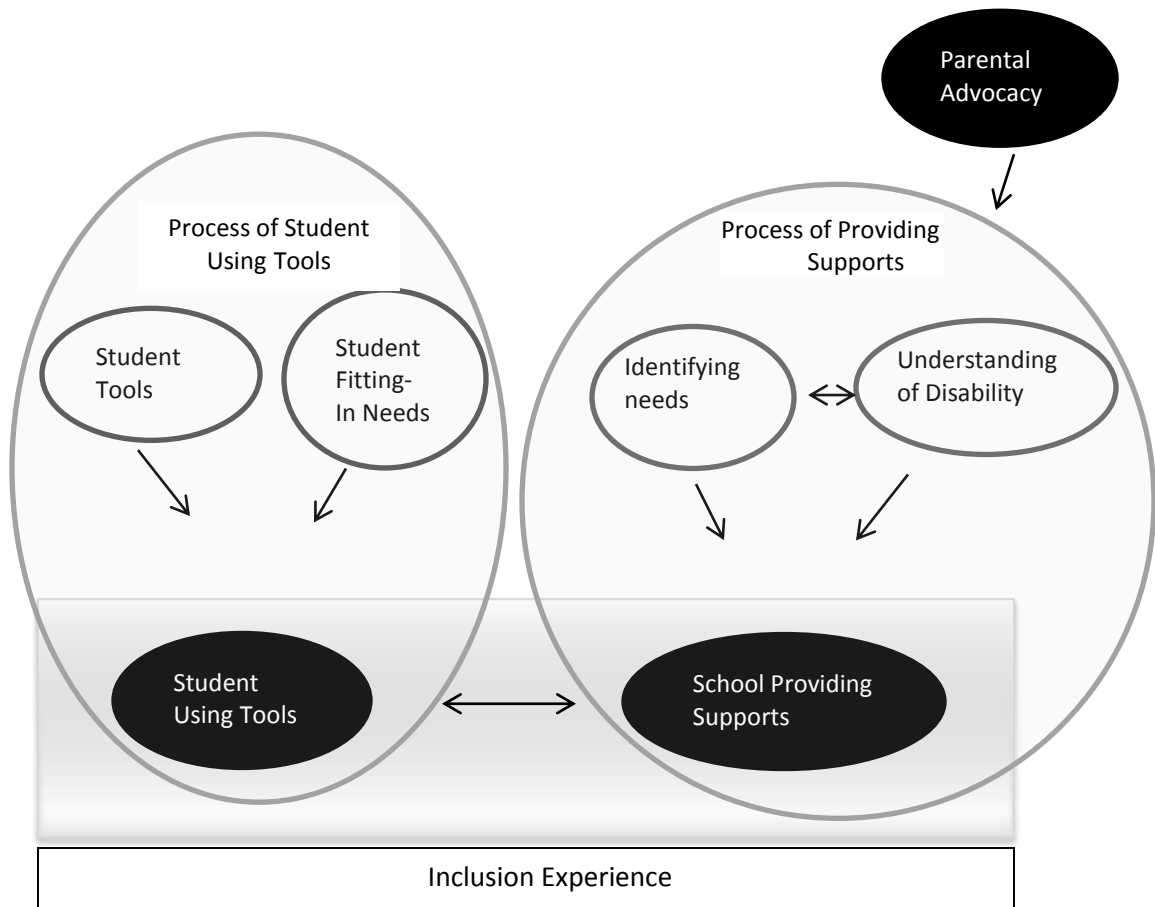
The process of reintegration is impacted by attributes, actions, and attitudes of the teacher, student, and other school personnel as well as by the parent(s)/guardian(s). The three processes are conceptualized as the student process of using tools, the environmental process of providing support and the parental process of advocacy. I will discuss each of these processes as they relate to current research.

Relationship to Research Literature

Process of student using tools.

Student success at reintegration is affected by factors generally attributable to the student such as student's ability to self-regulate, self-advocacy skills, and ability to use those tools when problems arise. This process begins before the student enters the mainstream environment. The student develops their self- regulation and self-advocacy skills in the alternative school setting. Each student in this study entered the mainstream environment with different levels of self-advocacy and self-regulation. A higher level of ability to self-regulate was related to a higher chance of success. However, simply having a high level of self-regulation does not ensure success in reintegration. Students in this study encountered internal and external barriers as they used self-regulation tools.

Self-advocacy process.

One way that a student impacts the level of support he or she receives from the school environment is by using self-advocacy. Special education teachers in this study emphasized the importance of the skill set of self-advocacy for successful reintegration.

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy (2005) developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities.   The four components of this framework are knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership.   This study supports the importance of self-awareness, and, the insight of knowledge regarding ways in which learning differs for that individual student. With both internal and external pressure, to fit in by blending in, a reintegrating student needs a strong understanding of personal learning needs and differences. Rejection of self-identity as disabled or requiring special services complicates self-awareness, this study suggests. Some students in my study rejected identifying as special education as this identification was perceived as conflicting with their desire to fit in with peers.

The educational literature supports the benefits of self-advocacy use by special education students. Literature shows a connection between self-advocacy and successful transitioning from the school system into the adult world (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007; Thoma & Getzel, 2005; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes (2000) indicated several benefits to self-advocacy, including successful transition from secondary to post-secondary settings, higher esteem, higher academic achievement, deeper understanding of personal

strengths and weaknesses, and stronger problem solving skills.   Hayes (2006)

recognized that IEP teams found that an ability to self-advocate is an essential skill to

reintegration. Hayes completed a qualitative analysis of the IEP decision-making

process as relates to reintegration. The researched IEP team believed that students

need self-advocacy skills for reintegration success. In order to be successful in the

general education setting, some examples the group provided were, the student should

learn to ask questions, seek assistance, and take ownership of personal education.

Much of the research, concerning the effects of self-advocacy with regard to

special education students has focused on categories of disability other than EBD, such

as learning disability and cognitive disability. Carter, Trainor, Owens, Sweden, & Sun

(2010) explored some needs unique to the EBD population in the area of self-

determination and self-advocacy, and how their learning needs may differ from peers

with learning or cognitive disability. Teachers reported that students with EBD engaged

in self-determination and self-advocacy behaviors at a lower rate than learning disabled

peers, but at a higher one than cognitively disabled peers. In addition, Carter, et al.

revealed that problem behaviors were strongly associated with student's self-

determination capacity. Carter, et al. hypothesized that the time spent on instruction as

concerns appropriate behavior took away from time available for instruction on self-

determination and self-advocacy skills, with regard to students with EBD.

The special education teachers participating in this study reported using direct instruction to develop the self-advocacy skills of students. This strategy is supported in education literature, as students with disabilities do not typically acquire the self-awareness necessary to take the necessary first step on their own (Schreiner, 2007). In spite of demonstrated benefits, training students with disabilities in means of self-advocacy is not a prevalent practice in schools (Agran, Snow & Swaner, 1999 ; Fiedler & Danneker, 2007; Test, Mason, et al., 2004). This study supports explicit instruction of self-advocacy skills, and confirms gaps in existent training of self-advocacy use, for students with disabilities. Sands and Doll (1996) found that self-advocacy and self-determination are developmental tasks in which students' capacities are shaped over time, by instruction and opportunities received across multiple settings. Students in this study demonstrated the need for explicit instruction in a variety of settings, not just in the special education setting where they received the majority of this instruction.

Approaches to developing self-advocacy skills found in the related literature include person-centered planning, self-advocacy curricula, and instructional strategies. Person-centered planning is a set of approaches which emerged in the 1980s which impacted the delivery of services primarily to adults with disabilities (Holburn, Jacobson, Vietze, Schwartz, & Seren, 2000). The individual with a disability is at the center of planning efforts which are tailored to individual goals, strengths, and needs. Self-determination and community inclusion are emphasized (O'Brien & Lovett, 1992). For students with disabilities, person-centered planning typically includes the student as an

active planner in the IEP team.   Self-advocacy skills are nurtured and developed during the process of the IEP meeting. This approach to IEP planning has been linked to improved transition planning (Miner & Bates, 1997), development of culturally sensitive supports and interventions (Callicott, 2003), improved focus on student goals and needs related to self-determination (Keyes & Owens-Johnson, 2003), and improved home-school collaboration (Miner & Bates, 1997).

Curricula have also been developed which focus on means of instruction to student skills as regards self-advocacy. Fielder and Danneken (2007) have developed a list of educational strategies to assist instructors in ways of fostering these skills. Findings from this study support the need for explicit instruction in methods of self-advocacy, especially in the mainstream environment. Many students and teachers participating in this study reported utilizing self-advocacy skills and training while in the special education classroom. However, translation of use into the mainstream classroom was less successful.

Fitting in with peers.

The use of the tools of self-advocacy and self-regulation are mediated by the student's desire to fit in and subsequently, not stand out in the mainstream classroom. The actions students took in order to fit in with peers resulted in student's not using the tools of self-advocacy and self-regulation in the mainstream environment.

Recent literature relevant to the findings of this study centers on the invisible

nature of some disabilities. An invisible disability is one with no outward or obvious

physical manifestation (Livneh, Martz, Wilson, 2001). A visible disability could include

someone missing a limb, or a student with Down's syndrome. An invisible disability

could include a person with bipolar disorder or dyslexia. Students with EBD are

generally considered to have an invisible disability, showing no obvious outward

manifestations, and looking like everyone else (Chakroborti-Ghosh, Mofield, & Orellana,

2010). Persons with invisible disabilities are faced with decisions concerning disclosure

of a stigmatized identity. This decision around disclosure includes consideration

regarding whether one can or wants to "pass" as nondisabled (Hecht & Gutman, 1997;

Hillyer, 1996). Barga (1996) found that students in her study of college students with

learning disabilities engaged in passing behaviors in order to diminish the stigma and

reactions of others when they learned of their learning disability.   Passing, she found,

was a coping strategy.   Students in this study made similar decisions, as they tried to

"pass" and fit in with their peers during reintegration. Although some persons with

invisible disabilities may be able to pass in some situations, there is usually a cost (Barga,

1996; Berger, 1990). Costs, noted by Barga (1996) in her study of ways students with

learning disabilities managed the disability in the classroom, were unmet needs and

tension created by the nondisclosure. Students in this study had similar unmet needs,

due to "passing" behaviors that were used to fit in during reintegration. This finding is

new to the literature because "passing" has not been explored in the context of EBD

students, nor as a dynamic of reintegration.

Process of providing supports.

School personnel, acting individually and as part of a system, can support and/or

create barriers to the process of reintegration by providing supports. Kinds of support

provided include relationship building, flexibility, making adjustments to standard

protocols, and supporting use of self-regulation and advocacy skills. School personnel

varied on their understanding of the student's disability and needs. These variations led

to varying success at modifying the environment to provide for a greater chance at

reintegration.

Understanding the disability.

The level and kind of support provided is impacted by the level of understanding

the people within the system have of the student and her or his disability. I elevated

understanding of disability to a separate category because of its importance in the

process of developing supports. Having an understanding of the disability allows for a

better fit between the support needed and support provided. Having an understanding

of disability as located within the student versus mediated by the environment led to an

overreliance on the student to deal with problems as they arose. In this study, this led

to identifying necessary adjustments too late in the process to salvage the reintegration.

Educational research supports existence of a connection between beliefs regarding disability and the corresponding level of support provided. Many educators believe that problem behavior originates within a person and is a symptom of a diagnosis. They do not develop a more complete understanding of behavior as being caused or sustained by the environment (Galloway, Armstrong, &Tomlinson, 1994; Miller, 1995, 1996; Soodak & Podell, 1994). Kern, Hilt-Panahan, Sokol (2010), in a review of research literature concerning EBD and positive behavioral support programs, suggest that an incomplete understanding of behavior supports belief, by the teacher, that there is nothing he/she can do to modify a behavior. The review goes on to find this belief encourages reliance on interventions such as moving a student to a more restricted setting, or on outside interventions, such as counseling or medication.

This view of disability is consistent with a medical model of disability. The medical model of disability describes disability as located within a person as defined by professionals who determine categories of disability (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1999). There is an assumption within this model that problems facing persons with disabilities arise within the person because there is a limitation within the person which does not conform to normative values. Interventions are, therefore, directed at the individual with the disability. This model is contrasted with a social model of disability. In the social model of disability, disability arises from the attitudes and barriers of the environment in which the person lives (Mackelprang & Salsgiver). Functional limitations become disability when society fails to include people regardless of their individual

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variations (Oliver, 1990). Interventions, therefore, need to also be directed at changing society and environment versus simply changing the individual. This study supports the notion that there are multiple factors which contribute to reintegration success, including changing the environment and the students' ability to manage behaviors.

Certainly, some teachers in this study displayed the medical model of disability mindset, and did not attempt to arrange an environment supportive to the needs of the student. Instead, there was an expectation that the student adjust to the existent environment. A student ready for reintegration was seen as one able to make those adjustments. School personnel expressed conflicting perceptions regarding classroom approach to reintegration. Is it best to see the child as student first, disabled second; or, see the child as disabled first, student second? Perception of which view was most fair directly impacted resultant behavior. A philosophy expressed by mainstream teachers was that one would wait until problems develop before seeking out information. A philosophy described by special education staff and administrators was that one needs an understanding of the student's disability, before problems occur. This difference of interpretation resulted in less successful reintegration.

Parental advocacy process.

The third process is parental advocacy, a tool used by parent(s)/guardian(s) to increase the level of understanding of student disability and thereby secure appropriate support for the student.

The dynamic of parental advocacy was present in the case studies. Use of this factor is reflected through parents seeking better service provision and awareness, for their child, from the school system. The existence of parental advocacy efforts in special education is not a new finding in research literature. Conclusions of this study support efforts by parents to educate school personnel regarding both child and disability.

Parents participating in this study directed personal advocacy efforts toward increasing supports available to their child. There is a small body of research which confirms a connection between parental advocacy in special education and the level of resource and support provided to the student with a disability. Parents using effective advocacy skills were given increased resources for the child, as compares to those who did not act as advocate (Coots, 1998; Gross, 1996).   Research has directed attention to examination of differences between the parents who are able to advocate, and the parents who are not.   These variables have been attributed to systemic barriers to collaboration such as: no effort to secure family input (Harry, Allen & McLaughlin, 1995), disregard for a meeting schedule convenient to family (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997), and insufficient attention to language barriers (Weiss & Coyne, 1997). Other studies have attributed the differences in advocacy-effectiveness to family circumstances, such as a variation in approach to seeking assistance (Danseco, 1997). Established presence of a poor relationship between family and school is another variable to success (Thorp, 1997). A third factor, cultural differences regarding values of individualism and equity codified in special education policy (Kalyanpur, 2000), also presents.

One aspect of advocacy not addressed concerns the parental effort to increase systemic understanding of the student's disability. The factor regarding understanding of disability and its impact on type and level of support provided reflects that this effort on the part of parents seems well-directed.

Implications

Practice implications.

School social work has long maintained a dual focus on helping the individual student develop social competence and the school environment improve responsiveness to the needs of all students (Germaine, 2006; Dupper, 2003). Findings from this study suggest implications directed at development of student skills and development at the responsive capacity of the environment.

Self-regulation is the ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators all emphasized the important role self-regulation plays in determining student success. Assisting the student in development of an individually tailored self-regulation plan which addresses situations uniquely troubling to the student will aid in this behavioral management. Communicating this plan of student self-regulation to the mainstream teacher will assist in eliminating barriers experienced for students with disabilities. One of the barriers this communication would deter is obstruction by mainstream teachers of student attempt at self-regulation in the mainstream environment. Additionally, school personnel and

parents need to provide continued support to the student, especially regarding use of learned self-regulatory tools, during the reintegration process. The student capable of adapting self-regulatory skills usage across the varied aspects of the mainstream environment expands the possibilities at success.

Preparing the student with a disability for mainstream reintegration involves a great deal of planning. In addition to working with the student to establish a self-regulation plan, I also advise that school personnel address and assist the student in dealing with complications that result from social pressures. Whether actual or perceived, the student with a disability confronts challenges in terms of desire for social acceptance. One aspect of social interaction which can create problems regards pressure to internalize difficulties with comprehension, rather than exemplify difference and disability. A student confused in the mainstream classroom must vocalize this confusion to receive assistance. The effects that result can either further the student's reintegration progress, or impede it. Discussion with the student upon beginning the mainstream reintegration process can normalize those pressures, allow adaptive planning, and assist with future problem-solving as needed.

Because of classroom-dynamics differences between the mainstream and special education settings, strategic generalization strategies for the use of self-advocacy and self-regulation are necessary to attend to the unique aspects of the mainstream environment. This study illuminated two of these important aspects: the tendency of

the teacher to rely on the student to ask for assistance if needed, and the desire of the student with a disability to fit in with fellow classmates. Strategies used by special education personnel to increase the use of self-advocacy included direct instruction, provision of support upon use, and problem-solving assistance regarding behavioral barriers. Mainstream school personnel, in partnership with special education personnel, need to develop further generalization strategies to transfer gains in self-advocacy across settings to the mainstream classroom. A suggested further step is to provide continued direct instruction in self-advocacy to the mainstream teacher, advocating alongside the student. After measured success at that level, encouragement of the student to independently self-advocate is advised.

It is important that potential need for classroom accommodations be considered and discussed early in the reintegration process. The realities of the time constraints and limitations to communication which exist in the mainstream environment require that accommodation needs be anticipated and adopted prior to reintegration. For example, a student who requires guidance during test-taking in the special education setting would have that accommodation written into the plan before reintegration begins. Awareness of this necessary accommodation would decrease the likelihood that the reintegrating student would experience the cycle of academic struggle increasing negative behavior leading to teacher frustration.

Finally, the integral role taken by parents to draw attention to their child's unique needs should be supported. Acting to strengthen that parental advocacy furthers successful mainstream reintegration for the student with a disability. One suggested means of support is the use of parent panels aimed at increasing overall disability awareness (Duckworth & Kostell, 1999). A typical parent panel would consist of meetings between parents and educational staff, in order to share information about different disabilities and discuss associated issues and concerns (Pivak, McComas, LaFlamme, 2002). These venues for communication would serve to acknowledge and support the unique ability of parents to explain student needs.

Implications for policy.

This research calls attention to problems with implementation of the IDEA at the local level. The problems the two participating school districts of this study experienced can be broken down into two categories: breakdown in implementation of local policies meant to communicate student needs, and personnel practices which do not support the goals of the IDEA.

The heart of the IDEA is its requirement of an individualized educational plan for each student with a disability who needs special education. Both school districts in the study developed policies to communicate information from the student IEP to mainstream staff. In one school district the policy arose out of communication between special education and mainstream staff to determine what information would be most

important for mainstream teachers to have and how to best communicate that information. A form was devised which synthesized listing of student needs and the required accommodations. This is consistent with recommendations to design interventions for mainstream teachers of students with disabilities that are practical for the organizational structure typical of general education classrooms (Polychronis, McDonnell, Johnson, & Jameson, 2004) and require limited teacher effort (Kohler, Anthony, Steighner, & Hoyson, 2001). In spite of the seeming accessibility of the information, problems were experienced in that some teachers reported not receiving the information and some reported not reading it until issues arose. In the other school district, the policy was to make the IEP available by computer to the mainstream teacher. In this district, the change in key personnel, namely the special education case manager resulted in a lapse of two months before the mainstream teacher had access to the IEP. These implementation failures led to staff not being aware of student educational needs. This awareness seems essential if a teacher is to meet the unique needs of the student with the IEP as is required in the IDEA.

The second policy implementation problem encountered was practices by school personnel which were inconsistent with the goals of the IDEA. In passing the IDEA Congress rejected an assembly line approach to education and required education tailored to the unique needs of each student with a disability (Hurder, 1997). This tailored education is reliant on the identification of the student as disabled and in need of additional or special services in order to receive an education. Once qualified for

special education it is the responsibility of the school district to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE). An appropriate program consists of "specially designed instruction" and the "related services" needed to help the student benefit from instruction. The law requires that the education program be fitted to the student, not the other way around (IDEA, 2004). Practices of school personnel inconsistent with this were deciding to not seek out information about student needs, not identifying necessary accommodations, and relying on the student to communicate needs. Lipsky (1980) presented a theory of street-level bureaucracy which highlights the pivotal role public service personnel have in the implementation of public policy. He posited that because of the unique conditions of their employment, street level bureaucrats have a great amount of discretion as they carry out policy and as a result make decisions on a case-by-case basis which may not directly reflect the goals of policy. The conditions Lipsky spoke about seem present among the school personnel in this study; these include direct contact with the targets of the policy, vague policies which require interpretation, discretion in their role, and competing pressures such as underfunding and meeting all student needs.

The idea that macro-level educational policy does not lead directly to changes in the practice of classroom teachers is not new (Rand Corporation, 1977). The power of the implementers of policy, in this study school personnel, necessitates increased attention to their attitudes, beliefs, needs, and knowledge. Continued resistance to the goals of the IDEA has been found in research. Summers & Semrud-Clikeman (2000)

found that in implementation of the IDEA, some school psychologists in their study

transformed the regulations and rules of the law to align with their personal beliefs.

Identifying beliefs among individual teachers at the local level which may be serving as a

barrier to implementation of the IDEA is recommended. Enhanced internal monitoring

by school personnel of the meeting of professional obligations of the IDEA and

beliefs/attitudes which interfere with the meeting of that obligation is another

recommendation.

On the local level, enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of local

policies related to communication of IEP needs and goals is recommended.

Communication of student needs and accommodations was important in the six cases of

this study. Though policies were in place to facilitate that communication, breakdowns

occurred. Externally monitoring the process of communication of IEP information is

important.

Implications for research.
While a theoretical model for reintegration of students with

emotional/behavioral disabilities has not yet been developed, this study acts to further

its development by examining two important sources of interaction within the

reintegration system: staff understanding of student disability and student desire to fit

in with peers.

This study suggests that further research examine ramifications regarding staff comprehension of student disability. There is a need to define personnel understanding of student disability. Development of a method by which to measure each individual mainstream staff member's understanding of disability would facilitate research into the actual implications their understanding has on the process of reintegration.

A model of best practices concerning the means through which understanding of disability is most effectively furthered is needed. This research project highlighted the importance of having an understanding of disability which both recognized and acknowledged the unique needs of the student but also saw the experience of disability as being moderated by the environment. Research in this area would likely entail studying model school policies, communication protocols, training programs for mainstream teachers, and specifics for support provided by special education staff.

This study notes that another important interaction worthy of closer inspection is analysis of the repercussive aspect concerning the student desire to fit in with peers. Additional research exploring the relationship between a student's understanding of his/her disability, and any corresponding ability to self-advocate, needs to be engaged. The importance of self-advocacy was clearly demonstrated for each of the six students participating in this study. The connection between awareness of ability/disability seems connected to self-advocacy (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005), but has not been studied specifically in the EBD population. The unique needs of this group

suggest research into this connection could yield strategies which might improve the ability of these students to successfully self-advocate and reintegrate.

Lastly, this study focused on the reintegration of older school-aged students, primarily those in senior high school. More research is necessary to examine and determine the experiences that younger students have with mainstream reintegration. Self-advocacy was a significant theme for older students. It is reasonable to assume that the process and importance of self-advocacy would be different for students of varying ages, as self-advocacy has a developmental trajectory.

In conclusion, this qualitative research study advanced the knowledge of the reintegration of students with EBD by describing the three sub-processes of student's use of tools of self-regulation and self-advocacy, the provision of environmental support, and parental advocacy. The study generated a grounded theory on the process of reintegration which highlighted the importance of a systemic understanding of student disability as well as student mediation of the desire to fit into the mainstream setting. Strategies which fail to consider or include those dynamics would be unsuccessful. This research makes significant contributions to understanding the processes of reintegration and offers more avenues for further research on a population in great need of services.

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Appendix A

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

University of Minnesota School of Social Work

Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in Creating Opportunities for Success for All: A Case Study of the Reintegration of Students with Emotional-Behavioral Disorders"

Michaela Rinkel, MSW, ABD, PhD

Date Created: 7/30/09

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study that seeks to understand student's experiences of transitioning back to the mainstream school environment after placement at a special education school.
- Your child has been nominated by their teacher to participate in this study that is being conducted for dissertation research in conjunction with the University of Minnesota, Department of Social Work. Your child's identifying information has not been shared in any way with the researcher at this time. Your child was chosen because he/she meets the criteria for this study as a student who is likely to start mainstreaming in the near future and you, as parent, are being offered the opportunity to have your child participate.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study:

- The research project involves a case-study analysis of your child's transition to an inclusive learning environment with general education classes at their mainstream school. The researcher wants to document and write about your child's transition experiences. It is important to find out what helped to make the process easier and to determine any barriers that made transition difficult. The results of this study may someday help educators develop smoother transitions for students as they return to mainstream environments from special education school sites. Your child should also feel good about assisting with this important research and sharing their experience.

Description of Study Procedures:

- If you give your consent and your child agrees, I will ask your child to sit down with me and be interviewed up to five times. Typically I will interview your child three times, however if your child has a difficult time with the length of the interview I might cut the interview short and schedule another interview. The interviews will be about the transition experience back to the mainstream environment. (There are some sample

questions below). Your child's interviews will last about 50 minutes each and will be held in a conference room at school which will be quiet and private. They will be scheduled at a time that does not interfere with instructional time. The interviews will be spaced throughout the next approximately five months as your child continues the mainstreaming process.

- Because this research focuses on the possible resources and barriers that exist in the whole system during a child's transition, additional information will be collected from sources other than your child. In addition, you will be asked to complete an interview about your child's transition experience. This interview will be about what you have observed about your child's experience. This interview is also scheduled to last approximately 50 minutes and will be done at a location and time convenient to you. I might schedule a follow-up interview following the initial interview.
- In addition, your child will be observed in their classroom on at least one occasion, but possibly more. Your child's IEP team will be observed. Your child's special education, mainstream teacher, and vice principal will be asked to complete an interview about their experience with your child during the transition.
- I will also need your permission to look at school records. This will add to the information I am told during the interviews. I will only be looking at the following:
    - The exact dates of your child's transition
    - Your child's grades and progress reports
    - Your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), and
    - Your child's behavioral records
    - Your child's discipline records

Risks to Being in Study:
- The study has the following risks. First, there is a chance that during the interviews you or your child could become upset recalling stressful events during the transition or that led up to placement at the special education school. The questions asked are not meant to dig up old hurts. But they may arise in the course of the interview.
- Because of this potential risk, I will make it clear to your child that they can skip any question or stop the interview at any time. In addition there are social workers and counselors available if your child needs to talk about anything raised in the interviews. And, of course, if your child reveals to me that there has been harassment or other types of discrimination, I will refer your child to the appropriate counselor or administrator at the school.

Benefits of Being in Study:
- The benefits of participation are that participants often feel good about having the chance to benefit others who might be experiencing the same thing that they are. Also

your child will have the benefit of having someone genuinely interested in their experience during this stressful time listening non-judgmentally to them.

Payments:
- You will receive a one-time $25 gift card for the cost of transportation and your time during the parental interview. This gift card will be yours to keep even if during the interview you decide to not participate.

Costs:
- There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

Confidentiality:
- The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file. Access to the records will be limited to the researchers; however, please note that sponsors, funding agencies, regulatory agencies, and the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.
- The audio tape recordings that are made of the interviews will be accessed by the transcriber and myself only. These will be destroyed four years after the study is completed.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:
- Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with your child's school.
- You are free to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason.
- There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part or for stopping your participation.

Contacts and Questions:
- The researcher conducting this study is Michaela Rinkel. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at _____ or email at _____.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Director, Office for Human Research Participant Protection, University of Minnesota at (612) 626-5654, or irb@umn.edu

Copy of Consent Form:
- Please keep the enclosed copy of this form for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

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I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent for my child to participate in this study and consent for my participation.

Signatures/Dates

Study Participant (Print Name) : _____

Parent/Guardian (Print Name): _____

Parent/Guardian (Signature): _____   _____

Date

_____ (initial) I have been provided a copy of this form to keep for my records.

_____ (initial) I have been provided a copy of sample interview questions for my records.

_____ (initial) I give consent for the primary researcher to have access to my child's cumulative folder, grades and discipline information.

Please sign and return one copy of this form in the postage paid envelope provided. You

will be contacted by Michaela Rinkel, the principal researcher, to make sure that you

understand the study and to have any questions answered.

Appendix B

Student Assent to Participate Form

Michaela Rinkel, Doctoral Candidate
University of Minnesota
School of Social Work
Date:

Dear Student:

I would like to see if you are interested in being part of a research study on students who are going back to mainstream after being in a special education school. I am interested in learning about your recent experiences in school and your move to mainstream classes. Because you might go back to your mainstream school sometime this year and take some classes there, I am asking if you would be interested in this study. I am hoping that by talking to you, your parent(s), and teachers, I can learn how to make this time going back to another school go smoothly for other students.

If you agree to be in this study, I will interview you up to five times during the rest of this school year. The interviews should take less than 50 minutes and will be conducted in the school office during your non-instructional time. I will be asking you questions about going back to your other school and how it is going, what is going well and any problems you are having. It will be tape recorded so the researcher can type the interview later. The tapes will be destroyed as soon as possible. I will also be interviewing your parents and teachers, looking at your school records and observing the class that you are mainstreaming.

Some of the questions that I ask might remind you of some of the stress you are having while going back to your school. If that happens, you may refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you may stop participating at any time by contacting me at the phone numbers listed below or by stopping the interview. Your name, the names of your

teachers, and your school will be kept confidential and will not be used in any report, analysis, or publication.

Being in this study is totally up to you and no one will be mad at you if you don't want to do it. You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can ask me next time.

Signing here means that you have read this paper or had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study. If you don't want to be in this study, don't sign. Remember being in this study is up to you and you can change your mind later.

I agree to be interviewed for this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of Student   Date

_____

Signature of Person Explaining Study

Appendix C

School Personnel Consent Form

Michaela Rinkel, Doctoral Candidate
University of Minnesota
College of Social Work
Date

Dear School District Employee:

You have been identified through the School District of as someone who works with an EBD student who is a subject in a research study. I am conducting research on students with emotional and behavioral disorders who transition from full-time special education sites to inclusive general education. This study is intended to identify phenomena that facilitate the transition from a self-contained class to an inclusive general education setting. Barriers to successful inclusion will also be identified through this project. This research study is in conjunction with the University of Minnesota as part of a dissertation by Michaela Rinkel from the Department of Social Work under the supervision of Jane Gilgun, PhD.

I am asking that you complete one interview and a possible follow-up interview based on questions that arise following data analysis. The interview will take approximately 40 minutes. You will not be asked to provide any personally identifying information on your students until parental consent forms have been signed.

Teachers, student-participants, and their associated schools will not be identified by name in any written report, analysis, or publication. By signing the section below, you are consenting to become part of this study and may be contacted for follow-up. Your participation is voluntary and you may cease to participate in this study at any time by simply contacting me at the above address or phone numbers. Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be

directed at Office for Human Research Participant Protection, University of Minnesota at (612) 626-5654, or irb@umn.edu.

Please sign one copy of your letter and return it with your completed survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope within 1 week of receiving it.

Thank You Very Much,

Michaela Rinkel, Doctoral Candidate University of Minnesota, Department of Social Work

I consent to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I may cease participation at any time by contacting her at the above phone number.

_____   _____

   Teacher's Signature   Date
I have been provided a copy of this form to keep for my records**. _____** (initial)

Appendix D

Interview Guide

This interview guide will be used as a guide, and not as a strict format that will be followed in every interview. Probing questions will be used to go deeper with what has been shared, asking for more reflection and clarification. The questions will be modified depending upon the age and level of understanding of the child.

Guiding questions for students:
- You will be returning to your mainstream school soon, can you tell me what you think that will be like?
- What do you hope will happen when you return?
- What are you worried about happening when you return?
- Who do you know over at the mainstream school? Students? Adults? Tell me about them.
- How do you feel about returning?
- Can you tell me about what happened that led to you being transferred out of this school?
- Are you involved in any activities at the school? Do you plan on being involved?
- Can you tell me what you would do if you had a problem at the school?

Guiding questions for parents:
- Your child will be returning to the mainstream school soon, can you tell me what you think that will be like?
- How do you hope it will go?
- What are you worried about happening?
- Who do you know at the mainstream school? Tell me about them.
- How do you feel about your child returning?
- Can you tell me about what happened that led to you being transferred out of this school?
- Are you involved at the school in any way? Can you describe how?
- Do you recall regular contact with _____'s teachers, especially in the beginning of the transition? How would you describe that?
- What information do you think is most important for other parents as students transition back to mainstream? Why? Is there any information that you think would be helpful but for some reason is not given? If so, what?

- Did _____ run into any difficulties during the transition? Could you describe these difficulties? What was effective in your response?
- Have you had a history with this mainstream school before _____ most recent transition back? If so, could you describe what that relationship was like.

Guiding questions for teachers:

- How does the other school do at preparing the students for return to mainstream?
- Describe the behavior intervention approach you use with this particular child.
- How has this approach been successful and unsuccessful. Please give specific examples.
- Can you describe your relationship with this student? What have you done to help to create this relationship?
- What do you think are the reasons for this student's successful or unsuccessful attempt at inclusion?
- Have you witnessed other students who made an attempt at inclusion from a supported behavior class into a general education class? Were they successful? Give an example.
- If a student attempted inclusion in general education but was unsuccessful, and had to return to the supported behavior environment, what was the main reason for them to return? Please explain and give an example.
- Have you had contact with this student's parent(s)? How often? What has this contact been like? How do you think this contacted aided or hindered the student's attempt at inclusion?

Appendix E

Initial Observation Guide

This guide serves as a starting point. If observation points do not make sense as analysis continues, then those points will be dropped or modified. I will attend to at least the following dimensions during observations:

- time of day
- area observed
- circumstances of observation (i.e. passing time, lunch period, etc.)
- interactions with other students, verbal and non-verbal - # and quality
- engagement by/with school personnel with students
- evidence of attention to lecture
- engagement with class material
- space arrangement for students
- type of activity

Specifically during IEP meetings
- use of acronyms or jargon
- efforts to include and engage parents and student
- who are experts in the room
- how are decisions made
- how are conflicts reported
- is information shared outside of the meeting
- numbers of professionals in the room
- roles of staff members
- evidence of connection between student and staff members

Appendix F

Initial Codes

	Initial Code	Source of Code
Peers	History with peers	My experience
	New peer relationship without history	My experience
	Disconnected from peers	My experience
Teachers	Feels overwhelmed with student	Research
	Feeling of competence with EBD	Research
	Seeks consultation from others	Research
	Communicates with parent	My experience/ research
	Communicates with other school staff	My experience/research
Parents	Communicates with school staff	Research
	School involvement	My experience
	Initiates contact with school	My experience
	Disengaged from school	My experience
	Feels respected at school	My experience
	Engages in problem solving around reintegration	My experience
Student	Connection to adults in school	My experience/ research
	Expectations of success	My experience
	Mental health issues	My experience/ research
	Learning disability	Research
	Seeks out supportive staff	Research
	Has academic competence	Research
	Aggressive behaviors	Research
	Self-regulation abilities	My experience/ research
School system	Expects child to fail	My experience
	Provides necessary supports	Research
	Flexibility in policy implementation	Research
	Provides open access to special ed teacher	Research
	Open communication in the system	My experience/research
	Transition planning	Research

Appendix G

Collapsed Codes

Codes - Collapsed

Codes – Open Coding

Advocacy   Self – advocacy
- Teaching self-advocacy
- barriers
  - lack of success using skills in mainstream
  - past failures at self advocacy
  - fear of looking stupid
  - relying on student for communication – barrier
- timing –
  - knowing when to ask
  - asked for help too late - point of no return barrier
- aspects of role of advocate
- effects of advocacy

Became category **Self advocacy**
teaching self advocacy

generalization problems

history of self advocacy
barriers
Moved to – **Student Fitting In**

Moved to **Understanding of Disability –** subtheme connection to self-advocacy

Created category **- Advocacy**

Supports - Relationships - Friends / Family / Teachers/ Admin / Others
- Process of relationship building
  - relationship building strategies
- Ways supported by teacher
  - reinforcing correct behavior
  - feels understood
  - supportive flexible
  - believe can change
  - supportive understandable
  - supportive fighting
  - holds accountable

- Ways unsupported by teacher
  - Unsupp. – not understand
  - Unsupp. – not liked
  - Unsupp.- not think changed

Created category **– Developing Supports**

Subtheme strategies staff utilize

Subtheme student experience of support

Moved to Barriers to Connection

- Effects of a positive supportive
  relationship   ⟶   Moved to Understanding of Disability
  - keeping motivated   subtheme Connection to Supports
  - getting more resources
  - reach out for help
  - can confront more easily
  - flexibility in following rules
- Effects of a positive supportive   ⟶   Collapsed category into others
  relationship
  - understanding disability
  - assist self-advocacy

Individual Attributes

Created subtheme under Student tools–
self-regulation

- mh difficulties   ⟶
- self-regulation (sr)
  - anxiety (an)   Dimension of self-regulation
  - anger
  - impulsivity   -developing tools to regulate
  - shutting off outside
  - developing tools to regulate
  - using self-regulation tools   ⟶   -using self-regulation tools
  - barriers when use tools
  - experiences developing   -having tools
    new tools
- academic competence
  - negative academic self
    concept
  - positive academic self   Moved to case study description for
    concept   level of academic competence
  - history of problems
    understanding
  - give up when overwhelmed
    and relationship to
    behavior
- importance of appearing normal   Created dimension of Barriers
- identity with special education   Encountered under Student Using Tools
  Subtheme effects of relationship   – academic barriers

Communication

- Problems of communication
  - lack of communication = fall through cracks
  - Process
    - relying on student for communication
    - not knowing about student
- Home and school communication
  - being the bridge for communication
  - translating school to the child
  - translating child to school

- Attitude toward communication
  - prefer more information
  - prefer no prior knowledge of student

  - standard protocols as a substitute for accommodation

Adaptations in the Environment
- Needs for adaptations
  - self-regulation needs
  - academic needs
  - flexibility
- barrier
  - when find out - there is a problem not enough time to create accommodation
  - Attitude
    - not believing in need to accommodate
    - blank slate
- unmet need for accommodations
  - lack of resources

Communication codes were integrated into others categories to dimensionalize

moved to **Advocacy** – history

Moved to **Understanding of Disability** – Connection to Self-Advocacy

Moved to **Advocacy** – History of

Moved to **Advocacy** – Increase Understanding of Disability

Created Category – **Understanding of Disability**

Attitude of fairness

Moved to **Developing Supports** – Adjustments– flexibility

Created subtheme – Making Adjustments under **Developing Supports**

- moved to **Understanding of Disability** – connection to provision of supports

Moved to **Understanding of Disability**

-moved to **Making Adjustments** – lack of resources

Appendix H

Initial Case Study Framework

The following framework guided my initial case study write-up.

Develop a chronology of events related to placement and transition.

Parental relationship and involvement with school, support regarding transition, evidence of that support. Parental support of schooling in general. Parental history with home school and placement school.

Student's feelings about returning, expectations, motivations for returning. Academic skills as reported by student and others. Behavioral problems that have been identified. Identification of staff at home school who are supportive in the students' eyes.

Description of the transition plan in place. Level of communication between schools during placement, before transition, during transition. Level of contact by the student with the school during the time of placement. What is the level of change in the placement (100% change, ½ time, etc.)

Supports available to mainstream teachers, presence of a workable Behavior Intervention Plan, access to support staff, flexible discipline strategies. Transition strategies communicated to mainstream staff – how.

History of relationships with peers at the school. Changes in those relationships during placement. Involvement with peers during placement. Involvement upon return.