

**An Illustration of the Work Lives of Experienced Teachers of Students
with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders at the Middle School Level**

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Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

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April 20, 2004

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Activity theory, special education teachers, emotional and/or behavioral disorders

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this qualitative study is to illustrate how experienced teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (EB/D) working in middle school settings conduct their work. In the current context of public education, the work of teaching students with EB/D is considered stressful and undesirable by many individuals and has resulted in a shortage of adequately prepared and experienced special educators willing to teach this vulnerable population (Westat, 2002). In response to the shortage, school districts may resort to hiring improperly prepared individuals-- a practice that impedes the provision of an appropriate education to students with disabilities (Kauffman, 2001; Turnbull & Turnbull; 1998). In order to understand the work of those special educators who have remained in the field of teaching students with EB/D, this exploratory case study examined the work of four experienced special education teachers teaching students with EB/D in various instructional settings in middle schools in Virginia. Activity theory (Engeström, 1999) provided the conceptual framework in this study. The results of this study support the current research literature on the work of teaching students with EB/D. The teachers spent their workday (a) supporting their students' progress in the general education curriculum, (b) developing their students' prosocial skills, and (c) fulfilling multiple non-teaching related duties. Efforts to teach their students were impeded by (a) difficulties in working relationships with certain general education teachers and (b) meeting the complex responsibilities of being a special educator in the current context of public middle schools.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Alan. You have been an unbelievable source of support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people who have made this dissertation possible.

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Dr. Jean Crockett, my committee chairperson, advisor, and friend. She provided guidance, encouragement, and wisdom throughout this doctoral process while keeping me grounded. I thank Dr. Lynn Boyer for her time, patience, and thoughtful responses to my questions. I am sincerely pleased that we became acquainted. Acknowledgement and appreciation are also extended to my other committee members, Dr. Bonnie Billingsley, Dr. Lisa Driscoll, and Dr. Jennifer Sughrue.

A special acknowledgement is extended to the four teachers who participated in this study. Their willingness to share their time and experiences with me was invaluable. I have also gained much respect for your dedication to your work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. I would also like to acknowledge the administrators who participated in this study.

I made many new friends as I made this journey through this process called a Ph. D and tested the boundaries of the old. Debbie, you have been a true source of support, encouragement, and comfort. Gwen, thanks for your many faces of friendship over the many years.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family. Thank you for all of your support and love over the years. My nieces, Heather and Megan, have provided love and many words of encouragements. Remember the places that you will go.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

As the middle of her third year of teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EB/D) at the middle school level approached, Nancy had already decided that she would not be returning to her job the following year. Her enthusiasm for her work had diminished over the past two years. Her room assignment had been changed each year, the paperwork related to the job continued to increase, and her planning time was often spent attending child study, eligibility, and IEP meetings.

Adding to Nancy's frustration was the inability to teach her students. She chose this job because she wanted to work with and teach students with EB/D. Yet, it seemed that less and less of her day was dedicated to providing her students with specialized instruction. She spent a portion of her day preparing them for state mandated tests. Other factors contributed to her feelings of frustration. For example, the administrators often used her classroom as a detention room for other students, she had little opportunities to interact with her peers, and the behaviors of several of her students were becoming unpredictable and unmanageable. When Nancy went to her principal several times with her concerns, the principal listened patiently and offered sage advice but those meetings were unproductive. The principal finally admitted that she knew very little about special education, particularly EB/D, and that perhaps they could get together with the director of special education to work out the problems. Due to scheduling conflicts, that meeting never happened.

Early that spring, Nancy reported to her principal that she would not be returning the following school year as she had accepted a position as a history teacher at another middle school. When asked why she left her special education job, Nancy gave different answers, depending upon her mood or her audience. Yet, the answers varied only slightly, "I just felt unsupported. It seemed no one understood what I was trying to do" or "I didn't have time to teach, I spent most my time doing paperwork or sitting in meetings."

The above example illustrates the challenges associated with the working conditions confronting many special education teachers, particularly teachers of students with EB/D in public schools middle schools across America. Stressful working conditions or issues associated

with the design of their job can influence special educators' decisions to leave the field of emotional and behavioral disorders (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

The provision of an appropriate education of students with disabilities is dependent upon the availability of qualified special educators (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998). For students with EB/D, the likelihood that experienced and adequately prepared educators will provide them instruction is diminished when one considers the findings of the National Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE) reported in the 23rd Annual Report to Congress. Specifically, in the 1999-2000 school year, 69,249 special education teacher positions remained unfilled of which 12,013, or 17%, were for teachers of students with EB/D (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The SPeNSE Report also indicated that, of their sample, 71% of the teachers providing instruction to students with EB/D indicated not holding proper certification credentials to teach this population (Westat, 2002).

Adding to the need for qualified personnel to provide an appropriate education to students with disabilities is the finding that the role of a well-prepared and qualified teacher can positively influence the school and post-school lives of students with EB/D (Simpson, 1999).

The need to retain qualified teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral problems in the profession is important in order to provide these students with quality instruction supported by effective teaching practices. Inadequate working conditions associated with the work, or poorly designed jobs, confront many of these teachers as they report to classrooms across the United States (Gersten, Keating, Yavanoff, & Harniss, 2001). In order to address specific concerns associated with work, a greater understanding of the details of that work are needed.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this case study is to illustrate the work lives of experienced special educators who teach students with EB/D in middle school settings by identifying the actions and job design issues associated with that work. The goal is to provide detailed descriptions of *how* and *why* experienced teachers of students with EB/D in middle school settings engage in the work of providing specially designed instruction to their students. The use of a case study design allows for the collection of “comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 447). The illustrations of the work are

composed from the “rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions” (p. 438), which are the foundation of qualitative research designs and allow for a deeper understanding of the nature of their work.

An additional purpose of this study was to evaluate the appropriateness of activity theory as a means to frame the work of special educators. Activity theory is being used increasingly in studying people as they work because it allows the multidimensional aspects of work to be considered (Engeström, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 1999). Thus, this study utilized activity theory to identify the specific actions and job design issues associated with the work of teachers of students with EB/D as they unfold in the daily life of select middle schools.

Research Questions

The primary question for the study was this:

(A) What are the actions and job design issues associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D within a middle school setting? Subordinate questions included:

1. How do experienced teachers of students with EB/D engage in their work?,
2. Why do those experienced teachers engage in those actions?,
3. What are the documented job descriptions of those teachers in local school policies?
4. What are the disconnections that exist between their expectations of the work and the realities of the work in a middle school setting?

To address the secondary purpose of the study, an additional question was this:

(B) Does activity theory provide a useful framework from which to frame the work of teaching students with EB/D?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guides this study is activity theory, which is an outgrowth of the work of Soviet psychologist, Vygotsky and his colleague, Leont'ev (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). The framework of activity theory is based upon the premise that “human activity is endlessly multifaceted, mobile, and rich in variation of content and form” (Engeström, 1999, p. 20). Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) suggested that human activity is depicted as an “interactive web of actors, artifacts, and the situation” (p. 23) and can best be understood through a unit of analysis that allows that activity to be viewed from where it actually takes place. These factors must be considered because “the artifacts and actors are essentially intertwined in action contexts” (Lave, as cited in Spillane et al., 2001, p. 23). Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, and Blake (1995) suggested that job design takes into

consideration the organizational elements of a job such as how the work is structured, the specific associated processes, and systems for information sharing. The use of activity theory to frame this study allowed for those elements associated with the job design to be identified, organized, and described. Activity theory is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Methodology

This study was designed to investigate how and why experienced teachers of students with EB/D engaged in the work of teaching their students in order to understand their work. Patton (2002), in discussing case study designs, emphasized the importance of distinguishing the difference between “case studies seeking to identify cause and effect relationships and those seeking understanding of human experience” (p. 478). To that end, I utilized a cross-case study design with the intent to illustrate the work lives of four experienced middle school teachers of students with EB/D. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, extensive observations, field notes, and a review of relevant documents.

Limitations/Assumptions

The data collection methods used in this study contain certain limitations. First, data collected using observations and interviews were subjected to the perceptions or views of the researcher. Precautions to researcher bias are addressed in Chapter 3. Next, this proposal focused on teachers of students with EB/D in two separate districts of similar size in Virginia. Additionally, the sample was limited to experienced middle school teachers of students with EB/D in Virginia. Therefore, readers of the research must make decisions regarding the transferability to other settings and to other participants.

The assumptions that each of us brings to any situation may impede our ability to make progress in our journeys to gain knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin suggested that as researchers, we must be aware of our recognized and unrecognized assumptions so that they do not intervene with our ability to interpret a situation or an experience thoughtfully. Patton (2002), in discussing assumptions of researchers in qualitative studies, provided some rather sage advice. He cautioned that in order for researchers to not become a part of the problem, we must not assume that we “have all of the questions, much less all of the answers, right” (p. 337). Although my experience as a special education teacher has placed me with children of all ages with a variety of disabilities, I have not been assigned as a teacher of students with EB/D. Therefore, I cannot assume that I truly know the experiences of

their work. Instead, the information provided through the rich descriptions in this study are intended to enable readers to see the nature of the work of teaching students with EB/D in middle schools and how these educators describe the meaning of their work.

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this paper:

Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP): a plan that utilizes positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behaviors that interfere with the learning of students with disabilities or with the learning of others or behaviors that require disciplinary action (VAC-20-80-10).

Collaboration Teacher: consults with general education teachers to determine intervention strategies for specific students (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000)

Eligibility Meeting: a group of qualified professionals and the parent or parents of the child meet to determine whether the child is, or continues to be, a child with a disability and is eligible to receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA). To receive services under IDEA, a student must be determined to have one of the 13 disabilities recognized under IDEA and must need special education as a result (Huefner, 2000).

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA): a process to determine the underlying cause or functions of a child's behavior that impede the learning of the child with a disability or the learning of the child's peers (VAC-20-80-10).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): a written document that describes a child's educational needs and details the special education and related services the district will provide to address those needs (Bateman & Linden, 1998).

IEP Meetings: conducted to provide students found eligible for services under IDEA with an individualized education program (IEP).

Job Design: the set of structures, systems, and process through which the work of teaching is conducted (Morvant, Gersten, Gillman, Keating, & Blake, 1995).

Resource Teacher: special education teacher assigned to provide identified students with disabilities specialized and individualized instruction for at least 21% but no more than 60% of the students' instructional day (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999).

Self-Contained Teacher: special education teacher assigned to provide identified students with disabilities specialized and individualized instruction for more than 60% of the students' instructional day (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999).

Special Education Teacher: an educator employed to provide specialized and individualized instruction to students with disabilities in grades pre K-12.

Standards of Learning (SOLs): Performance measures that assess student achievement in the Commonwealth of Virginia K-12 schools are known as Standards of Learning (SOLs). The SOLs are intended to improve the education of every child in every school in Virginia and consist of four major elements: a) high academic standards; b) tests to measure student progress; c) measures to ensure accountability for student achievement; and d) a performance report card. SOLs focus on mathematics, English, science, social studies, and computer skills in grades 3, 5, and 8. Students must pass a minimum number of courses to receive a general education diploma and test scores results for grades 3, 5 and 8 are considered in promotion decisions (Virginia Department of Education, 2004)

Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (EB/D): Students eligible for special education services who have been identified as exhibiting one or more of the following factors: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term can also include schizophrenia; however, it does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless they have an emotional disturbance (34 CFR §300.7(c) (4)).

Supports: those functions performed to meet the administrative, supervisory, and emotional needs of special education teachers.

Teacher Attrition: teacher reassignment within a district to other schools, voluntarily leaving one district for another, involuntarily departure, leaving public education for other pursuits.

Teacher Retention: staying in the classroom as a special education teacher.

Teachers of Students with EB/D: special educators employed to provide specialized and individualized instruction to students identified with an emotional and/or behavioral disorder.

Experienced Teachers of Students with EB/D: special educators employed to provide specialized and individualized instruction to students identified with an emotional and behavioral disorder who (a) possess endorsements in EB/D, (b) have at least 3 years of experience teaching students with EB/D, and (c) were considered effective teachers by supervisory personnel.

Work Lives: the day-to-day actions associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D.

Significance of the Study

This study can contribute to the currently limited research base that focuses on the work of experienced teachers of students with EB/D at the middle school level by providing detailed descriptions of the actions associated with their work. In addition, these findings may offer insights into the working conditions of this population of teachers to stakeholders and provide suggestions to address retention concerns. Working conditions have been established as a primary reason for decisions to stay or leave the special education classroom. Job design, as it affects the role of special educators within the school organization, is an element of working conditions that has received recent attention in the research literature (Billingsley, 2002; Gersten et al., 2001). A description of the work lives of this group of teachers through a qualitative inquiry is timely, as previous studies have relied upon quantitative methods (see Clark-Chiarelli & Singer, 1997; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Pullis, 1992). There is little question that the need for the placement and retention of experienced special education teachers in classrooms is a priority for stakeholders. Thus, the illustrations of the work lives of teachers of students with EB/D at the middle school level may provide useful insight to address concerns related to the work.

Overview of the Dissertation

This study involved a qualitative case study design. Data were provided through interviews of special educators and administrators engaged in the work of providing special education, observations of the work related to the provision of educational services, and a review of relevant documents. The data collected and analyzed for this case study resulted in the

illustration of the work lives of teachers of students with EB/D working in contemporary middle school settings.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation includes an introduction to the topic, a statement of the problem and purpose, research questions, limitations and assumptions, definition of terms, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of related literature. A review of the theoretical literature and professional commentary provides the current context of the work of teaching students with disabilities before narrowing to the topic of teaching students with EB/D. A brief review of the historical perspective of the work is provided. Eight research studies focusing on the working conditions of teaching students with disabilities, particularly teachers of students with EB/D are analyzed and synthesized. Additionally, three studies that utilize activity theory as the analytical framework are provided. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study, including an explanation of the study's design, the sampling procedures, the data collection and management procedures, and the data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings of the individual cases in detail. Chapter 5 provides the findings of the cross-case analysis and a discussion of the relevant literature. Chapter 6 provides the conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH STUDIES

This chapter examines the literature related to the work of special education teachers who are responsible for the provision of specialized and individualized instruction to students eligible for special education services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA). Of specific interest are the working conditions related to the job design of teachers of students with EB/D. This area of inquiry is timely for several reasons. First, the present shortage of well-prepared and qualified special education teachers threatens to impede the provision of individualized and specialized instruction to this student population, which is a right assured under the guidelines set forth in IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). A description of the work of teaching students with EB/D may provide information that could assist in attracting teachers to this occupation.

A second concern is the high rate of attrition of the teachers who work with students with EB/D (Singer, 1993). George et al. (1995) suggested that the working conditions or the job design of teachers of students with EB/D could contribute to teachers' plans to leave the field. A description of the job design of this population of teachers may inform efforts to keep capable special educators in classrooms.

Third, the job of teaching all students in American schools has been influenced by issues related to reauthorizations of the IDEA as well as education reform efforts such as an increased emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, collaborative teaching models, discipline measures, and accountability initiatives. These efforts have placed demands on teachers, changed the working conditions for many general and special educators, and resulted in negative outcomes for a number of students with emotional problems (Feyten & Hines, 1998). An adequately designed job could improve the quality of instruction and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for all students.

Finally, the severity of the problems of students identified as having emotional and behavioral disorders has changed dramatically over the past several decades (Walker, Sprague, Close, & Starlin, 1999-2000). These students present a challenge to teachers and administrators and place significant stress on the ability of schools to address the specialized needs of those students. A well designed job could support identified needs of these students, lead to the creation of positive and safer learning environments, and improve educational outcomes.

Purpose of the Review

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the existing literature specific to the work lives of teachers of students with EB/D. Of particular interest were those issues that contributed to special education teachers' decisions to stay or leave the classroom. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of factors specific to the working conditions of teachers of students with EB/D a review of the literature was conducted. The guiding question for this review is: What are the working conditions related to the job design of teachers of students with EB/D? To answer this question and to provide background on the problem, the following factors are considered: (a) the theoretical basis for the job design of special educators, (b) current context of the work of teaching students with emotional problems, (c) historical aspects, and (d) the various perspectives on factors that influence the job design of this population of teachers. Next, a research synthesis of studies that examine the working conditions of teachers of students with EB/D is presented. In addition, three studies that utilized activity theory as an analytical tool are presented and reviewed. These studies are provided in a table format in Appendix A. This is followed by a presentation of the research synthesis. In conclusion, a summary of the research and commentary is provided.

Search for Relevant Literature

In order to prepare this review of literature, I conducted computer searches of electronic databases such as Education Full Text, ERIC, and electronic journals. Searches were limited to peer reviewed journals, as nonprofessional commentary on problems related to working in special education is plentiful. I also approached the search for relevant literature by conducting hand searches of journals. References located in texts, books chapters, and journal articles related to the work of teaching students with EB/D led to additional sources. No time limits were applied to the search terms in order to gain a historical perspective of the work of teaching students with EB/D. In order to gain an overall understanding of the working conditions of special educators that contribute to decisions to leave or stay in the classroom, I used search terms such as *special education teachers*, *attrition*, *retention*, *shortages*, *disabilities*, and *workplace conditions*. It was necessary to add the terms *stress* and *job satisfaction*, because results using *working conditions* were limited. As the topic narrowed to teachers of students with EB/D at the middle school level, the terms *emotional behavioral disorders*, *emotional problems*, *middle school*, *secondary level*, and *teaching* were used to locate information specific

to those teachers. The terms *middle school* and *behavioral disorders* did not produce relevant studies. However, the use of the terms *secondary level* and *disabilities* provided several studies that addressed the work of teaching all students with disabilities between grades 6 through 12. Finally, the phrase *job design* was added to the search; however, this addition provided no new literature relative to the work of special educators.

The same terms were used to locate studies specific to the work of teaching students with emotional problems. A time limit of 1975-2003 was set in order to consider the working conditions within the context of the IDEA. Studies were included in this review that investigated factors specific to the working conditions of general educators, special educators at elementary and secondary levels, and teachers of students with EB/D. An addition to the search terms was the phrase *activity theory*. This term was added in order to identify studies that utilized activity theory as the analytical framework and that focused on the work of pre-k through grade 12 teachers.

Special Education Teachers, Workplace Conditions, and Job Design

The need for qualified personnel to provide special education or specialized and individualized services to students with disabilities is inherent to the IDEA. Zigmond (1997) eloquently reminded us that this work of providing special education is, indeed, special and requires specially trained personnel.

Special education is, first and foremost, instruction focused on individual need. It is carefully planned. It is intensive, urgent, relentless, and goal directed. . . . It means teaching something special and teaching it in a special way. . . . monitoring each student's progress. . . . and taking responsibility for changing instruction when the monitoring data indicate that sufficient progress is not being made. (p. 384-385)

Unfortunately, the current shortage of qualified special educators and problems associated with their retention may deny many students with disabilities the provision of a special education. Many states have responded to the shortage problem by granting emergency and/or conditional endorsements to individuals who have not been properly prepared as special educators or, in some instances, as general educators (Zabel & Zabel, 2002). Other responses have been to employ long-term substitute teachers to fill vacant positions (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). While these decisions do meet the immediate need to place a person in a vacant classroom, positive outcomes for students with disabilities are questioned.

Special Education Teachers

At the most basic level, the work of teaching students with disabilities involves the use of individualized and specialized instruction provided in an appropriate educational setting. The reality is somewhat different. For example, the contemporary special educator may provide instruction to a number of students in a variety of classrooms while interacting with multiple professionals who are also responsible for providing educational services to those students. Mastropieri (2001) suggested that first-year special educators might encounter (a) assigned mentors, (b) issues related to the availability of teaching resources, (c) the need to establish working relationships with a paraprofessional, (d) time and scheduling concerns, (e) issues related to inclusion and behavior management, and (f) problems communicating with parents. Properly prepared teachers may find themselves overwhelmed by certain workplace conditions.

Workplace Conditions

The relationship between workplace conditions and decisions to stay in the classroom has been substantiated in the research literature (see Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997; Morvant et al., 1995). However, to understand the significance of that relationship it is necessary to clarify what constitutes workplace conditions in a school setting.

Rosenholtz (1989) suggested that workplace conditions are the design and management of specific tasks within the workplace. She offered three primary organizational conditions that influence commitment to teaching. First, the environment must provide teachers with “psychic rewards, where people gain estimates of their particular worth in a performance-based context” (p. 423). Rosenholtz suggested that positive relations with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents could fulfill the need for psychic rewards for the majority of teachers. The desire for “increased task autonomy and discretion” (Rosenholtz, p. 423) is also essential in a commitment to teach. The workplace must offer opportunities for teachers to experience professional independence and to have input on instructional decisions that influence the learning of their students. Finally, the work that is being conducted must be meaningful and it must be “important to their personal values and beliefs” (p. 424). In order for teaching to be meaningful, teachers should (a) be provided opportunities for professional growth, (b) be encouraged to demonstrate confidence in their ability to teach their students, and (c) believe that their work positively affects students.

Workplace conditions are important to individuals who have taken on the work of educating students. A well-designed teaching job should provide acknowledgement opportunities for a job well done. In addition, teachers should be provided opportunities to participate in instructional decision-making and offered meaningful professional development opportunities.

Definitions of Job Design

The concept of job design was borrowed from the research literature of business organizations in an effort to understand “the special educator as a professional” (Gersten et al. p. 551). Hanna (1988), in the business organizational literature, proposed the following:

Every organization has ways of balancing out the many demands for its time, attention, resources, and energy. Depending on the balance that is struck, the system performs and delivers certain results. Think of this balancing act as *design*. Design is not just structure, it is not always formal or conscious. This balancing of resources isn’t always fixed—you may not do things the same way every time, and your results may vary (even drastically!) from month to month, But . . . the fact that certain results occur (and not others) verifies that some design has been perfectly executed. (p. 39)

This description suggests that although the attainment of a perfectly balanced special education job may be impractical, recognizing that some balance must exist is important to meet the demands of providing instruction to students with disabilities.

Job design, as it relates to the field of special education, considers the day-to-day working conditions confronting special education teachers as they report to work. Morvant and colleagues (1995) presented an in-depth definition of job design in the following description:

Job design can be viewed as the set of structures, systems, and processes through which work is conducted. Included are particular ways in which people are organized to perform work, the relationship between time and work demand, organizational decision-making processes, and systems of shared information (p. 12).

This explanation of the job design of a special educator offered by Morvant et al suggests that the work of teaching students with disabilities takes into consideration more than the act of working with students. Consideration must also be given to other concerns such as, the community, the school, professional colleagues, and resources.

Perspectives on Job Design and the Work of a Special Educator

Many special educators who choose the work of teaching students with disabilities often do so for altruistic reasons (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendriks, 1993). That is, they chose teaching out of the desire to help exceptional children as well as for the nature and design of the work. An unexpected result is that many special educators may find they have not been properly prepared for the jobs they encounter in schools (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000).

The job design of a special educator is a composite of multiple teaching and nonteaching duties. These duties or responsibilities are constantly undergoing changes due, in part, to reform efforts and reauthorizations of IDEA. The work of teaching students with EB/D may be even more complex and demanding due to the nature of the problems of the students and the need to interact with multiple individuals on behalf of the students. The perspectives of a number of individuals in the field of special education who consider job related concerns and the workplace conditions of special educators are addressed in the following section.

Job Design and Special Educators

Morvant et al. (1995) provided a broad theoretical perspective of job design as it applies to special educators. Job design serves as a function within an organization that may hinder or support the work of meeting valued goals. They suggested that when a job is designed, attention must be given to the manner in which work is structured with particular notice given to “the way it is staffed, scheduled, and generally organized” (p. 12). When this concept is applied to people, a poorly designed job leads to frustration and stress, which could lead to decisions to leave jobs. For special education teachers, this means that a poorly designed job could lead to the decision to leave the classroom. On the other hand, a job that is well designed could influence a teacher’s decisions to stay in the special education classroom.

Gersten and colleagues (2001) addressed a similar application of job design, which could also speak to the special education teacher retention problem. They proposed that a well-designed job could increase job satisfaction, commitment to the field of special education, and intent to stay. Their premise was that many special education teachers experience stress due to weak job designs, which in turn influences levels of satisfaction with a current teaching position or assignment and commitment to the profession. Satisfaction with the working conditions and commitment to the work are related to special educators’ intentions to stay in teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Of particular concern to many stakeholders is the difficulty in

recruiting and retaining teachers to work with students with emotional and behavioral problems (Lauritzen & Friedman, 1991; Singh & Billingsley, 1996).

Job Design and Teachers of Students with EB/D

The special education teacher is to provide specialized and individualized instruction in an instructional setting that has been determined as appropriate by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee. The goal of that instruction is to meet the unique needs of each student with a disability and to prepare the student for independent living. The work of teaching students with disabilities requires training in the use of effective teaching strategies. Teachers must also modify instructional materials and make accommodations for various learning styles. The work of teaching students with EB/D includes the above with special requirements. This work is special indeed because of the very nature of the disability. Students with emotional and behavioral problems may display aggressive or acting out behaviors or may be socially withdrawn. Consequently, many consider the work of teaching students with EB/D as undesirable (Cavin, 1998; MacDonald & Speece, 2001).

In reflecting on her career in the field of EB/D, Guetzloe (2001) stated that she chose the work because of the interesting attributes of the children. She followed that statement with one credited to H. L. Mencken, “that the worse people behave, the more fascinating they are” (p. 2). Kauffman (2001) portrayed students with EB/D as those who “arouse negative feelings and induce negative behavior in others, including teachers” (Shores & Wehby, 1999, as cited in Kauffman, p. 5). These students are generally aggressive, suffer academic failure, and are unpopular with their peers and teachers. Kauffman continued to portray the student with EB/D as male who may have been identified with an emotional and/or behavioral problem early in his schooling. More than likely, the student was not identified for special education until school personnel documented serious discipline and academic problems related to this behavior for several years. Delayed identification results in the negative outcomes for students with EB/D.

Unfortunately, the outcomes for many students with EB/D are disheartening. These students frequently drop out of school, experience high arrest rates, have low rates of employment, and experience difficulties living independently (Nelson, 2000). The recruitment, training, and support of teachers to provide these students with effective teaching practices could improve the outlook for their future.

As mentioned elsewhere in this study, teachers are drawn to the field of special education because they want to work with children with disabilities. Guetzloe (2001) offered that, in her experience as university professor, teachers choose to work with students with emotional and behavioral problems for one of two reasons, (a) a belief that the current teacher shortage will ensure them a job in the teaching profession, and (b) a history of emotional problems exists in their lives. Regardless of the attraction to the field, effective teachers of students with EB/D require specialized training and proper preparation in order to ensure positive outcomes.

Kauffman (2001) provided an insightful description of the work of teaching students with EB/D. He proposed that the primary goal of the teacher who accepts the work of teaching students with EB/D is to improve their achievement and social behavior. Kauffman cautioned that the teacher must create a balance between academic instruction and addressing the behavioral needs of the students. This balance can be provided through the creation of a classroom environment that allows the student to feel that “work is accomplished, play is learned, love is felt, and fun is enjoyed—by the student and the teacher” (p. 533). These words are not intended to imply that the work of teaching students with EB/D is not a serious endeavor. The task of creating an environment that encourages and allows these students to succeed requires the teacher to assume multiple underlying tasks.

Teachers of students with EB/D must first identify the contributing factors that explain the student’s current emotional or behavioral state that can be changed. The teacher must then identify and measure the behaviors that are the source of their problems. Kauffman (2001) likened that act to checking ones’ vital signs. The teacher must also ensure that “no further disservice” (p. 531) is done to the student. That is, the teacher must recognize the past and present circumstances of the child that are not alterable while focusing on those present and future conditions that can be altered. In order to create an effective teaching environment the teacher must also choose tasks that are at a level that allows the student to experience academic success. Teachers may also need to work with the students’ parents or representatives from community agencies. What begins to develop is a job that requires much finesse, patience, flexibility, specialized training, and commitment.

The difficulties of working with this population of students and the need for experienced, well-trained teachers are recognized in the field of EB/D. Cavin (1998) offered a “toolbox” (p.

370) of methods to guide teachers of students with EB/D in creating that balanced classroom environment to which Kauffman (2001) referred. These methods represent his experiences as a teacher of students with EB/D as well as others in the field.

Cavin's (1998) toolbox is a combination of practical advice such as the importance of choosing battles and learning to ignore certain behaviors. This advice is heavily laced with the importance of maintaining a sense of humor when working with students with EB/D. Cavin advised that teachers of these students should not expect that their students act like their nondisabled peers because these students "are in your classroom because they do not act 'normal'" (p. 371). Additionally, for students and teachers to experience success in the classroom, teachers must "remember that these kids with all of their problems, their criminal records, their probation officers, their idiosyncrasies, their unlovable characteristics, and their strange families are still kids" (p. 383). Individuals not properly prepared for the realities of this work may become overwhelmed and decide not to return to teach students with EB/D.

To finish with his sage advice, Cavin (1998) described the work of teaching students with EB/D as the most challenging job in education and advised:

If you want to set up camp a few feet from the gates of hell and try to rescue a few just before they tumble in, join me in this place. Few will praise you. Colleagues may look on you as a second-class citizen. Most of the kids will not appreciate you. You won't get Christmas gifts or thank-you letters. . . . You will have the opportunity to do the impossible. (p. 383)

The work of teaching students with EB/D is indeed special and requires the ability to balance academic achievement, behavioral management, and the everyday realities of the work

The characteristics of the students may certainly deter some from accepting the challenge to which Cavin (1998) and Kauffman (2001) refer. Other matters such as policy issues, societal mores, and concerns around teacher qualifications have influenced the work and working conditions of teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

The job designs of all special education teachers have undergone significant changes since Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997. Morvant et al. (1995) addressed these changes in the work of teaching students with disabilities:

Such shifts, especially the current movement to integrate special education programs and students, have propelled marked changes in the work roles and responsibilities of many special education teachers. A key consideration is the extent to which the special education teachers' job, as it is currently designed, is capable of handling the new requirements of the job. (p. 11)

Gersten et al. (2001) provided a contemporary image of the work of a special educator in their discussion of role dissonance. Special educators may experience feelings of conflict between what they believe their work is and the "expectations held by others, such as administrators, other teachers, parents, and support service personnel" (p. 552). Adding to their conflict is the reality that they are responsible for multiple teaching and nonteaching duties that may include providing instructional support to their general education peers.

Zabel and Zabel (2002) also portrayed a change in the nature of the work of teaching students with disabilities. They suggested that, primarily due to inclusion efforts, special education teachers infrequently work alone or with "their 'own' students" (p. 73). In speaking to the consequences of these changes, the authors offered the following:

While few mourn the passing of the solitary teacher, at least that teacher knew the primary source of his or her professional reinforcement—students. As teachers spend more time in consultation, collaboration, and supervision and less time in direct interaction with students, potential reinforcement from that source may be less available. (p. 73)

Although, many special educators are attracted to the work for altruistic reasons, they may find the realities of the workplace conditions as being overwhelming. When competent and qualified teachers decide to leave the classrooms, those students remaining are certainly placed at risk.

Gersten et al. (2001) posed the following questions for consideration when thinking about the job design of teachers of students with disabilities, "Does the job, with all that it entails, make sense? Is it feasible? Is it one that well-trained, interested, special education professionals can manage in order to accomplish their major objective—enhancing students' academic, social, and vocational competence?" (p. 551).

Current Context of the Work of Teaching Students with EB/D

Teaching students with disabilities is an activity that requires a continuous response to contextual factors that are often out of the control of the teacher. Factors influencing the work of teaching students with disabilities include student and teacher demographics, the instructional setting in which the special education is provided, reform efforts, and policies. These factors significantly influence the work of teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Current Teacher and Student Demographics

The shortage of qualified special educators in the United States has serious implications for schools, teachers, and students (Ax, Conderman, & Stephens, 2001). Data from 1998-1999 indicate that approximately 10% of the 387,284 special education teachers employed to provide special education services to students with disabilities were not fully certified to teach their assigned population of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The situation for students with EB/D is of particular concern. In the 1999-2000 school year, 470,111 students were identified with emotional problems making emotional disorders the fourth most prevalent disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The likelihood that many of these identified students will be provided instruction by experienced and adequately prepared educators is diminished when one considers the findings of the National Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE) reported in the 23rd Annual Report to Congress. Specifically, in the 1999-2000 school year, 69,249 special education teacher positions remained unfilled of which 12,013, or 17%, were for teachers of students with EB/D (U. S. Department of Education, 2001). These findings must be interpreted with caution as they may represent multiple openings.

An even more alarming indication of the status of this profession was the finding that, for the 1999-2000 school year, 71% of teachers providing instruction to students with EB/D indicated not holding proper certification credentials to teach this population. Of the sample of all special education teachers, 59% indicated not being certified to teach students with disabilities (Westat, 2002c). Clark-Chiarelli and Singer (1995) noted similar findings in their analysis of a national sample of special educators. They reported that 43% of teachers of students with EB/D indicated not holding permanent regular certification to teach this population of students. These findings are cause for concern, as many students with EB/D require programs that contain positive behavioral interventions and supports as well as

individualized specialized instruction. Educators lacking training and knowledge of how to implement appropriate behavioral practices often opt for “more traditional and punitive practices which are seldom effective with students with EB/D” (Scheuermann & Johns, 2002, p. 57).

According to the 23rd Annual Report to Congress, between 1990 and 2000, the number of students identified with emotional or behavioral problems increased approximately 20% (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). During the 1999-2000 school year, 470,111 students ages 6-21, were identified as students with EB/D representing 8.3% of students served under IDEA. These findings fall short of those reported by the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) indicating that approximately 11% of our nation’s children have been identified as having emotional and/or behavioral disorders that impairs their abilities (Office of the Surgeon General as cited in CCBD, 2002). Kauffman’s (2001) concern that the national mean level of identification of students with EB/D has remained below 1% of the total population of children and youth who could benefit from specialized supports for more than two decades adds another dimension to the under identification of students.

Although the increase in the number of students identified with EB/D over a 20-year period seems significant, Forness and Kavale (2001) suggested that many students with EB/D are misidentified. That is, many students with EB/D are identified under the category of learning disabilities (LD) and consequently they are receiving specialized instruction focusing on learning deficits rather than a combination of academic, social, or behavioral skills. The authors suggested that a portion of the problem is related to the stigma associated with the EB/D label. Another possibility is the difficulty in retaining qualified special educators to provide services to these students. An experienced and qualified special educator could assist in the identification or misidentification of students with emotional and behavioral problems.

Policies Affecting Teaching

The unintended consequences of policies influence the work of teaching all students in public schools in the United States. Darling-Hammond (1997) addressed the policy implications for all teachers in the following:

Each hour of every day teachers must juggle the need to create a secure supportive environment for learning with the press for academic achievement, the need to attend to individual students and the demands of the group, and the challenges of pursuing multiple strands of work so that students at varying places in their learning move ahead

and none are left behind. These realities contravene the bureaucratic view of teaching as straightforward work aimed at a limited number of preset and simple goals and objectives, organized into a set sequence of activities and lessons used in more or less the same fashion for all students within and across classrooms, and ‘delivered’ to students ‘without regard for persons.’ (p.69-70)

While Darling-Hammond’s (1997) comments are directed toward all teachers, the work of teaching students with disabilities is influenced by changes in policies and reform efforts in both general education and special education.

The IDEA governs the provision of specialized and individualized instruction to students with disabilities and assures those students a free and appropriate education (§300.300(a) (i)). Reforms efforts, such the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), also contribute to the changing role and responsibilities for special education teachers.

IDEA. The provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and the use of research based practices for students identified with disabilities is the cornerstone of IDEA. Crockett and Kauffman (1999) refer to these three foundations as the “‘holy trinity’ of special education law” (p. ix). The most recent reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 represented the seventh for this landmark federal law. While the “holy trinity” has not changed, the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA put into motion the most significant changes in the law since its inception in 1975.

Many of the changes were directed at issues related to the discipline of students with disabilities and provisions in the IEP (§300.346 (a) (2) (i); §300.520(b) (1)). IDEA 1997 encouraged the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBS) for students with disabilities whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others (§ 300.346 (a) (2) (i)). For students with disabilities whose behaviors impede their ability to learn or the ability of other to learn, their IEP should contain behavioral goals and objectives and a behavioral intervention plan (BIP), which has been based upon a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) (§300.520(b)(i)(ii)). Students with EB/D are referred to administrators more often for disciplinary action because of behaviors associated with their disabilities when compared to other special education students (Etscheidt, 2002). Teachers of students with EB/D in many school districts are responsible for documenting behaviors, consulting with other professionals,

conducting the FBA, developing and writing the BIP, and amending the IEP. This requires experience and training to meet the educational needs of the involved students.

IDEA 1997 also required that each child with a disability is involved in and makes progress in the general education curriculum (§300.347(a) (1) (i)). The implications for both general and special education teachers are broad. For example, curriculum must be modified and adapted to meet the needs of individual students. In addition, many school districts have implemented co-teaching and collaborative models to provide instruction to special education students in the general education classroom. For teachers of students with EB/D, the mandate to make progress in the general education curriculum may require that they focus primarily on academic growth rather than addressing the emotional and behavioral concerns of their students (Forness & Kavale, 2001). These demands may increase feelings of frustration and stress for special educators (Gersten et al., 2001).

IDEA 1997 also emphasized that the general education classroom should be considered as the initial placement for students with disabilities (§300.500(b) (1) (2)). The inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classes is a controversial issue, particularly for students with EB/D (see Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Kauffman, Bantz, McCullough, 2002).

Overall, students with EB/D continue to receive the majority of their instruction in separate settings. According to the 23rd Annual Report to Congress 33.2% of students with EB/D received the majority of their specialized instruction outside of the regular classroom for greater than 60% of the day during the 1998-1999 school year (US Department of Education, 2001). These settings included special education classes, day treatment programs, or residential care. Nonetheless, students with EB/D are being provided with educational services in general education classrooms at a slightly increasing rate. Using data from the 1998-1999 school year, 25.5% of students with EB/D were served outside of the regular classroom less than 21% of the school day. This compares to data from the 1996 school year where 22.5% of this population were served at the same percentage rate (US Department of Education, 1999).

Scheuermann and Johns (2002) proposed that in many school districts administrators respond to demands for inclusion opportunities for students with EB/D by ignoring continuum placement options and unilaterally placing these students in general education classes. In addition, many of these placement decisions are made with little or no consideration given to the proper preparation of the general education and special education teachers or support for those

teachers and their students. These practices place unwieldy burdens on both general educators and special education teachers and can lead to program failure for students with EB/D.

Heflin and Bullock (1999) supported these assertions in their findings that for students with EB/D, inclusion is encouraged and implemented due to administrative pressures. The authors suggested that general and special teachers frequently feel that they have not been properly prepared to work collaboratively or to modify instruction to meet the individualized needs of their students. That is, many general and special educators indicated feeling that administrators, who were following the state or local policy mandates, had forced the inclusion of students with EB/D upon them. These teachers also indicated not having been adequately prepared for the challenges collaboration, student behavioral management concerns, or the modification of instruction. In addition, none of the educators believed that full inclusion was the best alternative for students with EB/D.

Other concerns were the added responsibilities for teachers of students with EB/D related to the increased delivery of services for those students in the general education classroom. For example, teachers of students with EB/D may provide the general education teachers with assistance in the areas of crisis intervention and behavior management (George et al., 1995). Weiss and Lloyd (2002) reported that many special educators found themselves working as paraprofessionals in the general education classroom. These added responsibilities and shifts in responsibilities contribute to stress and role conflict for the teachers of students with EB/D.

General education reform initiatives. The most recent general education reform initiative is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB Act) of 2001, Public Law 107-110. The Act is the most extensive reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since ESEA was enacted in 1965. A significant implication of this Act for special educators is the highly qualified teacher provision, which requires that new elementary and secondary teachers be fully licensed by the state, hold a bachelor's degree, and demonstrate competence in their subject area (§9101(23)(A)(i); §9101(23)(B)(i)(ii)). Teachers currently employed will be held to the same standards; however, they must demonstrate their competence through evaluations or meeting established tests (§9101(23)(C)(i)(ii)). Of particular concern are the implications for middle school special teachers who, if held to this definition, would have to demonstrate competence in all of the academic areas in which they teach.

Middle school special education teachers assigned to self-contained settings are often responsible for teaching multiple subject areas to their students. Carter and Scruggs (2001) provided a description of the teaching responsibilities of a middle school special educator assigned to a self-contained class comprised of 31 students in grade levels 6 through 8. The teaching responsibilities included providing instruction to students in three math groups, two reading groups, in addition to social studies, social skills, English and language skills, and science classes. While this teacher's situation may be an isolated case, following the guidelines of the NCLB Act would require that this teacher demonstrate competence in seven core subjects. The stress associated with such a task may influence decisions to leave special education classrooms.

In summary, changes in IDEA and educational reform efforts that focus on accountability have influenced the teaching of students with disabilities. Darling-Hammond (1997) suggested that a century of bureaucratic mandates has resulted in the creation of a trap that has ensnared both students and teachers. This trap requires them to respond to new educational goals; however, their responses are hindered by "a web of rules, regulations, structures, and directives" (p. 94). Kauffman (2002) in addressing the issue of school reform efforts and special education stated, "The particular problems of students who can learn the general education curriculum only with extreme difficulty, if at all, are not routinely taken into account" (p. xi). This statement would suggest that the work of teaching these students is also not considered in many policy-making decisions. To encourage commitment teachers, must feel that their work is considered important (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Historical Considerations of Teaching Students with EB/D

In order to understand the current context of an issue it is important to be knowledgeable of its past (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999). In referring to the history of the special education for students with EB/D, Kauffman (2001) cautioned:

The historical roots of special education for students with emotional or behavioral disorders are not easy to identify. Although these disorders . . . have long been recognized, it is only relatively recently that systematic special educational provisions for these students have been devised." (p. 63)

Politics, societal mores, humanitarian concerns and educational advances influenced the history of the provision of educational services to students with EB/D. Prior to the beginning of the 20th

century, in many cases, students with emotional or behavioral disorders were considered “insane” and educated, if at all, as “idiots” (p. 69). Societal attempts to provide services to care for these students ended with a mixture of positive and negative results. However, the beginning of the 20th century introduced new beginnings for this population of children.

Kauffman (2001) proposed that the first 50 years of the 20th century saw the establishment of intervention programs that were aimed at improving the lives of children and youth with EB/D. During the first 15 years of the 20th century the creation of the first teacher training program for special educators and the establishment of the U.S. Children’s Bureau by Congress that focused on the welfare of all children in the United States were seen. During the 1920s, programs focusing on the mental health of children were developed in many schools. Clinics were also established throughout the US that centered on the mental health of children. By the late 1940s, the majority of states required local school districts to provide special education to at least one category of students with disabilities. Unfortunately, students with EB/D were in the minority.

However, other significant developments in the field were noted during 1945-1960 (Kauffman, 2001). In the mid-1940s, schools were established in New York City to educate students with EB/D exclusively. By the mid-1950s, the need to identify students with EB/D in public schools was met by researchers. Teacher preparation programs that focused on educating identified students with emotional or behavioral problems were studied with high hopes for implementation. In 1963, federal funding (P.L. 88-164) was made available to support the preparation of personnel to work with students with EB/D.

The 1970s ushered in federally funded projects that focused on the long-term needs of students with EB/D. Kauffman (2001) identified these projects as focusing on: (a) conceptual models, (b) labeling, and (c) analysis of needs. In 1975, Congress passed P.L. 94-142 now known as IDEA, which mandated educational services to all identified students with disabilities. While this law certainly improved the chances that students with EB/D would be provided with specialized instruction that prepared them for independent living and employment, it became evident that many students’ needs were not being met. The late 1980s brought significant advances.

Congress passed P.L. 99-457 in 1986, which extended the provisions of IDEA to children with disabilities between ages 3 years and 5 years and included incentives for the

development of programs that focused on the early intervention for infants with disabilities and those at risk, from birth to the age of 3 years. Although, improvements for students with EB/D were noted, advocates for this population of students were not completely satisfied with outcomes. In 1987, two powerful organizations, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Mental Health Association joined forces to create the National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition (Kauffman, 2001). This coalition is still active and focuses on bringing representatives from various groups together who are involved in ensuring that students with EB/D are provided appropriate instruction. Representatives include parents, special educators, social workers, and school psychologists. The need to provide services to very young children with emotional or behavioral problems was also recognized in the mid 1980s. While these efforts improved educational outcomes for students with EB/D, the need for additional improvement were recognized and continued into the 1990s.

Early in the 1990s, the federal government initiated a national agenda for education that addressed the unsatisfactory outcomes for students with EB/D. Kauffman (2001) identified the seven primary objectives: (a) expand positive learning opportunities and results, (b) strengthen school and community capacity, (c) value and address diversity, (d) collaborate with families, (e) promote appropriate assessment, (f) provide ongoing skill development and support, and (g) create comprehensive and collaborative systems (p. 85). Kauffman suggested that the achievement of these objectives “remains to be seen” (p. 85), in part due to the provision of sufficient resources.

The provision of services to students with EB/D has indeed improved in the past century. Scheuermann and Johns (2002) suggested that these advancements include: (a) laws that are in place ensuring them a free appropriate public education; (b) due process protections when disciplinary actions are necessary; and (c) an extensive research base that provides educators with effective practices to assist with preventing and managing taxing behaviors. However, positive outcomes for this population of students depend upon the provision of effective instruction that includes special education and behavior management (Kauffman, 2001). According to the IDEA, all identified students with disabilities are guaranteed the provision of a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment that emphasizes specialized instruction by qualified personnel who have been “specially trained in the handicap in question”

(Martin, 1979, p. 63). However, the provision of qualified personnel to provide specialized instruction has long been a concern in the field of special education.

In 1979, Martin addressed the problem of providing qualified special education teachers to students with disabilities. He suggested that the difficulty rested in the failure of states to determine their individual personnel needs and “then secure and/or train” (p. 64) those teachers. Several years later, Jones (1981) referred to issues related to the supply, burn out, and retention of qualified special education teachers in his text on implementing P.L. 94-142. These reports suggested that the supply and retention of special education teachers has been a concern to stakeholders for many years. That is, the field of special education started out with problems in attracting and retaining special educators and has not had the opportunity to catch up (Zabel & Zabel, 2002). Other factors that contribute to difficulties in meeting the need for qualified special education teachers have been related to an increase in the number of students identified as qualifying for special education services that was addressed elsewhere in this paper. An additional problem suggested by Zabel and Zabel is a decrease in the numbers of students entering teacher preparation programs.

The combination of several factors, which includes an increase in the number of students identified with EB/D, fewer teachers being attracted to the field, and problems related to retention may help explain why the field has a shortage of teachers. However, other factors related to the specific work of teachers of students with EB/D and how IDEA reauthorizations and reform efforts have changed the work of these teachers are briefly reviewed in the following section.

In summary, a significant shortage of qualified teachers of students with EB/D exists in many of our nation’s schools. Difficulties in attracting committed teachers to the challenging work of teaching this population and decisions to leave the classroom have resulted in the placement of unqualified individuals in many classrooms. Additionally, conditions specific to the work of these teachers have been altered in reaction to policy changes and reform efforts. These changes have altered the nature of the work, shifted responsibilities, as well as adding additional tasks resulting in what may be perceived as an overwhelming job design.

Research Synthesis

The work of all special education teachers is noted as being more stressful than the work of their general education peers and as having higher rates of attrition (Billingsley, 1993). However, the work of teaching students with emotional or behavioral disorders has been determined as being more stressful than other special education teaching positions and can influence decisions to leave the classroom (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Special educators at the secondary level may also experience frustration and dissatisfaction with their work related to multiple expectations (Lobosco & Newman, 1992). In order to understand the work of teaching students with EB/D and to identify factors that can influence their decisions to either leave or stay in the classroom, a review of relevant literature is provided. First, studies that compare the work of teachers of students with EB/D to other special education teachers are presented. Next, studies that address the nature of the work of teaching students with disabilities at the secondary level are discussed. Finally, studies that investigated the work of teaching students with EB/D are provided. The research literature that addresses special educator teaching assignments is relatively limited. The nine studies presented in the following sections were selected as they addressed issues specific to the work of teaching students with EB/D and working conditions for special educators at the secondary level. These studies are followed by a discussion of three studies that utilized activity theory to frame inquiries into the work of teaching in public schools.

A Comparison of Teachers of Students with EB/D and Other Special Education Teachers

In the following section, studies that identified differences between general educators, special educators, and teachers of students with EB/D are analyzed. Two of the studies (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Singh & Billingsley, 1996) addressed factors that influence the intentions of special education teachers to leave the work of teaching students with disabilities. Comparisons are made between teachers of students with EB/D and other special education teaching assignments. Stempien and Loeb (2002) examined the differences in job satisfaction between general educators, special education teachers, and teachers of students with EB/D.

In a study conducted by Cross & Billingsley (1994) path analysis was used to examine the degree to which work-condition factors, teaching assignments, and personal characteristics influenced intentions to stay in or leave the special education classroom. Of particular interest was the teaching assignment, teachers of students with EB/D. The sample was selected in three

stages from the Virginia Department of Education personnel file. First, researchers conducted a random sampling of 10% (n=558) of all special educators in Virginia, which included 59 teachers of students with EB/D. In the second stage, 100 teachers of students with EB/D were randomly sampled to allow the researchers to determine if differences did exist between these teachers and other special educators. The third stage involved the selection of the final sample, which included 159 teachers of students with EB/D and 499 special educators in other teaching areas for a total of 658. Data were collected using a questionnaire that was mailed to the sample of teachers. Researchers reported an 82% response rate after two follow-up mailings. This final sample consisted of 542 special educators of which 130 were teachers of students with EB/D and the remaining 412 teachers taught students with other disabilities.

Data were analyzed using path analysis to determine specific factors that influenced the intent to stay in teaching. Path analysis is designed to control influential factors while allowing the analysis of other factors. Factors of interest to the researchers were “principal support, role problems, stress, job satisfaction, and commitment” (Cross & Billingsley, 1994, p. 414).

The researchers found that overall the strongest influence on intent to stay in teaching for both groups of teachers is job satisfaction. This research also suggests that the work of teaching students with EB/D is related to higher perceptions of stress and role problems. This finding would suggest that teachers experiencing less stress and fewer role problems are more satisfied with their work when compared to their colleagues. These findings support other literature that identified the significance of stress associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D (see Center & Steventon, 2002; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997) and that recognized the positive relationship between role problems and intentions to stay in the special education classroom (Gersten et al., 2001).

Stress is an important variable to consider in the role of teaching and has been described as “the particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman as cited in Wisniewski & Gargiulo, p. 327). Cross and Billingsley (1994) used a nine-item scale to determine the degrees that teachers experienced emotions such as tension, frustration, and nervousness that related to their work. Wisniewski and Gargiulo (1997) suggested that while many educators are able to manage the stress of the teaching profession others are overwhelmed by their inability “to structure the environment and moderate the

sources of stress” (p. 328). Teachers who experience stress daily and for extended periods may become emotionally exhausted. They may also experience a lack of personal accomplishment and feelings of professional failure. Of particular concern is the “tendency to depersonalize the recipient of services” (p. 328). Teachers experiencing high levels of stress may withdraw from their students and “develop callous attitudes towards their students, parents, and colleagues” (p. 328).

Cross and Billingsley (1994) identified role problems as a composite of role conflict and role ambiguity. Gersten et al. (2001) suggested that role problems or role dissonance are related to educators perceptions of their work and the actual requirements of the work and can contribute to increased levels of stress and ultimately to decisions to leave the special education classroom. The reduction of stress and clarification of role problems are components of the notion of job design. A job design that clearly defines role expectations and acknowledges the specific needs of EB/D teachers could reduce stress, diminish role problems, and reduce the likelihood of attrition, and could improve the quality of working conditions (Gersten et al., 2001).

In summary, Cross and Billingsley’s research determined that job satisfaction has a strong effect on commitment to work and is influenced by levels of stress and role problems, both of which are problems for teachers of students with EB/D. To that end, Singh and Billingsley (1996) sought to determine if the factors that influence job satisfaction, professional commitment, and the intention to stay in the work of teaching were the same for teachers with EB/D when compared to all special educators.

Singh & Billingsley (1996) conducted a study to determine if certain workplace factors that influence teachers of students with EB/D intent to stay, as well as job satisfaction, and professional commitment, differed from those of other special education teachers. The researchers utilized data obtained from the previously cited study. Results of this research indicated four significant factors as being common between the two teaching groups. These were (a) job satisfaction, (b) role problems, (c) teaching experience, and (d) stress.

The factors that were significantly different between the two groups, which influenced intent to stay, were role problems and stress. The effect of role-related problems was more significant with the special education teachers ($b = -.302$) than with the teachers of students with EB/D ($b = -.163$). Stress also had a negative effect on the decision to continue in special

education. The effect of stress on special education teachers was $b = -.068$ and $b = -.138$ for teachers of students with EB/D. This difference suggests that stress is a significant factor with teachers of students with EB/D and their decisions to stay in teaching.

The researchers also noted that principal support and professional commitment differed between the two groups as they related to intent to stay in teaching. The effect for principal support for the special education teachers intent to stay was significant at $b = .168$ while for teachers of students with EB/D it was less significant ($b = .068$). The effect of professional commitment, on the other hand, was more significant for teachers of students with EB/D ($b = .193$) but had no effect for the special education teachers. This implies that for this sample, professional commitment is stronger for teachers of students with EB/D than it is for other special educators while the importance of principal support is less significant.

Principal support significantly influenced job satisfaction for both groups. The effect for teachers of students with EB/D was $b = .198$ while for the special education teachers it was $b = .175$. A second identified factor that negatively influenced job satisfaction was found to be role-related problems. The total effect for special education teachers was $b = -.224$ while the teachers of students with EB/D was $b = -.101$. The significant difference of $b = -.123$ indicates that role-related problems among special education teachers could have a greater impact on job satisfaction than with teachers of students with EB/D among this sample. This finding suggests that, for this sample, the roles for teachers of students with EB/D are not as significant a problem compared to other special educators. However, role problems are an issue with both groups.

The issue of role related problems with teachers of students with EB/D is surprising, as one would presume, given the complexities of the job such as student characteristics, that the effect of role problems would be significant. Yet, this group reported having fewer problems related to their roles when compared to other special education teachers. The researchers approached role problems by combining role ambiguity and conflict. Respondents were asked to respond to statements such as, "I know exactly what is expected of me" to address role ambiguity and "I receive incompatible requests from two or more people" (Singh & Billingsley, 1996, Instrumentation Section, para. 6). These findings could relate to the self-contained classroom placement for a number of EB/D teachers and isolation that many of these teachers

experience (Nichols & Sosnowksy, 2002). That is, when working in relative isolation these teachers do not have opportunities to receive requests form multiple parties.

Perhaps teachers of students with EB/D become accustomed to working in isolation yet rely upon principals to support them in times of need. This could explain the finding in this study related to principal support. The support of a principal appeared to be more significant to other special educators than to the teachers of students with EB/D. This suggests that the role of the principal does not as strongly influence their decisions to stay in teaching. However, the role of principal support in job satisfaction is important for both groups.

These studies above represent the perspectives of K-12 special educators and teachers of students with EB/D in Virginia and their teaching intentions. The researchers were able to demonstrate the important relationship between teaching assignment, stress, role problems, job satisfaction, and intent to stay or leave. Stress and role problems are factors for both groups. The stress of working with students with EB/D appears to have negative implications on job satisfaction and, therefore, on decisions to leave the work of teaching these students. However, role-related problems appeared not to be as significant for teachers of students with EB/D when compared to other special educators.

Satisfaction with the work of teaching students with disabilities is important for the retention of qualified and committed professionals. In the following study, a comparison of job satisfaction between general educators and special education teachers is provided.

Job Satisfaction of General Educators and Special Educators

Stempien and Loeb (2002) sought to determine whether general education teachers or special education teachers were least satisfied with their work. To that end, they compared three categories of teachers to evaluate job satisfaction. The participants were subsequently divided into three groups. Group 1 consisted of 60 general education teachers who had no students with disabilities in their classrooms. Group 2 consisted of 10 teachers of students with EB/D in special education classrooms working in general education schools and 26 teachers who taught students placed in separate special education schools. Students in this group had been diagnosed with EB/D as well as autistic or autistic-like symptoms. Group 3 comprised 20 teachers of students with less severe disabilities from both general education and special education. The sample was drawn from eight suburban schools located close to Detroit, Michigan, six of which were considered general education schools. The two remaining schools were considered special

day schools and provided services exclusively to students with disabilities. All of the participants were full-time certified teachers.

Researchers collected data through the distribution of a five-page survey to individual schools. The surveys consisted of a job satisfaction index and a life satisfaction index. Two open-ended questions were also included, which addressed what the teachers would like to change about their job and what they liked about their work. Data were collected within 2 weeks.

Results suggested that the classroom assignment does indeed influence job satisfaction. Teachers in general education classrooms (Group 1) reported greater job satisfaction when compared to their special education peers. Teachers of special education students only in Group 3 reported less job satisfaction and Group 2 reported even less job satisfaction. An interesting finding was that teachers of students with disabilities within general education schools were as satisfied with their work as their colleagues assigned to the special education school settings. This is in contrast to the results reported by Clark-Chiarelli and Singer (1995) where teachers of students with EB/D in separate settings have lower levels of job satisfaction. Although special education teachers rate themselves lower on job satisfaction, they did not rate themselves lower in life satisfaction.

Special education teachers are also more frustrated with their work. Frustration related to the work is important to address, as it was strongly associated with stress and job satisfaction. This frustration could be related to the finding that all teachers in this study reportedly would like to reduce (a) the size of their student caseloads, (b) the amount of paperwork, and (c) the amount of time spent planning.

Other findings of note relate to what each teacher liked about his or her job. All three groups reported enjoying working with the students, observing the progress of their students, and opportunities to interact with colleagues. The teachers of students with EB/D reported enjoying working with their students more than their special education and general education peers. The opportunities to interact with colleagues were also important to the teachers of students with EB/D. An additional finding was that this group did not enjoy the creativity of their work or the challenge of the work when compared to their colleagues.

These findings have several implications. First, teachers of students with EB/D, in this sample, are generally dissatisfied and frustrated with their work. Feelings of frustration and

dissatisfaction may reflect role related problems such as role overload or dissonance. Secondly, the isolation of the work of a special educator is a recurring theme that is addressed in other studies on the work of teaching students with disabilities (see McManus & Kauffman, 1991, Pullis, 1992; George et al., 1995). Therefore, the need to foster collegial relationships is important. An additional concern is the finding that teachers of students with EB/D enjoy working with their students yet do not enjoy the challenge or the creativity of their work. The authors suggested that this finding might be related to the isolation of the work. That is, opportunities for professional development and involvement in decision-making processes may encourage enthusiasm among teachers of students with EB/D.

Summary

The three studies reviewed above provide perspectives from general educators, special educators, and teachers of students with EB/D employed in schools districts located in Virginia and Michigan.

These studies support the supposition that the work of teaching students with disabilities contributes to higher levels of stress and job dissatisfaction when compared to general educators. Teachers who work with students with EB/D are represented as having higher levels of stress and job dissatisfaction, experiencing role problems, as well as feelings of frustration. While not all of the sources of stress were identified in the studies, factors identified earlier in this chapter address possible sources of stress such as the behavior associated with emotional or behavioral disorders.

Several of the stress factors identified could be related to the way in which the work of teaching students with EB/D is organized or designed such as the isolation of the work, student caseloads, time to plan, and complete paperwork. A properly designed job could address these factors and reduce stress that, in turn, could improve the retention of special educators. An interesting finding was that role related problems were not as significant for teachers of students with EB/D when compared to other special educators. This finding may relate to the period in which the data in those studies were collected (Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). These studies were conducted prior to the implementations of the IDEA 1997 reauthorization and standards based assessment tests, policies that have influenced the work of teaching students with disabilities (see Stodden, Galloway, & Stodden, 2003).

In the following section, studies that address the work of teaching students with disabilities at the secondary level are presented. Grades included under the term *secondary level* education tended to differ across school districts and can include grades 6 through 12.

The Work of Teaching Students with Disabilities at the Secondary Level

Special educators at the secondary level face particular challenges in providing a specialized and individualized education to their students. These responsibilities can include choosing effective instructional methods that will meet the varied needs of their students, addressing their students' functional living and social skill needs, and attending to multiple administrative tasks associated with their work. All of these factors contribute to new responsibilities and pressures for secondary level special educators.

Multiple Roles & Responsibilities

Conderman and Katsiyannis (2002), in addressing concerns directed at the instruction that students with disabilities received at the secondary level, provided information on the roles and responsibilities of 132 special educators teaching grades 7 through 12 in Wisconsin. Of the 199 special educators, 45 were identified as holding endorsements to teach students with EB/D. Using a forced choice survey teachers provided perceptions of the time that they spent on various roles and responsibilities associated with working with students with disabilities. Researchers reported a 66% return rate after a second mailing.

Teachers in this study reported having multiple teaching roles. While less than half (42%) indicated that their time was spent in a variety of roles, 50% of that group indicated that they spent time in consultation with general educators. Almost 40% noted spending time co-teaching in general education. Other roles included (a) coordinating work experiences, (b) providing vocational education, and (c) teaching in general education. One third indicated spending greater than 50% of their time teaching in self-contained classrooms. One fourth noted that they provided instruction to students in resource rooms for greater than 50% of their teaching time.

Other responsibilities associated with their work noted by 80% of the teachers were the development of IEPs, scheduling and attending IEP meetings, writing lesson plans, and assessing students. However, more than half (52%) indicated that these tasks took up 25% or less of their time. These roles and responsibilities may not greatly differ from that of their

elementary colleagues until the time spent coordinating work experiences, teaching vocational courses, or addressing transition services are considered.

Over half of the special educators (60%) indicated responsibility for coordinating work experiences or teaching vocational education courses. The primary responsibility for coordinating work experiences reportedly fell to 35% of the special educators with only 17% solely responsible for teaching vocational education courses. Almost half (45%) identified themselves as being responsible for coordinating transition services. The provision of transition services consists of multiple tasks such as initiating and maintaining community contacts as well as the related paperwork. Transition services are particularly important to students with EB/D, as the transfer from middle school to high school can be extremely difficult due to the need to adapt to a new environment and an increased focus on academics (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Other teaching responsibilities noted by the authors, but not discussed at length, were the remediation of basic skills, teaching learning strategies, the promotion of social and emotional growth, supporting students in their content area classes, and teaching functional living skills.

What develops from this study is a picture of a job with unique demands that may contribute to high levels of stress, frustration, or role problems. As a limitation of this study, Conderman and Katsiyannis (2002) suggested that the answers provided “reflect the teachers’ perceptions of their reality. Therefore, some of these findings must be viewed with caution” (p. 175). This suggests that the results may be somewhat exaggerated. However, the authors also posed the following question, “How long can we keep giving more responsibilities to teachers (without removing any) and still maintain quality teachers and programs” (p. 175). In discussing the implications of their study, the authors speak to the notion of secondary general educators and special educators having a “shared role” (p. 176) in the education of students with disabilities. The authors suggest that the teachers may not be aware of or understand this role due to inadequate preservice training. An additional proposition was that administrators were not explaining the specifics of the job to teachers assuming those roles. This shared role is the practice of co-teaching that is implemented in many districts to address increased calls for inclusion programs (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

Roles of Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is a teaching model that has been developed to meet the needs of diverse learners assigned to a single classroom setting. Mastropieri and Scruggs (2000) suggested that,

although many schools have initiated specific co-teaching models, research has not supported the proliferation of the practice. In this second study, Weiss and Lloyd (2002) examined the roles and instructional actions of middle and high school special educators who worked in co-teaching situations in the Mid-Atlantic region. Researchers conducted interviews and observations of six special education teachers as they worked in co-taught settings such as general education and special education classrooms.

While co-teaching, special educators in this study assumed four different roles, (a) the noninstructional role of providing support to students, (b) teaching the same content to students in a separate classroom, (c) teaching a portion of the content in the same classroom, and (d) team teaching or providing instruction interchangeably. While in the special education classroom the special education teacher assumed all of the responsibilities associated with providing students with disabilities specialized and individualized instruction, assessment, and feedback.

The roles associated with co-teaching required that many of the special educators regularly work with multiple general educators. One teacher at the high school level reported working with seven different teachers, preparing lessons alone, and only meeting with teachers briefly and casually before classes began. A teacher at the middle school taught grammar and English in the co-taught classroom and then taught English to students with disabilities in a special education classroom. Several special educators in this study were unable to provide the individualized instruction to students with disabilities while in the co-taught classrooms and attempted to assist students when in the special education classroom. This resulted in students studying for tests or completing assignments for other classes while in the special education classroom.

The diversified roles of many special educators in co-taught settings may contribute to feelings of frustration and increased levels of stress. The authors proposed an additional consequence that may result from the shift in roles: Are qualified special educators provided with opportunities to utilize their specialized skills? In this study, “many of the teachers acted as support personnel in the general education classroom. Teachers with master’s degrees were doing the work of paraprofessionals. Does this lead to overall job satisfaction or encourage teachers to get specialized additional training? We think not” (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002, p. 68).

Qualified special educators performing the work of paraprofessionals may significantly decrease job satisfaction and contribute to frustration related to their role.

Other implications of this study are directed at outcomes for students with disabilities. Weiss and Lloyd (2002) suggested that “overall, co-teaching, as reported in interviews with teachers and an administrator, was implemented to get students with disabilities into the general education curriculum without much thought of how or how well” (p. 68). These findings correspond to those of Heflin and Bullock (1999).

Summary

These studies reflect the work of teaching students with disabilities at the secondary level in two diverse geographic areas. These studies indicate that teachers of students with disabilities working at this level fulfill multiple roles and fulfill numerous responsibilities (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Concerns for role problems such as role overload and role dissonance are warranted for this group of teachers particularly in light of the findings of the previous studies. Role problems can increase feelings of stress and frustration and can lead to decisions to leave the classroom. It is difficult to ascertain if middle school special educators have higher attrition rates than those teaching at other levels (P. Gillespie, personal communication, January 29, 2002). However, the supposition could be made that the increasing responsibilities and multiple roles for teachers of students with disabilities at the middle school level could indeed influence decisions to leave. While these studies did not address teachers of students with EB/D these findings could be transferred to their work.

In the following section, studies that examined the work of teaching students with EB/D exclusively will be reported and analyzed. The research specific to this group is fairly limited. The studies reviewed in the following section address teacher intentions, working conditions, and factors related to the stress of working with students with EB/D.

Research Specific to Teachers of Students with EB/D

Stress associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D has been noted as influencing decisions to leave the classroom. Inadequate working conditions can contribute to higher levels of stress, and dissatisfaction with the work thus can influence career decisions. Studies that identified stress factors and working conditions related to the work of teaching students with EB/D are synthesized in this section (George et al, 1995; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nelson, Maculan, Roberts, & Ohlund, 2001; Pullis, 1992).

Stress Factors Associated with the Work

Teachers working with students with EB/D report greater levels of stress (Singh & Billingsley, 1996). The following studies focused on the stress of working with students with EB/D from the perspectives of teachers of students with EB/D.

In this long-term quantitative study, Pullis (1991) surveyed 244 classroom teachers of students with EB/D across 9 states over a 5-year period with the intent to gather data related to the stress of working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders. Data were collected through the completion of a questionnaire that was distributed in three different manners. First, attendees at workshops conducted by the author were asked to complete the questionnaire. A second method of data collection included asking students attending graduate special education classes taught by colleagues of the author to participate in the study, and finally, teachers attending conferences focusing on teaching students with EB/D were asked to participate. The author was interested in four areas, (a) specific stressors, (b) effects or symptoms of stress, (c) strategies to deal with stress, and (d) teachers' perspectives on changes in their settings to reduce stress. Data were collected using a two-part survey designed by the author.

Teachers identified and rated primary sources of stress. The following four factors were found to be most stressful, (a) school/settings, (b) career issues, (c) workload issues, and (d) pupil characteristics. School/setting factors included such as (a) inadequate discipline policies, (b) attitudes and behavior of administrators, (c) evaluation by administrators/supervisors, and (d) attitudes of other teachers/professionals. Career issues included poor career opportunities, inadequate salary, and low professional status. Stress addressed concerns related to workload issues and included excessive meetings, accountability standards, and high paperwork loads. The fourth factor, pupil characteristics, included loud, noisy students, impolite or rude behavior, and poor motivation. Teachers reported effects of stress such as feelings of exhaustion, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed. The carryover of school stress to outside life was also noted as an area of concern.

Teachers were asked to report on how they coped with the stress of their work. The majority of teachers practiced stress management techniques in the workplace with 96% reportedly managing their stress by discussing their problems with their colleagues and organizing time and setting priorities (86%). Teachers were also asked to suggest workplace strategies that they would like to see provided. The most frequently cited strategy was the

opportunity for collaboration with colleagues. Teachers also desired more professional development opportunities, more verbal praise, reinforcement, and respect for their work.

The results of this study suggest that teachers of students with EB/D find working conditions as being more stressful than providing instruction to their students. However, inadequate discipline policies were identified as a significant source of stress for these teachers. This could suggest that greater frustration is associated with inadequate levels of support for their work than with interactions with their students. Teachers also indicated the desire to have more opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues and professional development. Pullis (1992) noted that the most significant factor reported was the perception that colleagues did not understand, value, or respect their work.

In a more recent study, Nelson et al. (2001) were also interested in determining the specific factors of working with students with EB/D that contributed to stress. Data were collected from a national sample of 415 teachers of students with EB/D who were members of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) a division of the Council for Exceptional Children. The authors selected three separate inventories that were mailed to the sample pool. The inventories addressed (a) demographic data, (b) working conditions, and (c) perceived ability to work with students with EB/D.

The authors were interested in specific working conditions factors that had been identified as producing stress in teachers of students with EB/D. These included (a) teacher-principal relationship, (b) capacity to contribute to decisions, and (c) working relationships with colleagues. Teachers in this sample indicated being more likely to contribute to decisions than to having strong relationships with their principal and colleagues.

Many of the behaviors associated with students with EB/D have been identified as sources of stress for teachers. Nelson et al. (2001) categorized the behaviors as (a) internalizing, (b) externalizing, and (c) thought disordered. Teachers reported having greater ability to work with students who exhibit internalizing behaviors or those students who avoid interacting with others than those who are thought disordered or who externalize behaviors.

Overall, results of this study reflect that the teachers had positive attitudes toward their working conditions. Those teachers who perceived themselves as having (a) a strong relationship with their principal, (b) the ability to contribute to decisions that affect their work,

(c) satisfactory working relationships with their colleagues, and (d) the capability to work with students who externalize behaviors were more likely to report lower levels of stress.

These two studies identified sources of stress for teachers of students with EB/D. One finding was contradictory. The teachers in the earlier study (Pullis, 1992) indicated that the behaviors and attitudes of the administrators were causes of stress. The later study (Nelson et al. 2001) did not support this finding. This disparity could be related to several factors. First, Pullis' study was a long-term examination of the sources of stress for this population of teachers. Nelson et al.'s study was a mail survey that represented a specific place in time. Secondly, the samples were disparate. Nelson et al. surveyed teachers of students with EB/D who were members of the CCBD, which may not accurately represent a majority of this population of teachers. Finally, Nelson et al. utilized a survey that had specific identified factors that contributed to stress associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D. Pullis's survey allowed teachers to select factors that contributed to the stress of working with this population of students.

The behaviors associated with students identified with EB/D were identified as significant areas of stress to teachers in both studies and supports earlier discussions on this topic. Additionally, working conditions were cited as sources of stress and were related to job design. These included overwhelming paperwork, excessive meetings, and the isolation of the work. Many teachers of students with EB/D work in self-contained settings with limited opportunities for interaction with colleagues. Positive working conditions may reduce levels of stress for teachers of students with EB/D and therefore, increase job satisfaction. The following study considers the working conditions specific to the work of teaching students with EB/D.

Working Conditions

McManus & Kauffman (1991) were interested in the working conditions of teachers of students with EB/D. They were particularly interested in identifying specific classroom conditions that could affect teaching, teachers' perceptions of support, and teachers' job satisfaction. Researchers used the CCBD database to select their sample. Surveys were mailed to 701 teachers of students with EB/D from across the United States. Of the 402 who returned the questionnaire, 259 were teaching in self-contained classes, 120 were teaching in resource classes, and 23 were considered itinerant teachers. A 66% response rate was reported by the authors.

The results of this study indicate that the majority of teachers were moderately satisfied with almost all working conditions. This finding seems surprising given the teaching conditions reported by the teachers. Teachers of self-contained classes in particular appeared to teach under less than desirable conditions. This group (45%) reported having less than 30 minutes per day for planning and preparation yet they planned for more students than their peers did. Their teaching time was interrupted frequently for meetings with only 49% reporting their classes were not typically interrupted. Self-contained teachers also reported being physically attacked about six times per year, which was twice the number of their resource peers.

Teachers were also generally satisfied with levels of support. Resource teachers and teachers working in self-contained settings were very satisfied with the support they received from their special education colleagues. Both groups of teachers relied upon their special education colleagues for help or consultation more frequently than they relied upon their principals or special education administrator/supervisor. An interesting finding was that teachers in self-contained settings turned to principals and special education administrators/supervisors more frequently than resource teachers did. This finding could relate to the isolation of the work or behaviors of their students. In addition, resource teachers relied on relationships with general education teachers more than teachers in self-contained settings did. Again, this could relate to their proximity to colleagues. However, support from parents was rated as being unsatisfactory.

Findings also correspond to previous studies where the isolation of the work, paperwork responsibilities, and planning times were problematic. The authors addressed concerns for the isolation of the work of teaching students with EB/D, “Most special educators turn to other special education teachers more than to any other professional personnel, but one-third...seek help from a special education colleague no more often than monthly if at all” (McManus & Kauffman, 1991, p. 257).

This study presents a picture of teachers who work under stressful conditions yet seem satisfied and somewhat enthusiastic about their work. The teachers also reported enjoying their work while maintaining a considerable level of passion. This finding is surprising when more than two-thirds considered quitting teaching at least once during the year. Additionally, nearly 50% had considered transferring to a general education position. This finding aligns with that of Singer’s (1993) study that found that the attrition rates for teachers of students with EB/D were higher than for other special education teachers. However, McManus and Kauffman’s (1991)

findings may not adequately represent the majority of teachers of students with EB/D given that the sample pool was the CCBD database.

Special educators are also more likely to transfer to a general education teaching position than a general educator is to transfer to special education (Lauritzen & Friedman, 1991). In the following study, the researchers were interested in factors that influenced teachers of students with EB/D intentions to leave the special education classroom.

This study examined factors that influenced the intentions of teachers of students with EB/D to either leave or stay in their teaching positions. More specifically, the researchers were interested in understanding work conditions that attributed to dissatisfaction, lowered commitment, and a desire to leave the classroom. George and associates (1995) emphasized the importance of noting that this study did not focus on attrition but rather “stated intent” (p. 228). Therefore, the results indicate *intention* to leave and not actual commitment decisions.

The sample comprised 96 teachers of students with EB/D from 53 school districts in 23 states working in grades K-12. Data were collected via mail survey to 228 teachers of students with EB/D randomly selected from lists provided by directors of special education to the researchers. Researchers reported an 81% return rate. The survey focused on (a) teachers’ background and experience, (b) programmatic and instructional practices, and (c) current working conditions. Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted to allow teachers opportunities to expand upon their earlier written responses.

Teachers who participated in the study provided services to students with disabilities in resource rooms (22%), self-contained settings classrooms (69%), and segregated special schools (9%). The majority of teachers taught at the elementary level (42%), 34% at the secondary level, and 20% were at the high school level. A significant percentage (74%) of the sample was certified to teach students with EB/D.

Fifty-one of the participants reported intentions of staying and 35 indicated intentions of leaving. A significant number of those intending to leave (61%) reported they were interested in obtaining other work within the school organization, such as counselors, administrators, general educators, or other special education teaching positions, but not teaching students with EB/D. In addition, 10% of the sample indicated they were unsure of their plans.

Workplace factors significantly influenced their intentions. The location of the work was a concern as 61% of the elementary teachers and 44% of those teaching in self-contained

settings indicated plans to leave the classroom. Those teaching in special schools indicated fewer intentions of leaving (11%). Student characteristics associated with EB/D also influenced intentions to leave. Forty-three percent of those teachers indicated intentions to leave and 22% of those staying specified that student attitudes interfered with the successful implementation of educational programs.

Intentions to stay were also influenced by various sources of support. Sources of support were identified as collegial support provided by paraprofessionals, other special education teachers, and general educators. The support from paraprofessionals seemed to be most important to both groups of teachers. In addition, both groups rated support from general educators as being somewhat adequate. The support of a supervisor also influenced decisions to stay in the classroom, however, was not as significant as the support of special education colleagues or paraprofessionals.

An interesting finding was that of parental support. George et al. (1995) reported that a strong relationship existed between teachers of students with EB/D who intended to stay and the parental support. This corresponds with similar findings of McManus and Kauffman (1991). These findings indicate that teachers of students with EB/D desire supportive relationships with parents of their students.

An important issue that influenced intentions was the paperwork responsibilities associated with their work. Twenty-six percent of the teachers interviewed indicated that the completion of required paperwork was the most difficult feature of their job. Time to complete paperwork was rated inadequate by 49% of all teachers in this study.

Overall, problems associated with working conditions specific to the work of teaching students with EB/D appears to increase intentions of leaving. George et al. (1995) noted the need to improve “weakness at the programmatic and systemic level” (p. 234), which may in turn decrease intentions to leave the classroom. Specific weaknesses include the lack of collegial and supervisory support, the isolation of the work, and the overwhelming paperwork associated with special education.

Summary

These four studies addressed issues related to the work of teaching students with EB/D and represented a national perspective of those teachers. The stress of working with this population of students appears significant and may be attributed to multiple factors. These

include less than desirable working conditions, isolation of the work, a lack of administrative, collegial, and parental support, and various role-related problems. An interesting finding was that, overall, it was not working with the students that caused feelings of stress and frustration, but the accumulation of adverse working conditions. This speaks to the notion that teachers come to work for altruistic reasons, that is the desire to work with students with disabilities; however, either role problems or unfavorable working conditions deter decisions to remain in classrooms teaching students with EB/D.

Synthesis of Research Special Education Teacher Studies

The studies reviewed in the previous sections focused on various factors associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D. In the following section, the information derived from these studies is synthesized and discussed. Eight particularly pressing issues were identified and are presented in Figure 1.

Working in Isolation

Opportunities for collaboration among colleagues, particularly for novice teachers, are important to foster acceptance of teaching standards set by individual schools and to improve opportunities for student learning (Rosenholtz, 1989). The significant isolation of the work was noted in the majority of the studies reviewed. Many teachers of students with EB/D teach in self-contained settings and have infrequent opportunities to interact with their colleagues (George et al., 1995; McManus & Kauffman, 1991, Pullis, 1992). Other teachers find themselves providing services to students in settings where they are isolated from special education colleagues (George et al., 1995). Teachers at the middle school levels, although spending time in classrooms with colleagues, spend time alone planning and have limited opportunities to collaborate with their peers (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). The magnitude of the isolation of the work is reflected in the following description: “Isolation is not just a matter of being alone. . . . It is the feeling of not being supported, of being overworked and underappreciated, and of being alone, having problems, needing help and having nowhere to turn” (as cited by Cunningham, in George et al., 1995, p. 234). Teachers of students with EB/D desire support from multiple sources including administrators, colleagues, and parents.

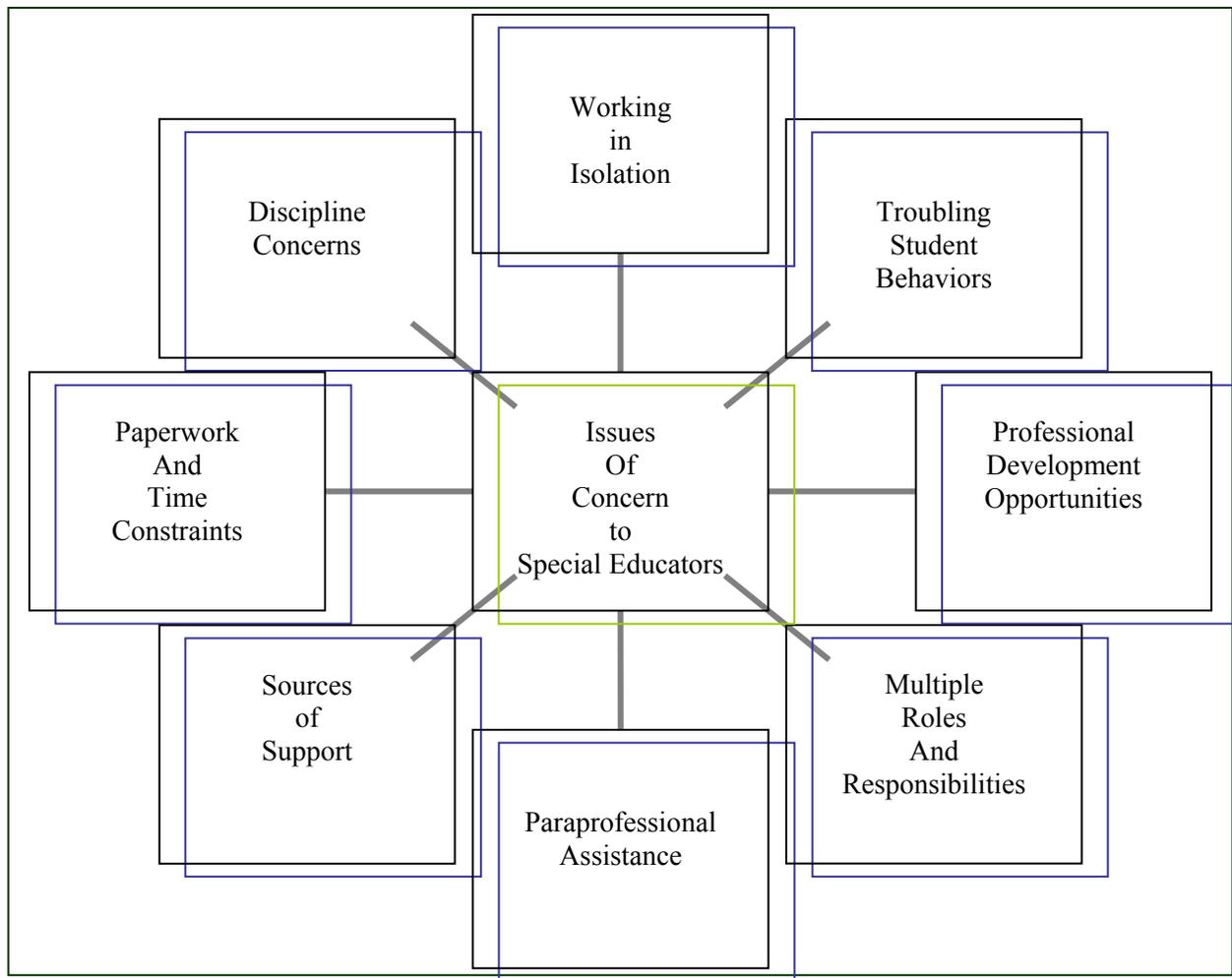


Figure 1. Issues of concern to special education teachers.

Sources of Support

The need to support special educators as they go about their work is often noted in the special education teacher retention literature (see Billingsley, 2002). The need for administrative supports is the more frequently requested type of support (Ax, Conderman, & Stephens, 2001).

However, the results of these studies suggest that when teachers of students with EB/D do seek support, they do so more often from their special education colleagues than from their administrators (Nelson et al, 2001; Stempien & Loeb, 2001). A difference was noted between teachers working in self-contained settings and those working in resource settings. That is, self-contained teachers were more inclined to consult with principals and special education administrators than with their special education peers in resource rooms (McManus & Kauffman, 1991). George et al. (1995) noted that teachers of students with EB/D indicated receiving low levels of support from their general education colleagues.

An additional source of support that appears to be important to teachers of students with EB/D is that of the students' parents (George et al., 1995; Pullis, 1992). Rosenholtz (1989) proposed that in order for teachers to feel committed to their work, they must feel that parents recognize their efforts. Teachers of students with EB/D must have the support of their students' parents if they there are to accomplish the arduous task of addressing the academic needs and behavioral challenges of their students (Kauffman, 2001).

Troubling Student Characteristics

The characteristics exhibited by students with emotional and behavioral disorders often cause teachers feelings of anxiety and frustration (Abrams & Segal, 1998). These reactions may result from the spectrum of behaviors that these students may exhibit. These behaviors can include the internalization of feelings when students become quiet and withdrawn. Other students may externalize their feelings and become violent or angry (Quinn, Osher, Warger, Hanley, Bader, & Hoffman., 2000). These types of behaviors have earned this population of students a reputation as being "extremely difficult-to-manage" (McManus & Kauffman, 1991, p. 258). Several of the studies indicted the significance of student characteristics as a cause of stress. These are addressed in the following section.

Pupil characteristics were found to be the fourth most significant source of stress for the teachers in the study conducted by Pullis (1992), however, this factor solicited a large number of comments from the participants who cited such concerns as "violent behavior, suicide, depression" (p. 195). The author had expected that this area would have been rated as being more stressful to teachers. Pullis suggested that teacher training programs had adequately prepared teachers for the challenging behaviors of these students.

Teachers in the study conducted by George and associates (1995) classified 20% of the behavior of their students as internalizing in nature with the larger portion (80%) as externalizing. Those teachers with intentions to leave served fewer students with externalizing behaviors but also indicated having lower tolerance for the associated behaviors. The authors suggested that teachers of students with EB/D value relationships with their students and may become frustrated by an inability to manage those relationships successfully, which may influence intentions to leave. Stempien and Loeb (2002) articulated a similar conclusion in their finding that 64% of the teachers of students with EB/D enjoyed working with their students compared to 40% of their colleagues who taught general and special education students,

however, were frustrated by the lack of student progress. Additionally, teachers who indicated feeling adequately prepared to address the behaviors of their students are less susceptible to stress associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D (Nelson et al., 2001).

Disciplining Students with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders

Advocates for students with emotional problems suggested that, “for students with E/BD discipline is an ever-present concern” (Scheuermann & Johns, 2002, p. 65). Previous research suggests that discipline issues are related to attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). Given these factors, one might assume that discipline issues would be of primary concern for teachers in the reviewed studies. However, in only one study (Pullis, 1992) were revealed discipline issues as a primary source of stress and this finding was imbedded within *school/setting factors*. The author did not speak to the implication of this finding except perhaps for this cursory statement, “Teachers of the behaviorally disordered need to learn how to balance their advocacy efforts for their students and programs with the reality that they typically constitute a very small part of the student body and responsibilities of administrators” (p. 200). The lack of finding discipline as a significant factor could be related to the focus of the reviewed studies, the wording of the surveys, and sample selection.

A finding that was recurrent in the studies was that of excessive paperwork and the lack of planning time. These findings are addressed in the following section.

Excessive Paperwork and Time Constraints

In a national study of special educators, (*Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers*, SPeNSE, 2002) 76% of those who intended to leave their jobs teaching students disabilities indicated that paperwork significantly interfered with their ability to teach. In a separate report, (*Paperwork in Special Education*, 2002) special educators indicated that they spent an average of 5 hours per week completing paperwork related to their work and that paperwork interfered with their ability to teach. The report, *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners: An Action Agenda to Achieve Quality Conditions for Teachings and Learning* (Council for Exceptional Children, 2000) identified overwhelming paperwork as the second major issue contributing to the attrition of special educators. In the same report, lack of adequate planning time was also cited as a critical concern. The inability to complete paperwork within allotted planning times can lead to feelings of frustration and stress related to the inability to meet individualize student needs (Nicols & Sosnowsky, 2002). Issues of paperwork and

planning time constraints were a common theme in several of the studies reviewed for this paper.

Over half of the teachers in McManus and Kauffman's (1991) study reported that they spent more than 3 hours per week on planning and paperwork related to their work. Workload issues related to paperwork burdens were a significant source of stress in Pullis's (1992) study on occupational stress. Almost half (49%) of the teachers in the work conducted by George and associates (1995) reported inadequate time to complete the paperwork related to their work. In addition, 26% indicated that the most difficult aspect of their work was finding time to complete the paperwork. Teachers who indicated having adequate time to complete paperwork were least likely to indicate intentions to leave. Special educators in Stempien and Loeb (2002) study reported that they would like to decrease the amount of time spent completing paperwork and add more planning time to their jobs. It is apparent from these studies that paperwork and time constraints are a primary concern to teachers of students with EB/D. Other topics related to the work of teachers students with EB/D and other disabilities were not consistent across studies and are provided in the following section.

Additional Issues Related to the Nature of the Work

Other issues related to the nature of the work were identified and included professional development opportunities, lack of assistance from paraprofessionals, as well as multiple roles and responsibilities.

Opportunities to learn on the job. Opportunities to learn on the job are important to special education teachers (Gersten et al., 2001). Other researchers suggested that professional development opportunities for teachers of students with EB/D and their colleagues that are specific to students with emotional problems could foster collegiality and encourage creativity and enthusiasm toward their work (Pullis, 1992; Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

Paraprofessional assistance. Adequate assistance from paraprofessionals was indicated as a working condition that concerned teachers of students with EB/D (McManus & Kauffman, 1991). More than half of the resource teachers in this study indicated that they received no support from a paraprofessional. Of those teachers who did receive assistance, a full-time aide was assigned to 46% while 35% had part-time assistants. Many teachers in self-contained settings are assigned the assistance of a paraprofessional. Generally, paraprofessionals assist teachers with meeting the academic and social needs of the students (Guinn et al., 2000).

However, for teachers who are isolated from special education colleagues, the paraprofessional becomes an important source of support (George et al., 1995).

Multiple roles and responsibilities. Although the studies of Conderman and Katsiyannis (2002) and Weiss and Lloyd (2001) did not specifically address the work of teaching students with EB/D, they represented the work of teaching students with disabilities in contemporary secondary school settings. Special educators are finding their teaching roles becoming diversified and shifting. No longer do these teachers work solely on providing instruction to students with disabilities, they also provide instruction to their nondisabled peers (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). They also consult with general educators, participate in co-teaching models, and may teach multiple subjects to a variety of learners (Weiss & Lloyd, 2001).

Summary

The studies reviewed in the above sections portray teachers of students with EB/D as being less satisfied with their work than other special education teachers are and are susceptible to high levels of stress, role problems, and frustration with their work. Factors that contribute to these problems include isolation, overwhelming job demands and poor working conditions, a lack of support, role-related problems, and to a lesser degree student characteristics.

Samples and Methods of Selected Studies

The studies reviewed in this chapter covered an 11-year period, had multiple purposes, a diverse sample pool, and utilized a variety of methods. The chosen methods and selected samples are discussed in the following section.

Methods of Inquiry

The majority of studies used quantitative methods of data collection such as mail surveys and inventories (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nelson et al., 2001; Pullis, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Stempien & Loeb, 2002). One study (George et al., 1995) used a mixed methodology by collecting the initial data using a questionnaire and then conducting telephone interviews to expound upon the gathered information. Weiss and Lloyd (2001) utilized qualitative methodology to conduct their study of secondary level special educators.

Mertens (1998) suggested that the use of surveys and inventories are common in educational research and a primary source of data collection in the studies reviewed in this chapter. While surveys are considered a good tool because data is collected from a large sample,

they rely upon respondents' "self-reports of their knowledge, attitudes, [and] behaviors" (p. 105). Therefore, results of the information are contingent upon the truthfulness of the respondents and their perceptions of the situation and should be interpreted with caution.

Population of the Samples

Researchers in the studies included in this review were primarily interested in the perceptions of special education teachers, including teachers of students with EB/D, that related to the work of teaching students with EB/D. Special educators providing services to students with disabilities in classroom settings across the continuum of alternative instructional placements were included in the samples.

This selection of studies represented the views of special education teachers from individual states as well as national perspectives. Years of experience were addressed in the majority of studies, as were gender, age, and race. All of these factors can influence the generalizability of the results.

Conclusions on the Work of Teaching Students with EB/D

The commentary reviewed and studies analyzed for this review portray the work of teaching students with EB/D as being stressful, demanding, lonely, and continually undergoing changes. These teachers indicated experiencing high levels of stress, being encumbered with a number of role-related problems, and generally not as satisfied with their work as other special education teachers. These factors could explain their exodus to other less stressful positions within the field of special education, within general education classrooms, administrative positions, or unfortunately out of the field of education entirely.

Stress producing factors specific to their jobs are numerous and include student characteristics, working in isolation, a lack of recognition and respect for their work, role related problems and overwhelming paperwork burdens. An additional factor that developed from this review is the frustration that many special education teachers feel due to a detachment between what they came to the job to do and what they actually do. In other words, they came to special education due to a desire to teach students with disabilities; however, in reality many spend their time attending multiple meetings, completing paperwork, and working in isolation. Special educators are also performing work for which they have not been prepared such as teaching general education curriculum. On the other hand, many special educators are conducting work

for which they are overqualified to do such as working as paraprofessionals in general education classrooms.

Many of the stress factors and role-related problems identified in this review are associated with the design of their job. Certain factors that are considered as dimensions of job design have been perceived as being amenable to change through the provision of administrative supports. However, an interesting finding was that these teachers of students with EB/D rely upon support not only from their administrators, but also from their colleagues and parents. In other words, they desired support from all individuals within their school buildings.

The field of emotional or behavioral disorders “in many ways has never been better” (Scheuermann & Johns, 2002, p. 57). Students with EB/D, who were previously excluded from educational settings, are now included, there are laws in place that protect their rights, and an extensive research base exists to direct the prevention and management of many challenging behaviors. However, “despite the good aspects of our field, all is not well” (p. 57). Students with EB/D will not benefit from those policies that are designed to protect them or advances within the research community that could improve their outcomes unless qualified and committed teachers provide them with a specialized and individualized instruction in appropriate settings.

Unfortunately, this discipline seems to be beleaguered with problems. The shortage of qualified personnel results in many school districts placing uncertified personnel in those classrooms or hiring long-term substitutes. The work of teaching students with EB/D has a reputation that does not lend itself to attracting individuals willing to undertake the challenges of the job, which increases the probability of negative outcomes for many students with EB/D.

In summary, many of the problems associated with the work of teaching students with emotional or behavioral disorders appear to be related to work place conditions. In addressing the need to prepare teachers for the work of teaching students during this era of accountability, Elmore (2002) proposed that

The work of schools is becoming more complex and demanding while the organization of school remains, for the most part static and rigid. If you push hard enough on a rigid structure, eventually it will break and hurt the people in it. (p. 1)

The work of teaching students with disabilities has, indeed, seen numerous changes. Teachers of students with EB/D are either unprepared for the conditions that they face upon reporting to

work in many schools across the United States, or the working conditions at some schools may be so inadequate that it is difficult to prepare a teacher to succeed.

Activity Theory as a Theoretical Framework

The work of teaching students with EB/D is complex and constantly changing. Activity theory is a theoretical framework that has been used increasingly to investigate the world of work (Engeström, 2000; Spillane, et al., 1999; Spillane et al., 2000). To familiarize readers with the premise of activity theory, the following section provides an overview. This is followed by a discussion of three studies that utilized activity theory to frame inquiries into the work of teaching.

Activity Theory

The framework of activity theory is based on the premise that “human activity is endlessly multifaceted, mobile, and rich in variation of content and form” (Engeström, 1999, p. 20). Spillane and his associates (2001) suggested that human activity is depicted as an “interactive web of actors, artifacts, and the situation” (p. 23) can best be understood through a unit of analysis that allows that activity to be viewed from where it actually takes place.

The conceptual framework for activity theory “considers actions as events in a collective activity system” (Engeström, 1999, p.30). The focal point of this model is the object, as it is the object that connects the actions to the activity. Engeström proposed that it is the “projection from the object to the outcome that . . . functions as the motive” (p. 31) for the activity and gives deeper meaning to the actions. Within this framework, analysis considers the activity of the actor (subject) as work is performed toward meeting the object and the outcome. The interactions with the tools (mediating artifacts), the rules, the community, and the division of labor are also considered in the analysis. Activity theory also allows the researcher to view and analyze a problem from the subject’s view and the system view. Engeström and Miettinen (1999) suggested that the researcher “constructs the activity system as if looking at it from above” (p. 10). Figure 2 depicts a conceptual model of an activity theory systems triangle. Due to space limitations within the figure, the specific components within the triangle are discussed in the sections following the illustration.

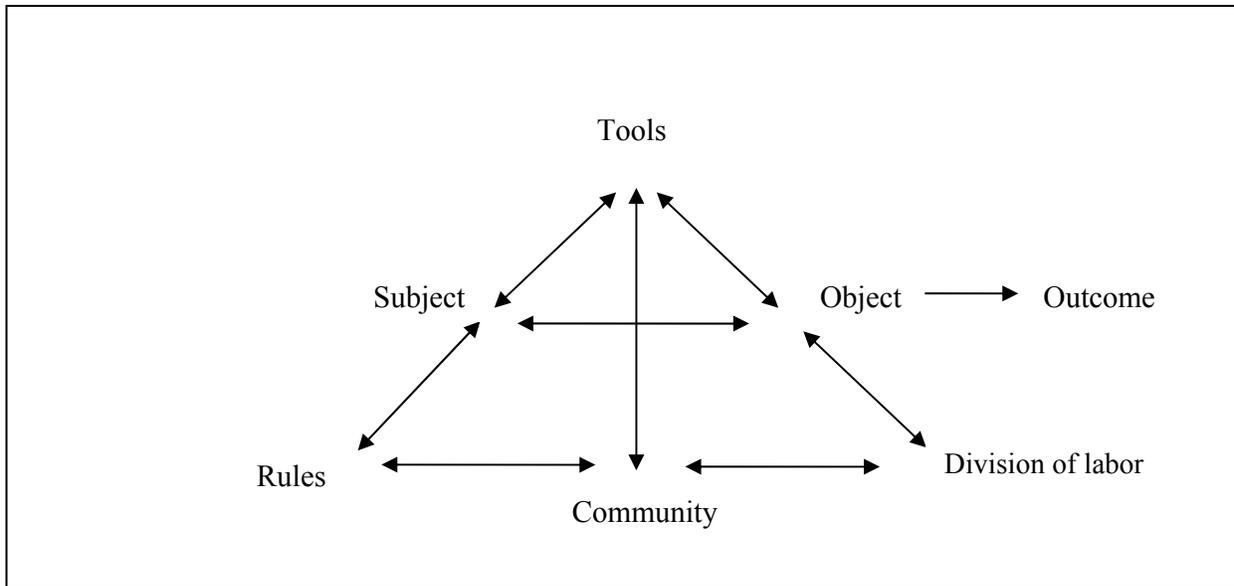


Figure 2. An activity theory system triangle. *Note:* Adapted from *Perspectives on Activity Theory*, (p. 31), by Y. Engeström, U. Miettinen, and R. L. Punamaki, 1999, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 1999 by Cambridge University Press. Adapted with permission.

Activity theory provides a tool to organize an inquiry into understanding work as it considers the actors or subjects, the mission of their work, the rules that guide their work, the community involved in the work, and the division of labor, or in other words, who does what during the identified activity.

Subject, Object, and Outcome

The subjects are the identified workers in an activity system whose activities are being examined. The objects are the immediate objects of the activity involved in a variety of tasks. The outcomes are purposes of the actions as well as the purposes of the community. In a school setting, the subject could be a teacher, the object could be a student, and the outcome could be student learning.

Tools

The mediating artifacts (tools) in an environment or activity system mediate the interactions between the subject and the object. The tools, or mediating artifacts, are those directly identified by the researcher, through observations and interviews, as being used to meet the object of the activity. Bannon (1997) suggested that tools are shaped and altered during the development of the activity and are either tangible or psychological in nature. In a school, the

subject could have available a range of tools such as textbooks, whiteboards, markers, notebooks, pens, computers, and other teaching materials. Other tools, related to the work of teaching, could include the teachers' academic training, school curriculum, and dispositions such as a sense of humor, flexibility, and patience.

Community, Rules, and Division of Labor

The identified actors engage in an activity that is embedded in a range of relations with other aspects in an activity triangle, such as the communities, rules, and the divisions of labor. All of these entities are considered in an activity system.

The community in activity theory considers those "multiple individuals or subgroups who share the same general object" (Roth & Tobin, 2002, p. 114). In a school setting, the community may include multiple teachers, administrators, support staff, students in the same small learning community.

The rules refer to the explicit and implicit regulations and norms that guide actions and interactions within an activity system. For schools, these could include the general and specific school rules, regulations, and local guidelines set forth by state and federal mandates such as IDEA that guide the provision of specialized instruction to students with disabilities. Roth and Tobin (2002) suggested that there might be implicit rules such as expected behaviors, respect, and participation in the work of schools.

The division of labor refers to the role that each individual in the community plays in the activity system. For example, when an identified action involves two teachers co-teaching a class, the individual role of *each* teacher is identified. Another consideration within the division of labor is the "division of power and status" (Roth & Tobin, 2002, p. 114). In a school setting, the relationship between the special education teacher, paraprofessionals, general education teachers, and administrators are considered.

In sum, community, rules, and division of labor are crucial components of an activity system. Lim (2002) illuminated the importance of these components.

Individuals exist in communities where there is a division of labor with the continuously negotiated distributions of tasks, powers, and responsibilities among the participants of the activity system. The relations between the individual (subject) and community are mediated by the community's collection of mediating tools and rules. Rules are the

norms and sanctions that specify and regulate the expected correct procedures and acceptable interactions among the participants. (p. 414)

Macro-Level and Micro-Level Considerations

An additional significant aspect of activity theory is that it allows work related tasks to be considered at the macro-level, or the large-scale organizational function, as well as the micro-level or day-to-day tasks (Spillane et al., 1999). For example, Spillane and associates noted that to understand education leadership tasks “the micro tasks that contribute to the execution of the macro functions” (p. 17) must be identified and analyzed. The authors illuminated the importance of identifying and analyzing the micro and macro level tasks in the following passage concerning leadership tasks:

What constitutes a leadership task? Constructing a school vision, holding a disciplinary hearing regarding misbehavior on a recent class trip, conducting a meeting to persuade parents of the merits of a new discipline code, or monitoring the instruction in a second grade reading classroom are all leadership tasks. Yet, there is tremendous variation in the grain size of these tasks. A leadership function like ‘constructing a school vision’ consists of smaller tasks including writing a draft vision, facilitating a staff meeting to discuss the draft, and revising the drafts that are spread over months or even years. In contrast, facilitating a disciplinary hearing is a micro task perhaps connected with the macro function of establishing a safe school climate. (p. 16)

Spillane et al. further suggested that the challenge is to identify and establish, through research, the existing links between the macro-functions and the micro-tasks of school leadership to understand leadership. In other words, the researcher, through observations and interviews, identifies micro-level functions which provide a framework for analyzing practice or work that allows for a consideration of the daily work lives of the subject without losing sight of the general purpose of the activity (Engeström, 2000; Spillane et al., 1999).

To that end, the identification and analysis of tasks at the macro-level and micro-level allows the researcher to differentiate between the “grain size of the tasks” (Spillane et al., 1999, p. 16) while providing a rich, detailed illustration of the subject engaged in the chosen activity that ultimately contributes to the carrying out of tasks at the macro-level. In addition, the identification of the actions, tools, and interactions and analysis at the micro level allows for an understanding of *how* and *why* the work is conducted on a daily basis.

In summary, activity theory can provide a frame for researchers to identify specific actions, the community, tools, rules, and division of labor to better understand how and why individuals go about their work. This allows the work to be reconstructed as though “looking at it from above” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 10).

Applications of Activity Theory in Education

To demonstrate its appropriateness to frame an inquiry into the work of teaching students with disabilities, three studies that investigated teaching and utilized activity theory as the theoretical lens were selected. Each study is qualitative in design and is considered a case study. As Yin (1994) suggested, case studies can be explanatory, descriptive, or exploratory in design.

Explaining Urban Teacher Preparation

In the first study, Roth and Tobin (2002) provided an example of how activity theory was applied as an analytical lens to identify concerns within a university based urban teacher preparation program. The identification of these concerns provided the necessary tools for the ultimate redesigning of the program. Specifically, upon exiting the training program, a significant number of teachers indicated concerns with being unprepared for the realities of the work. In order to address those concerns, Roth and Tobin used activity theory to focus on the “complex, situated, and distributed nature of an ongoing activity” (p. 113) such as teaching to understand the intricacy of learning to teach in urban schools. Their intent was to identify contradictions within an urban teacher-training program. In activity theory, contradictions are “developmentally significant and exist in the form of resistance to achieving goals of the intended activity and as emerging dilemmas, disturbances, and discoordinations” (p. 114).

Data were collected over a three-year period in an urban public school setting with a student population of over 2000 students. The majority of those students were African American and from economically challenged or working class families. Four students enrolled in the teacher-training program were the primary participants in the study. Data collection methods included interviews, observations, and maintaining of journals. Qualitative data analysis included peer debriefing, monitoring for subjectivity, and member checking.

Researchers reported identifying several existing contradictions within the urban teacher education program. However, for the purposes of their review, Roth and Tobin (2002) identified, focused, and reported on only one contradiction in the article: The expected outcomes of the teaching placement differed between the individuals at schools where the teachers were

placed and the professionals at the university. Ultimately, the identification of the dissonance between the university and the teacher placement provided the catalyst for change within the program.

The identified conflict related to the expected outcomes was that university personnel expected student teachers placed in schools to learn through the application of their knowledge and supervisory evaluation of their competencies as teachers. School personnel, on the other hand, often expected student teachers to replace the regular teachers in classrooms and provide instruction independently to students. Stated another way, student teachers were placed in schools expecting guidance from university and school based personnel while school personnel expected the teachers to be classroom ready. University personnel were also expecting the placement to be more of a learning experience for the student teachers, however, they were often placed in “sink or swim situations” (Roth & Tobin, 2002, p. 111) in their practicum placement. Thus, a disconnection between the school and university existed.

As a result of the identification of that conflict, Roth and Tobin (2002) reported the following:

We needed to rethink the school-university relationship and the different activity systems in which new teachers traditionally found themselves. . . that is, we had to deal with the quaternary contradiction between the construction of the individual as a teacher, on one hand, and the activity system focusing on student learning, on the other. (p. 120)

The consequential changes made within the teacher-training program were at two levels: the institutional level and the school level. Changes were implemented over a 3-year period.

At the university level, researchers implemented changes directed toward student teacher assignment at the school level, use of university personnel, and provision of required methods courses. Prior to making placement decisions for the student teachers, their career choices were considered. This meant that teachers were placed at elementary, middle, and high schools based upon their future employment plans. When possible, student teachers were assigned to their teaching situations in pairs as a form of peer support. As a considerable number of students wished to teach high school, the majority of student teachers were placed at one central high school, which enabled greater opportunities for peer support and interacting as well as meaningful supervisory support.

The changes to student teacher assignments allowed the supervisors to spend more time in schools with those teachers. Researches reported that this time was spent with the supervisors, student teachers, and co-operating teachers actively engaged in co-teaching situations. In-depth evaluations with meaningful feedback were also reported. Additionally, supervisors were utilized to collect data from the student teaches that could be used to address subject matter concerns as well as assist supervisors with co-teaching.

The manner in which required methods courses were offered to student teachers was also changed. Previously, required courses were offered twice weekly at one location directly after the dismissal of students. As a result, many teachers were late for classes and missed after school activities at their assigned schools. Courses offering times were changed to Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays mornings between the hours of 8:00 and 9:15. The changes in student teaching assignments to primarily one school resolved travel issues.

At the school level, the major change was the implementation of the co-teaching model. This model extended beyond the two teacher model in that it included “all individuals intending to evaluate or research teaching” (Roth & Tobin, 2002, p. 121). To that end, researchers, supervisors, methods teachers, and student teachers participated in preparing and teaching lessons to students. Another benefit to the new co-teaching model was that opportunities for spontaneous “tacit modeling of proper teaching practices” (p. 121) were prevalent. Finally, researchers reported that a significant amount of responsibility was removed from the co-operating teacher with the co-teaching model. Previously, many co-operating teachers indicated feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities the student teachers.

Roth and Tobin (2002) applied activity theory to assist them in identifying and addressing concerns within the urban teacher-training program at the University of Pennsylvania. The authors do acknowledge that contradictions in “activity systems of some participants in the teacher education program” (p. 126) still exist; however, many of contradictions were identified and addressed through the restructured co-teaching model.

Describing the Act of Teaching

A second study also addressed the notion of an existing disconnect between a preservice teacher training program and the explicit act of teaching. For the purposes of their research, Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, and Moore (2002) were more interested in gaining a better understanding and expounding upon a particular disconnect than in implementing change.

Specifically, these researchers wanted to understand one teacher's experiences in applying the concept of constructivism in the work of public school teaching. They hoped to gain a better understanding of two major concerns: The process or how one learns to teach and the process of concept development.

Activity theory provided the framework in analyzing how one teacher conceptualized teaching as she negotiated the path toward becoming a teacher—the university classrooms, student teaching placements, and her first job as a public school teacher. Cook et al. (2002) chose activity theory as their analytical lens as it “emphasizes the settings of human development and the goals, tools, and social practices that guide actions within them” (Activity Theory section, para. 2).

The participant in this study was a female regarded as one of the best students attending a large teacher education program with competitive admission standards. Data collection took place during the final semester of the participant's attendance at the university and continued throughout the first year of her employment as an elementary school teacher. Data collection methods included observations, interviews, review of relevant documents, field notes, group concept map activities, and various artifacts. Data were analyzed using the qualitative software Alas/ti. Researchers were primarily interested in identifying those tools used by the participant as she engaged in the action of learning to teach.

Authors reported that the participant's efforts to use the notion of constructivism during her university course work, student teaching, and her first year of teaching were hindered by a general lack of agreement at the university level regarding how the term was conceptualized. Further, her efforts to practice constructivist application were not supported or encouraged in the school settings where she taught. Therefore, the authors contended that the participant did not develop a true concept of the idea of constructivism but instead developed a “pseudoconcept” (Cook et al., 2002, Conclusion section, para. 3). Through the application of activity theory, researchers were able to identify specific instances at the university and school level that illuminated the development of the participant's pseudoconcept of constructivism.

Specific instances at the university included a lack of consistency at the classroom instruction level between theory and practice. Course work assignments consisted of memorizing facts and then taking multiple-choice tests, a practice that conflicted with how the

participant had interpreted constructivism. She interpreted constructivism to mean providing individuals with opportunities to demonstrate how they constructed their own knowledge.

A second example includes observation practices during student teaching activities. Critiques of the participant's work were not shared with her. Instead, the student teacher supervisor shared the information with university researchers, who did not immediately provide feedback to the participant. This further eroded her ability to conceptualize the notion of constructivism. Once employed in a teaching position, without a fully defined idea of constructivism, the participant engaged in a teaching style "characterized by a set of internal conflicts" (Cook et al., 2002, Conclusion section, para. 3). That is, the student teacher was unsure how to teach using constructivism as a guide.

In summary, this study is limited by its focus on one teacher's perspective, however, proponents of qualitative research would suggest that the provision of thick rich description allowed the research team to gain an understanding of one aspect of how a teacher learns to teach. This was accomplished through the identification and use of the various tools, such as the concept of constructivism that the participant applied during the learning process. They were also able to develop an understanding of how this teacher was unable to develop a concept of constructivism, which could be implemented in a teaching situation.

Exploring the Development of Teacher Commitment

In this third study, the research was designed to explore the development of teachers' commitment to use literacy in strategic ways that would effectively teach a diverse population of students. Ball (2000) examined how 100 teachers in the United States and South Africa applied theoretic applications learned in their teacher preparation courses and the role that those applications played in their becoming effective teachers of "poor, marginalized and underachieving students who are culturally and linguistically diverse" (Ball, 2000, p. 493). Ball applied activity theory as the theoretical framework to clarify the developing commitment of this population of teachers. Ball asserted that activity theory was appropriate as it allowed individuals to see, describe, and explain the emergence of a psychological function such as commitment.

Oral and written texts provided the data for this study. Data were collected over a 3-year period from 100 South African teachers and US teachers whom the author taught during that period. The collected data included reflections of course readings and course experiences as well

as the teachers' literacy experiences, transcripts of classroom discussion, and journal entries. Primarily, the collected texts reflected the teachers' developing perspectives on literacy and teaching and commitment to teaching a diverse student population.

The collected data were analyzed in two parts. First, Ball (2000) examined the data from a macro-level perspective. She was interested in understanding how the perspectives of the 100 teachers evolved over the three-year period concerning the meaning of human literacy. The second phase was a micro-level analysis of the literacy histories and writings of four of the 100 participants in order to identify emerging themes on their developing commitment to teaching students with diverse needs.

The initial macro-level analysis reflected that teachers in the sample came to the teacher education program with preconceived ideas regarding the meaning of literacy. The majority of teachers considered literacy as being limited to the ability to communicate through reading, writing, and communication. Further, results suggested that because of their course activities, teachers began to broaden their understanding of the multiple ways that one can be considered literate and recognized the existence of various methods for expressing literacy. Also, as teachers' perceptions of literacy evolved so did their thoughts about teaching diverse students. Ball (2000) reported that while all of the teachers had, indeed, gained a greater appreciation for what it means to be literate, "only some of them have begun to embark on an active and decisive plan of action that includes diversity" (p. 499).

For the micro-level analysis, four of the 100 students' case studies were analyzed to determine their levels of commitment to teaching students with diverse needs. Results indicated that two of the four did not develop a commitment to engage in teaching students with diverse needs at the time of the inquiry nor did they develop their perspectives on the meaning of literacy. Ball (2000) suggested that this lack of commitment was a result of these individuals unwillingness to engage earnestly in the various course activities and reading assignments that she presented to them in their teacher education courses. Conversely, the two participants who did engage in the course discussions, readings, and other activities, developed an expanded meaning of literacy, and were committed to teaching students with diverse needs. The author contends that these results can be related to one of the underpinnings of activity theory, which purports the following:

Human psychology is concerned with the activity of concrete individuals, which takes place either collectively— i.e., jointly with other people— or in a situation in which the subject deals directly with the surrounding world of objects... if we remove human activity from the system of social relationships and social life, it would not exist (Leont'ev as cited in Ball, 2000, p. 507).

In summary, this research suggested that teachers' levels of commitment depended upon how they engaged with activities and information presented in teacher education courses. Those more actively engaged in the social processes developed greater levels of commitment to teaching students with diverse needs. Therefore, Ball (2000) asserted that prospective teachers should be exposed to theory as well as provided with opportunities to explore the realities of implementation of those theories.

The three studies selected for review in this section utilized activity theory as the theoretical lens to frame their inquiries into the process of preparing teachers for that work. Each situation was unique and demonstrated the diversity of activity theory as an analytical tool to understand the work of teaching. Researchers were primarily interested in identifying contradictions between their teacher training programs and the reality of the work. This allowed researchers to identify special elements within teacher-preparation programs that could be addressed in order to improve outcomes for novice teachers.

Conclusions of the Research Synthesis

As a result of reviewing the related literature, I concluded that an understanding of the actions and job designs of experienced teachers of students with EB/D at the middle school level is needed. The review of the literature provides a description of a job that is complex, stressful, and has a high attrition rate. Decisions to leave or stay in that work are influenced by numerous reasons. However, identified problems related to the job design have been identified as (a) contributing to decisions to leave and include inadequate resources, (b) lack of relevant information, (c) limited decision-making power, and (d) a lack administrative supports (Gersten et al., 2001). In order to address problems related to the work of teaching students with EB/D, an understanding of *how* these teachers go about their work and *why* they do and think what they do is needed (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 1999). For this reason, a case study design was employed to examine how and why experienced teachers of students with EB/D working in middle school settings in Virginia engaged in their work.

Activity theory provided the framework to develop the research questions, guided the data collection, and writing of the final report. The use of activity theory is appropriate in this study as it allows for the understanding of an activity as it takes place in its environment while taking into consideration the structures, the systems, and the processes (Engeström, 1999).

An inquiry into the specific actions and job design issues are supported by the propositions put forth by several researchers that many of the factors related to stress, job satisfaction, and role-related problems fall under the concept of job design (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1993; Gersten et al., 2001; Morvant et al., 1995; Stempien & Loeb, 2002). These authors proposed that a properly designed job could diminish certain elements of stress and role-related problems that, in turn, could increase job satisfaction. Increased job satisfaction has been related to levels of commitment and intent to stay in the field. In order to guide the development of a properly designed job for teachers of students with EB/D in middle school settings an in-depth description of that work as it is conducted by experienced teachers could prove beneficial. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the body of knowledge that addresses effective practices that support teachers of students with EB/D.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains a description of the methodology that was employed to complete a case study analysis of the work lives of experienced teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (EB/D) working in middle school settings. This chapter describes the type of design used in this study and the procedures used to collect data.

Purpose of the Study

According to Wellman (as cited in Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 1999): How people work is one of the best kept secrets in America . . . the way in which people work is not always apparent. Too often assumptions are made as to how tasks are performed rather than unearthing work practices. (p. 4)

The primary purpose of this case study is to illustrate the work lives of experienced special educators who teach students with EB/D in middle school settings by identifying the actions and job design issues associated with that work. These illustrations allow for a deeper understanding of the nature of their work. The goal is to provide detailed descriptions of *how* and *why* experienced teachers of students with EB/D in middle school settings engage in the work of providing special instruction to their students. The use of a case study design allows for the collection of “comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 447). The illustrations of the work are composed from the “rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions” (p. 438), which are the foundation of qualitative research designs.

An additional purpose of this study was to evaluate the appropriateness of activity theory as a means to frame the work of special educators. Activity theory is being used increasingly in studying people as they work because it allows the multidimensional aspects of work to be considered (Engeström, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 1999). Thus, this study utilized activity theory to identify the specific actions and job design issues associated with the work of teachers of students with EB/D as they unfold in the daily life of select middle schools.

Research Questions

The question that guided this study was this: (A) What are the actions and job design issues associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D within a middle school setting?

Subordinate questions included (1) How do experienced teachers of students with EB/D engage in their work?, (2) Why do these experienced teachers engage in those actions?, (3) What are the documented job descriptions of these teachers in local school policies?, and (4) What are the disconnections that exist between their expectations of the work of teaching students with EB/D and the realities of that work in a middle school setting? To address the secondary purpose of the study, an additional question was this: (B) Does activity theory provide a useful framework for which to frame the work of teaching students with EB/D?

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Qualitative research lends itself to describing *what is going on* with a specific topic, as well as presenting a detailed view of a topic as it takes place in its natural setting (Creswell, 1998). Conversely, the use of quantitative methods to investigate an issue requires the use of predetermined categories of analysis that constrain levels of depth, detail, and openness (Patton, 2002). Those constraints could encumber the development of vivid illustrations of the work of teaching students with emotional and behavioral problems. In addition, job design is particularly suited to a qualitative research approach due to its composition; that is job designed is concerned with the contextual factors associated with the *how* and the *what* of the work being conducted.

Job design can be viewed as the “set of structures, systems, and processes through which work is conducted” (Morvant et al., 1995, p. 12). Of particular interest to those who study job design are factors such as (a) how people are organized to carry out their work, (b) what are the relationships between time and work demands, (c) what are the organizational decision-making processes, and (d) how are systems organized for sharing information. In other words, what exactly is happening in the work environment?

The Type of Research Design

Teachers of students with EB/D provide educational services in a variety of settings determined by each student with disabilities’ Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. In order to explore the work of these teachers in various educational settings a qualitative research design was employed for this study. Specifically, a cross-case study design as described by Patton (2002) allowed for the exploration and interpretation of the actions and job designs issues of 4 teachers of students with EB/D within and across 3 different school settings.

Stake (as cited in Patton, 2002) tells us that using a case study design to study a phenomenon allows for a “coming to understand its activity within certain circumstances” (p.

297). On the surface, knowing *what* teachers of students with EB/D *do* seems easy to comprehend. However, merely knowing what they *do* appears incomplete. In order to truly understand the work of teaching students with EB/D, it seemed important to investigate the work in a manner that allowed for an understanding of *how* and *why* people engaged in certain activities as they went about that work.

Activity was used to frame this case study for several reasons. First, it allows for a deeper understanding of the activity of teaching students with EB/D in a variety of settings because it allows for the isolation of specific actions while considering external factors (Bannon, 1997). Secondly, activity theory provides for a rich understanding of “*how* and *why*” (Spillane, et al., 2001, p. 23) people engage in their work. Next, without a rich understanding of *how* and *why* teachers of students with EB/D perform their work, the provision of useful information to school personnel and others interested parties would be difficult to attain. Finally, the need for an in-depth understanding of how special education teachers, particularly teachers of students with EB/D, do their work could provide information to address the retention of those teachers. Activity theory provides the framework that can guide change in a work setting, as was discussed in the literature review section in Chapter 2.

The Researcher’s Role

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the “instrument of data collection” (Patton, 2002, p. 51) and thus is charged with the production high-quality qualitative data that are “credible, trustworthy, authentic, balanced about the phenomena under study, and fair to the people studied” (p. 51). Qualitative inquiry also relies upon the world experiences of the researcher and the resultant insights regarding those experiences.

Specific to the work of teaching students with disabilities, I have more than 15 years of experience as a special education teacher and a general education teacher. Those experienced included teaching students with disabilities in preschools, elementary schools, middle, and high schools in a variety of instructional settings. In addition to my teaching experiences, I have had a variety of administrative experiences that included work as a general education administrator at the K-12 building level and as an assistant director of special education. These experiences with various jobs at the systems and classroom levels in education create the potential for researcher bias. Therefore, efforts to ensure objectivity were considered in the design and implementation of this study. As suggested by Patton (2002), I maintained a research journal throughout the data

collection and analysis process. I also cross-checked and cross-validated my impressions with the participants.

Procedures

The following sections of the chapter describe the selection of the research setting, the selection of the participants, my plans for assuring confidentiality, issues of entry, reciprocity, and ethical concerns.

Selecting the Setting

In case studies, researchers are interested in cases where the phenomenon of interest is likely to be found. As the primary participants were experienced teachers of students with EB/D working in middle school settings, it was important to locate those teachers. Therefore, the settings of this study were selected based upon selection criteria set forth in this study.

The 21st Annual Report to Congress reported that K-12 public schools with student enrollment numbers between 10,000 and 30,000, or medium sized districts, are less likely to experience shortages of qualified applicants than larger districts and more likely to have suitable candidates. (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Additionally, rural and smaller districts reportedly have greater difficulty recruiting teachers of students with EB/D than medium sized districts (George et al., 1995). Through a review of the DOE data, 16 school districts whose student enrollment numbers fell between 10,000 and 30,000 were identified. Ultimately, 3 middle schools in 2 separate districts served as sites for the collection of data in this study. Pseudonyms were assigned to the districts. District A became Warrior County and District B became Eagle County. Three schools were then selected, 2 schools were in Warrior County and the third was in Eagle County. Detailed descriptions of the 2 school districts and 3 middle schools are provided in Chapter 4.

Selecting the Participants

In activity theory, the actors are considered within the community. The proposed actors, or primary participants, in this study were selected through purposeful sampling. Merriam (1998) suggested “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which most can be learned” (p. 61).

One of the goals of this study is to inform the special education field of promising practices in the work of teaching students with EB/D at the middle school level. Therefore, the

primary participants for this study were 4 teachers of students with EB/D considered as being experienced. For the purposes of this study, I selected to apply the expert special educator criteria established in the work conducted by Stough and Palmer (2003). That is, teachers (a) met the certification criteria set forth by their districts to teach students with EB/D, (b) had at least 3 years of experience teaching students with EB/D, and (c) were recognized as being effective special educators by the director of special education in their district and building level administrators.

The identification and location of teachers who fit the experienced criteria proved to be problematic and time-consuming. I began the process by sending introductory letters to directors of special education in 6 of the identified 16 districts (see Appendix B for a copy of the letter). These 6 districts were chosen as they were within a 150-mile radius of my home. These letters were followed with an email contact. Four of the 6 directors reported that they did not have teachers who fit the experienced criteria. Repeated attempts at establishing contact with the remaining directors were unsuccessful. Therefore, introductory letters were sent to directors of special education in 6 more districts. After discussing my difficulties in locating teachers with several of these directors, it became evident that the experience criterion was not clearly expressed in my letter. I had asked for teachers of students with EB/D that had *between* 3 and 5 years of experience inadvertently requiring a very select sample. The letter should have read “at *least* 3 years of experience” permitting a much broader sample of participants. After clarification of that point, I secured email responses from a Coordinator of Special Education and a Director of Pupil Services that stated there were 2 teachers who fit the criteria employed in their districts. The email also confirmed that the teachers were willing to participant in the study. I then sent the director and coordinator, via email and the postal service, copies of the informed consent and the administrator interview protocols and requested to schedule interviews. I followed these contacts with phone calls at which time the director and coordinator volunteered to contact their superintendents to inform them of the study. I was also provided with the names, schools, and the contact information of the teachers who fit the criteria. However, individual teachers and the building level administrators were contacted prior to my initial contact with either of them. Table 1 provides an overview of the selected participants.

Assurances of Confidentiality

In naturalistic inquiry, the researcher is charged with assuring that the privacy of research subjects are protected (Patton, 2002). Prior to the beginning of each interview, each participant signed an informed consent statement, which provided information on the purpose of the study, proposed procedures, and the anticipated use of the collected data. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Tech approved the consent form prior to use in this study (see Appendix C). A pseudonym was assigned to each school district and participants. Participant identities were also coded during data collection and analysis based on their school district.

Table 1

Overview of Selected Participants

Case	District/School	Teaching Position	Years of Experience	Students on Caseload	Students' Disabilities
One	Warrior/Jordan Middle School	Resource	18	30	LD-21 OHI-5 HI-1 EB/D-3
Two	Warrior/Binns Middle School	Resource/Collaborative	28	12	LD-9 OHI-2 ED-1
Three	Eagle/Miles Middle School	Self-contained EB/D	8	8	EB/D-8
Four	Eagle/Miles Middle School	Resource/Collaborative	18	17	LD-10 MR-2 OHI-4 ED-1

Note. EB/D = emotional and/ or behavioral disorders; LD= Learning disabilities; OHI= other health impaired; MR= mental retardation.

Observations and interviews were the primary methods for obtaining data. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. I initially transcribed the interviews. However, as this task became time consuming, I employed a transcriptionist for the task. Tapes were stored

in my home office at all times except when being transcribed by the professional transcriptionist. The tapes will be destroyed one year following completion of the study. Although every effort was taken to assure the confidentiality of participants and selected sites, anonymity can never be guaranteed, as “it [confidentiality] is not entirely under the researcher’s control” (Locke, Spirduso, Silverman, 2000, p. 261).

Issues of Entry

Directors of special education in those districts that fit the selection criteria provided the entry points for this study. A one-page letter explaining the purpose of the study and proposed data collection methods was sent to 16 directors of special education whose districts fit the selection criteria. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix B. This letter was followed with an email and phone contact to determine if teachers who fit the criteria were employed in the district and to ensure their willingness to participate in the study.

I had originally planned to conduct the interviews beginning with the central office special education administrator. However, due to scheduling conflicts in Warrior County, I first conducted interviews with the teachers, the central office special education coordinator, and then the building administrators. In Eagle County, I conducted a formal interview with the Special Education director for the district. During that interview, I was provided the contact information for the building level administrator and the teachers. That principal requested an interview to review the purpose of this study and to discuss the expectations of the teachers who would participate in this study. After an initial meeting with that principal, I was introduced to the teachers. All interview appointments were established via email exchanges.

Reciprocity

The issue of whether or not to compensate research participants monetarily is a controversial issue in the research community as compensation can affect the level and quality of data (Patton, 2002). No monetary compensation was offered. However, Patton suggests that offering complete transcriptions of interviews or copies of interview tapes to participants demonstrates that we, as researchers, “value what they give us by offering something in exchange” (p. 415). Thus, I offered transcripts of the interviews as well as copies of the final study to participants.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues in qualitative inquiry are important to address as “naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and . . . may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches” (Patton, 2002, p. 407). Many of the ethical issues in a qualitative design such as purpose of the study, risk to the participants, reciprocity, and confidentiality are addressed in the informed consent statement that participants signed when they agreed to participate in this study.

Other ethical issues such as researcher subjectivity require special consideration. Researcher subjectivity can have multiple meanings. Patton (2002) suggested that it implies bias, unreliability, and irrationality. Research efforts to address subjectivity are therefore essential to a qualitative research design. To address researcher subjectivity and bias, I used several methods suggested by Patton. First, I made detailed notes during the interviews and observations about my impressions and interpretations. I referred to these notes and cross-referenced them during transcription and data analysis to ensure that my reporting was factual, logical, and confirming. After each interview or observation was conducted, I made detailed field notes. These were shared with the teachers during follow-up interviews. In addition, I asked a colleague to review my analysis of the data throughout the study.

Patton (2002) emphasized the importance of acknowledging biases in the written report. My 15 years of experience as a special education teacher and a general education teacher includes teaching students with disabilities in preschools, elementary schools, middle, and high schools in a variety of instructional settings. In addition to my teaching experiences, I have experienced a diversity of administrative experiences that includes work as a general education administrator at the K-12 building level and as an assistant director of special education. These experiences with various jobs at the systems and classroom levels in education create the potential for researcher bias. These measures addressed the potential for researcher bias and allowed for an illustration of the work lives of the four teachers of students with EB/D that, I believe, portray their actions in neither a negative nor a positive light, but reflects critically of the case.

Data Collection Procedures

Activity theory relies upon the collection of data specific to an activity as it is “stretched over the social and situational contexts” (Spillane, et al., 1999, p. 7) of a setting. In the following

sections, the means of data collection and rationale are provided as well as a discussion of the role of the cultural context.

Means of Collecting Data

Patton (2002) suggested that the three means of data collection in a case study are interviews, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002). I primarily used interviews and observations in this study. Field notes were also a significant means of data collection. A review of relevant documents was a lesser factor. Data were collected over a 5-month period, beginning in August 2003 and continued until February 2004.

The development of interview and observation protocols was guided by the premise put forth by Engeström (2000) that an activity system is “driven by a deeply shared communal motive. The motive is embedded in the object of the activity” (p. 964). Engeström is referring to the passion of the subject that drives the activity toward the outcome. In this study, the object of the activity is students identified with emotional problems. It is presumed that, the essential motive or mission of the activity, teaching students with disabilities as set forth in the IDEA, is to provide identified students with disabilities appropriate instruction and effective opportunities for learning with the intent to improve their lives, and to prepare them for employment and independent living. The actions, or work, in which special educators engage to teach students with disabilities, are guided by public policies and, thus, these actions are often motivated by individual interpretations or “human sense-making” (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002, p. 390) of the policies. Spillane et al. suggested that how individuals make sense of and implement policies is a consideration of: (a) how the mission of the work is understood; (b) the background, knowledge, and beliefs of the individual; and (c) the organizational elements of workplace. All of the protocols developed for this study were guided by the extensive work with activity theory conducted by Spillane et al. and Spillane, Diamond, Jita, Burch, and Johnson (2000).

Interviews

I used formal structured interviews throughout the study comprising a total of 25 hours. Taped, formal interviews of 45 to 60 minutes in length were conducted with the director of special education, the coordinator of special education, and the 3 building level administrators (see Appendix D for the administrator interview protocols). Initial in-depth interviews of 45 minutes to 60 minutes in length were conducted with each of the 4 teachers. These interviews provided demographic information as well as teacher background information. (See appendix E

for the teacher interview protocol). At least 5 pre and post observations interviews were conducted with each teacher (see Appendix F for these protocols). All of the post-observation interviews were between 30 and 45 minutes in length, were conducted formally, and recorded. Due to time constraints, several of the pre-observations were conducted without benefit of a recorder. During those times, I took detailed notes and typed up those notes shortly thereafter.

Observations

Data collection in activity theory and case study research utilizes the use of observations (Lim, 2002; Spillane et al., 1999). Additionally, Mertens (1998) suggested that observations of participants should continue until the researcher identifies the most important issues. She also cautioned “against coming to a conclusion about a situation without sufficient observations” (p. 182). Therefore, formal and informal observations were conducted with the teachers of students with EB/D at both the classroom and school level to capture firsthand descriptions of the activity of teaching students with EB/D. I conducted at least five formal observations of 45 to 60 minutes in length with each teacher at predetermined places and times for a total of 18 hours. See Appendix G for a copy of the observation protocol. As I was in the settings for extended periods, I also conducted informal observations. Notes from these observations were made in my field notebook.

Field Notes

I took notes during the observations and interviews, recording key words, phrases and actions. Immediately following each contact with a participant, I also wrote out comments regarding any problems with data collection as well as general observations about the mood and the tone of the session. My field notes were consistent, containing where the contact was made, who was present, the physical setting, social interactions, and what activities took place. Finally, the field notes included my insights, interpretations, beginning analyses, and working hypotheses about what was happening in the setting and what they might mean. These notes were intended to supplement the observational notes and were very valuable in capturing nuances in the observed settings.

Document Data Collection and Review

In activity theory, documents are artifacts that relate to the work under inquiry. Examples of documents in this study include district-level teacher job descriptions, teacher work

schedules, as well as student worksheets and textbooks. Job descriptions are provided in Appendix H.

Assessing the Cultural Context

In order to provide a rich description of an activity, such as teaching students with EB/D, it is important to take into account where the activity takes place (Spillane et al., 1999). In other words, activity of interest must be investigated in its “natural habitat” (p. 11) so that relevance is given to the description of work. Patton (2002) suggested that the physical environment may affect what takes place in a setting. Therefore, it is important to provide sufficient information about the environment that will allow the reader to envision the setting and make connections between the actions and the setting. During the data collection process, I took detailed notes of each setting following the guidelines provided by Patton. That is, I noted the size and look of a room, the amount of available space, the usage of space, the lighting, and the organization of people in the room. Patton also suggested that the researcher must take care to differentiate between their interpretative comments and actual conversations. Thus, I designated actual conversations in my field notes from my interpretations. Data regarding the cultural context inform the narrative in Chapter 4.

Data Analysis and Management Procedures

The case study approach to qualitative analysis constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data (Patton, 2002). Case studies rely upon the collection of data from diverse sources and results in the accumulation of a large amount of information. Therefore, it is necessary to manage and organize data in a manner that facilitates analysis. Data management techniques suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) provided guidelines for the data management. Data analysis followed the constant comparative methods suggested by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The following sections describe how data was managed and analyzed. Issues of the quality of the research design are also addressed.

Basic Operations in Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative inquiry is a mixture of inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis occurs in the beginning stages, when the researcher discovers by being open to the data, patterns, themes, and categories in the data (Patton, 2002). Deductive analysis takes place in the final stages of the analysis when the researcher is concerned with testing and affirming the authenticity and appropriateness of the inductive analysis (Patton).

Bannon (1997) noted that a difficult aspect of using activity theory as a framework for analysis is that no clearly defined set of procedures for conducting activity theory research exists. Therefore, to derive meaning from the data; I utilized the constant comparative as proposed by Maykut and Moorehouse (1994).

The first step in analysis was deriving meaning from the collected data. This was accomplished by reading through transcripts and developing units of data, which were then sorted into groups that looked and felt alike. I labeled these chunks of data with a word or phrase for identification purposes, separated them into groups, and taped them onto index cards. I then developed categories of data with relevant meaning. Categories were named based upon the data and reflected the purpose of the research. This method continued until all of the data were categorized into a meaningful category or a miscellaneous pile. This process began at the beginning of data collection and continued throughout the process. This approach allowed me to become familiar with the data and to anticipate possible areas to investigate. It also assisted me in staying focused on the main purpose of the study.

This study was a cross-case study of four teachers of students with EB/D. Therefore, I first analyzed each case individually so that I was able to gain an understanding of their work from a micro-level perspective. I then conducted a cross-case analysis “to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 195). This allowed me to gain an understanding of the work from a macro-level perspective.

Data Management

Defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), data management is the “operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval” (p. 420). Each recorded and transcribed interview, field notes, and set of documents were coded for source and filed for analysis consisting of numbers and letters. For example, formal interviews with teachers were coded T1.I and teachers observations were coded T1.O. Transcripts of interviews and field notes were saved on hard discs and copied for analysis.

In the original proposal, I projected that I would begin data collection by conducting interviews with directors of special education and administrators in July 2003. The actual data collection began in September 2004 for two reasons. First was the difficulty in locating participants and second directors did not wish to interfere with the teachers’ preparation for the

school year. Observations and interviews were completed by January 2004. Document collection was completed in February 2004.

Addressing Quality

Issues of the quality of qualitative inquiry are addressed by determining the trustworthiness of an investigation and its findings. Schwandt (1997) defines trustworthiness as “that quality of an investigation (and its findings) that makes it noteworthy to audiences” (p. 164). Strategies, such as credibility, transferability, and dependability, are methods for judging the trustworthiness of this project and are described in the following sections.

Patton (2002) suggests that the credibility of qualitative inquiry relies on three distinctive yet related inquiry elements: (a) rigorous methods for conducting fieldwork and analyzing data, (b) researcher credibility, and (c) a philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry. Each of these is addressed in the following section.

Patton (2002) suggested that strategies for enhancing the quality of data analysis rely upon an ability to recognize patterns in the data while adhering to rigorous analysis methods. A researcher must be open to searching for and documenting alternative themes, rival explanations, divergent patterns, and negative cases.

Triangulation is based upon the idea of combining several data sources and methods to overcome the biases that are associated with single-methods and single-source studies. In this study, I compared data collected during observations with interview data, checked for inconsistencies in what the participants said time over time, and compared interview and observation data against documents. I also maintained a researcher’s journal in order to provide an adequate audit trail.

Merriam (1998) suggested that member checks provide a method for enhancing researcher credibility. Member checks are the notion of “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if they are plausible” (p. 204). As themes began to emerge, I discussed them with the participants and asked for their feedback. Comments received from member checks indicated that I had accurately captured their actions and job design issues.

The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research; therefore, his or her credibility affects the way the findings are ultimately received. The standard concerning this issue is for the researcher to document “any personal and professional information that may

have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (Patton, 2002, p. 567). I have addressed these concerns earlier in this paper.

The credibility of a qualitative design is linked to the researcher’s belief in the value of qualitative inquiry. A researcher should possess a fundamental appreciation of the particular facets associated with qualitative methods such as the naturalistic approach, the necessity for inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking. These concerns have been addressed throughout this proposal.

The provision of a thick, rich description of the participants and settings under study allows the readers to make individual determinations of transferability (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, I documented my impressions of the settings and participants in detail using a research journal. These notes were transcribed and analyzed along with other collected data, which allows readers to make decisions regarding the transferability of the findings to their situation.

The dependability of a qualitative study relies upon the researcher ensuring that the process was “logical, traceable, and documented” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 164). This study follows the structure of a cross-case analysis, which is framed by activity theory. Data analysis utilized the well-established method of constant-comparative as suggested by Maykut and Morehouse (1994).

The Qualitative Narrative

Each of the four cases was analyzed individually, which provided for an illustration of the actions and job design issues associated with the work of each teacher of students with EB/D. This allows for an understanding of that work from a micro-level perspective discussed in Chapter 2. A cross-case analysis across the four cases strengthens the case study methodology and “can be thought of as a map providing guidance through the terrain of several cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 492). This presentation allows for an understanding of that work from a macro-level perspective. Although this study was conducted in three schools, chosen because of their fit to established selection criteria, responses from participants corresponded to each other. Chapter 4 provides an illustration of the individual cases and Chapter 5 provides an illustration of the cross-case analysis and discusses how those illustrations relate to the existing research literature and knowledge about the work of teaching students with EB/D. Chapter 6 provides conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS: PART I
OVERVIEW AND ILLUSTRATIONS

You know the reality is this: It is tough; it is hard – as anything you could ever want to do sometimes. I mean . . . it is sort of like being a social worker, and a teacher, and a juvenile delinquent officer. So it's all of those things in the middle school setting. (Paul, special educator, AT1.I.100).

As the words of Paul, a special educator, suggest, the work of teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EB/D) at the middle school level is complex and stressful. In order to understand that work, this study was designed to illustrate the work lives of four experienced teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorder (EB/D) who were engaged in their work in public middle schools. This study was also designed to evaluate the appropriateness of activity theory as a means to frame the work of special educators. The primary research question that guided this study was this: What are the actions and job design issues associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D at the middle school level. Subordinate questions include: (a) How do experienced teachers of students with EB/D engage in those actions?, (b) Why these experienced teachers engage in those actions? (c) What are the documented job descriptions of these teachers in local school policies?, and (d) What are the disconnections that exist between their expectations of the work of teaching students with EB/D and the reality of that work in a middle school setting? To address the secondary purpose of the study, an additional question is this: Does activity theory provide a useful framework from which to view the work of teaching students with EB/D?

This inquiry uses a cross-case study methodology addressing research questions and utilizes (a) observations of the work of participating teachers, (b) interviews with teachers and administrators; (c) a review of pertinent documents and materials; and (d) a researcher's journal to record my thoughts, beginning analysis, and other information. Activity theory provided the conceptual framework of this study as it is oriented toward the study of work (Engeström, 2000). This framework was used because it considers work as it takes place in individual settings.

The findings of this study are reported in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. In Chapter 4, I provide readers with an overview of the overall findings and illustrations of the teachers' work

lives. In Chapter 5, I provide a cross-case analysis. The following section presents individual illustrations of the work lives of the four teachers, each of whom represents a case. Each case is illustrated using a basic premise of activity theory, that is, *how* and *why* the teachers conducted their work. Data are reported through general and particular description. Data sources are referenced in the report using codes that identify the type of source (I--interview transcript; O -- observation; D -- document; FN-- field notes) followed by letters and a number that identify the participant. The letter A represents Warrior County and the letter B represents Eagle County. Next, participants are identified using the following codes: T-- teacher; GEA-- general education administrator; SEA-- special education administrator. Finally, the page number of the transcript is listed.

The Conceptual Framework

Activity theory framework as presented in Chapter 2 is the conceptual framework I have used to develop the narrative that illustrates my findings. Merriam (1994) noted that, “in order for a reader to vicariously experience a phenomenon, the writer must transport the reader to the setting” (p. 238). Therefore, this chapter makes use of a narrative text to review the data in light of using the framework of activity theory. First, a general description of the overall findings of the cross-case analysis is presented. Then in order to set up the context in which these data can be best understood, each case is presented and described. Readers are introduced to each case from each district level, Warrior County and then Eagle County.

The individual cases are illustrated to allow readers to understand the actions (the how and the why) in which these teachers of students with EB/D engaged as they went about their work in middle school settings. Job design issues are also provided. Activity theory played a primary role in the identification of job design issues. Recall that a basic premise of activity theory is that an identified mission motivates the actors or subjects in their actions. When asked to identify the mission of their work, these teachers indicated that they engaged in their work with the hope that their students would graduate from public school and become productive members of society. Activity theory considers impediments to the fulfillment of the actors’ missions as “contradictions” (Roth & Tobin, 2002p. 114). I used this principle in identifying job design issues associated with their work. This chapter will then conclude with a summary of the individual cases.

Overall Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to illustrate the work lives of experienced teachers of students with EB/D working in middle school settings by identifying the actions and job design issues associated with their work. The cross-case analysis identified the collective actions of those teachers in order to gain a better understanding of their work. Activity theory allowed for the capture of that work, analysis of the work, and identification of aspects of their work in their activity systems. It also framed the presentation of the following findings.

The special education teachers in this study perceived that the mission of their work was preparing their students for success in the general education curriculum in order to obtain a general diploma and become productive members of society. The identified actions in which they engaged as they worked toward that mission included (a) supporting their students academic progress in the general education curriculum, (b) promoting the development of students' prosocial skills, and (c) fulfilling multiple non-teaching related responsibilities. Their efforts were hindered by two job design issues, (a) difficulties in working relationships with certain general education teachers and (b) meeting the conflicting responsibilities of being a middle school special educator in the current context of public schools.

As the special educators worked, they employed certain tangible tools such as their students' IEPs and general education curriculum materials. They also used intangible tools such as their special education training and work experience to guide their work. Many facets of their work were in response to mandates set forth in IDEA, as well as national and state standards based policies. As they worked in their communities, their administrators, special education, and general education colleagues supported them in most of their efforts. This support facilitated their ability to do their work. These teachers assumed many of the teaching responsibilities associated with the instruction of their students although they shared those responsibilities with their general education colleagues. These findings will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Table 2 provides an overview of the actions and job design issues related to the special educators work.

Descriptions of Findings

In the following section, each district is described. I begin with a portrayal of each county followed by the school district. The introductions begin with District A, Warrior County. Next, I provide school level information and finally an introduction to each case as they worked

in their differing setting within each school building. Figure 3 on page 82 provides an illustration of the work settings.

Table 2

Overall Findings: Actions and Job Design Issues of the Cross-Case Analysis

Identified Actions	Job Design Issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting their students' academic progress in the general education curriculum ▪ Promoting their students prosocial skills ▪ Fulfilling multiple non-teaching related responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulties in working relationships with general education teachers ▪ Inadequate time to meet the conflicting responsibilities of being a special educator in response to IDEA and standards based reform efforts in middle school settings

Creswell (1998) suggested that the provision of a thick, rich description of the participants and settings under study allows the readers to make individual determinations of transferability. Detailed descriptions also allow the reader to understand the phenomenon under inquiry and draw interpretations about meanings and significance (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the following descriptions of the two school districts, the three schools, and the four teachers that participated in the study are designed to provide adequate information to allow the readers to determine the generalizability of the findings.

Warrior County

Warrior County is a rapidly growing region located in the southeastern part of the United States nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The population was approximately 85,000 residents with a projected population of 90,000 by 2010. Warrior County has an unemployment rate of 2.2%, which is consistently lower than the state and national averages. It is also home to a top-ranked large public university and several community colleges. The university houses a nationally recognized teacher-training program in the field of education with specific acclamation given to their teacher preparation programs. The special education teacher preparation program has a top 10 national ranking.

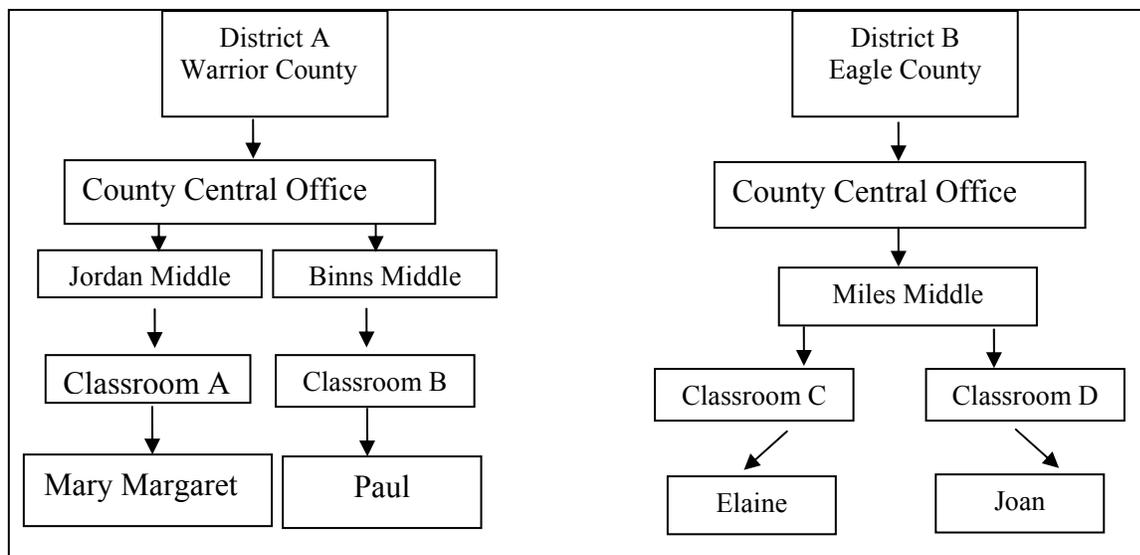


Figure 3. An overview of the work settings.

Warrior County Public Schools had an enrollment of 12,140 pupils in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Of the students enrolled, 14% were African American, 80% were White, or European American and 6% were Asian, American Indian, or Hispanic. A breakdown of these racial categories was not available. Of the total student population, 18.3% were identified as students with disabilities who were eligible for special education and related services under IDEA. Schools included 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 3 comprehensive high schools, 1 public charter school, 1 special needs school, and 1 alternative placement program for students in grade 6 through 12. Site-based management was practiced in the school district, so that budgetary and instructional decisions were made at the individual school levels. In addition, a block-scheduling format was in place in all of the public schools. Two middle schools served as data collection sites, Jordon Middle School and Binns Middle School. Table 3 provides demographic data regarding Warrior County and the 2 middle schools.

Central Office/Department of Special Education

Nora, the Special Education Coordinator for the 5 middle schools, was responsible for the supervision of the two teachers employed by the Warrior County Public Schools who participated in this study. She welcomed the opportunity to participate in this study. During the interview, she gave each question careful consideration before answering. When asked if Warrior County experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers of students with EB/D at the middle school level, she answered “To some extent, but we have a bigger market” (ASEA.I.9).

Table 3

	Warrior County	Jordon Middle School	Binns Middle School
Total County Population	85,000	-	-
Elementary Schools	15	-	-
Middle Schools	5	-	-
High Schools	3	-	-
Alternative Special Education Program	1	-	-
Student Enrollment	12,140	590	420
Racial Breakdown			
White	9,712	460	310
African American	1,700	59	93
Other (Asian, American Indian, and Hispanic)	728	71	17
Students with Disabilities	1,925	92	65
Autism	28	4	5
EB/D	148	5	4
Hearing Impairment	7	2	0
Other Health Impairment	197	33	14
Specific Learning Disabilities	891	48	26
Educable/Trainable Mental Retardation	124	0	15
Traumatic Brain Injury	5	0	1

Demographic profiles of Warrior County and participating middle schools.

Nora informed me that a generic job description guided the work of all teachers in Warrior County. Administrators at the building level determined specific job responsibilities and duties. Because the school district practiced site-based management, the job responsibilities differed from school to school. Scheduling and staffing determined many of the special education teachers' responsibilities (ASEA. I.1).

When asked if teachers of students with EB/D have different job responsibilities than other special educators, Nora replied, "All of our special education teachers have pretty consistent job expectations . . . classroom management, paperwork, procedural kinds of things. . . We don't have specific ED classes" (ASEA.I.4). She implied that the primary responsibilities of teachers of students with EB/D were to act in the best interests of their students and to attend to procedural paperwork. Nora concluded that effective teachers of students with EB/D must possess the ability to balance both responsibilities without enabling their students-- a task, she admitted, that "is hard to do sometimes" (ASEA.I.6).

In the following sections, Warrior County's Jordon Middle School is described and, Mary Margaret, a teacher of students with EB/D employed at Jordon Middle School, is introduced.

Jordon Middle School.

My appointment at Jordon Middle School was at 10:00 A.M. The drive along the busy four-lane route to Goldsmith was pleasant as it was a clear fall day complete with plenty of bright sunshine that accentuated the splendid colors of the fall foliage against a vivid blue sky. I glanced at my directions as I entered the city limits of Goldsmith and found myself almost at the intersection of the road that led to Jordon Middle School. I turned onto to another four-lane road that wove its way past shopping centers, apartment complexes, and fast-food restaurants toward a residential area. The school was located at the top of a long hill along with three similar looking brick buildings that appeared to share a common parking area. A sign for the school allowed me to find the building easily.

Built in 1966, Jordon Middle School was a one-level, brick, air-conditioned structure that offered plenty of natural light to the classrooms and hallways. It was situated on 20 acres on the northern outskirts of the town of Goldsmith. A general renovation completed in the fall of 2003 provided a new wing for classrooms. The outside areas included large fields, blacktop

areas, a softball diamond, and tennis courts. The Warrior County Parks and Recreation Department provided the softball diamond and tennis courts. The school also served as a community center to local organizations. Jordon Middle School's neighbors included an elementary school and an alternative program regional facility for students with EB/D that opened in the fall of 1999.

The administrative staff of Jordon Middle School promoted a philosophy intended to address the developmental, emotional, and educational needs of early adolescents. The ultimate goal was to provide students with the necessary academic, social, and civic understanding and skills so that they were successful in high school and would become contributing members of society. There were 52 professionals employed to provide educational services to the 590 sixth, seventh and eighth graders who share the building. Six of the professionals were special education teachers engaged in the work of providing services to students with disabilities. One special education paraprofessional was employed to assist these teachers in their work. Of the 590 students at Jordon Middle School, 78% were White, 10% were African American, 7% were Asian, and 5% were Hispanic. Approximately 18% of the students were eligible for a free or reduced lunch. In addition, 16% (92) were identified as students with disabilities who were eligible for special education and related services.

Five principals have provided leadership to Jordon Middle School during the 37 years of the school's existence. One principal, in his first year of working in that capacity, and an assistant principal, who has been at Jordon for the past 12 years, provided administrative leadership. The principal of Jordon Middle School determined the job descriptions for teachers guided by information provided by their building level special education department as well as the central office special education department. Betty, the assistant principal, explained, "We work very closely with the department itself in terms of people's strengths, what people want to work with. We also work very, very closely with central office special education personnel . . . It's not done in a vacuum" (AGA.I.1). From her perspective, Mary Margaret's responsibilities as a special education resource teacher were twofold. Her first priority was to address the academic needs of her students, which included teaming with the general education teachers with whom her students had contact. The purpose of the teaming was "to help educate everybody about what's going on and about what that child's needs are and how to best consistently try to build a

framework for that child” (AGA.I.14). The second priority was acting in the best interest of each child.

Case One

Mary Margaret

A long stretch of sidewalk guided the way to the front doors of Jordon Middle School. Neatly trimmed grass covered the area between the sidewalk and the school building and met with large evergreen trees that were evenly spaced along the edges of the building. Several types of brightly colored and healthy looking evergreen bushes were clustered around an even larger sidewalk protected by a concrete overhang, which led to the double doors of the school entry. A conveniently placed sign on the door advised visitors to check into the main office, which was visible from the front doors.

One of the two secretaries seated at the front counter in the well-lit glassed in front office greeted me warmly. She asked me to wait while one of the three students seated in the office ran down to tell Mary Margaret that her appointment had arrived. As I sat in the office, I noticed that much of the soft blue office wall space contained large windows that offered views of the expansive hallways. There were brightly colored posters announcing upcoming school and community-related events hanging on the office and hallway walls. I was about to flip through a magazine when I was told that Mary Margaret was coming up the hall. She walked into the office, introduced herself to me, accepted my offered handshake--and we were off.

Mary Margaret was a ball of energy, always on the move. Our walk toward her classroom in the clean uncluttered hallway was rapid and brief. The majority of the classroom doors were open which allowed the voices of teachers and students alike to roll out into the hallway and greet us. Again, I noticed the colorful posted notices on the walls.

Mary Margaret’s large and uncluttered resource classroom was located about four doors down from the main office. The classroom was filled with light provided by the sunshine that poured through the large windows facing the parking area in front of the school. Two long tables and student desks in groups of four were in the room. A table against a wall contained several computers. Neatly stacked over-sized pillows and cushions took up one corner of the room, surrounded by several small white bookcases filled with brightly colored, well-used books. Several bookshelves lined with special education and general education resource materials filled up wall space. An older style oak teacher’s desk tucked away in a corner held carefully placed

teaching related items such as a plan book, pencils, papers, and paper clips. There were a few strategically placed posters on the walls. One of these displayed a point system that Mary Margaret used and another poster displayed the class rules. One section of a blackboard contained what appeared to be neatly written student assignments.

Mary Margaret guided me to a table to set up my tape recorder. During that time, she checked her email and responded to several messages. She asked if I was ready and we promptly engaged in the interview. Mary Margaret thoughtfully considered each question before responding. She did not refer to the interview protocol that I had provided, rather she waited until I asked each question before answering.

Teaching Experiences

I learned that summer employment experiences during her junior high and high school years at summer camps introduced Mary Margaret to a child with Down Syndrome. Those experiences sparked her desire to become a special education teacher. An initial teaching assignment included a caseload of mostly students with EB/D, an assignment that she enjoyed because “they were a lot of fun” (AT1.I.58). This interest in teaching students with EB/D provided the motivation to obtain a master’s degree in special education from a local university. Mary Margaret had worked as a teacher of students EB/D at the middle school level for 18 years. Jordon Middle School has been her home for the past seven years. She has taught students with EB/D in a self-contained setting as well as in a resource setting. Here at Jordon, this is her third year as a resource room teacher, a position she chose when self-contained classes for students with EB/D were discontinued three years ago. There were four self-contained cross-categorical classrooms.

Teaching Responsibilities

Teaching the 30 students on her caseload was Mary Margaret’s primary responsibility. Her work included a number of other responsibilities. She held the position of special education lead teacher and was a mentor to newly hired special education teachers. She was also responsible for conducting educational assessments, completing required paperwork, as well as scheduling and attending meetings related to the provision of special education services under IDEA. These duties required that she contact parents, related service staff, general education teachers, and administrators. Although administrators and information learned through her college coursework provided guidance in determining her ultimate responsibilities, Mary

Margaret implied that the needs of the students on her teaching caseload were more important, “we get a caseload of students and then everything that they do throughout the school day I feel is my responsibility. I want to make sure that things go well for them” (AT1.I.10).

Nonteaching related assignments included a weeklong lunch duty assignment once per month, morning bus duty, and daily hall duty. Mary Margaret was undaunted by the amount of responsibilities associated with her work and actually found her job exciting. She stated with a laugh, “there is always something. But it makes the day go by fast. Because it is always, boom, boom, boom one thing to the next. And that’s what I enjoy” (AT1.I.6)

After 30 minutes, she glanced at the clock on the wall and informed me that she needed to get ready for her next class. As I left her classroom, I heard the buzz that signaled the change of classes. I waited for the crush of students, that earthy smell specific to adolescence, the boisterous voices, and the slamming of lockers. This did not happen, not on the scale that I had expected. The students came noisily out of their classrooms as they crowded into the hallways and clamoring for lockers yet they seemed to disperse easily into the various areas of the spacious building. Many of the students were dressed similarly, in loosely fitting denim jeans, short-sleeved t-shirts of various colors advertising a number of popular bands and sports teams. Most of the students appeared to be intent on getting to their next destination.

An Illustration of Mary Margaret’s Work

In the following section, I provide an illustration of Mary Margaret’s work life. Jordon Middle School utilized a block schedule model that provided four 90-minute classes. During those 90-minute blocks of time, Mary Margaret provided instructional services to the 30 seventh and eighth grade students with disabilities on her caseload, three of whom were identified as students with EB/D. Her teaching schedule provided her with two planning periods twice a week. She indicated that her students were pleasant, good-natured, and rarely caused her any problems. During the course of her workdays, she could interact with 27 different general educators on behalf of her children. Table 4 provides a profile of Mary Margaret and her work.

During her resource classes, Mary Margaret steadily moved from student to student, activity to activity, never slowing down. Her slim, lightly tanned face was framed by neat, short, dark, curly hair and provided a canvas for warm, brown, dancing eyes and an infectious smile.

Attired in either neatly pressed pants or skirt and top and comfortable shoes, or a hot pink sweater, black mini skirt, knee high boots, and a black fuzzy wig that lit up like a

Christmas tree-- it was spirit week-- Mary Margaret lent out lunch money, provided school supplies, words of encouragement, and opportunities for students to enhance their social skills. A steady stream of conversation accompanied these actions with her students.

Table 4

A Profile of Mary-Margaret and her Work

Teaching Position	Professional Degrees	Educational Endorsements	Years of Experience	Students on Caseload	Breakdown of Students' Disabilities
Resource Teacher	BS in Special Education MS in Special Education	EB/D, MR LD	18	30	LD-21 EB/D-3 OHI-5 HI-1

Note: EB/D= emotional and/or behavioral disorder; LD=learning disability; HI= hearing impairment; OHI= other health impaired.

The students came and went out her classroom in a practiced manner. They appeared to have favorite places to sit in the resource room and were familiar with each other. A typical day found between 5 and 15 students in Mary Margaret’s classroom. They talked quietly with each other and with Mary Margaret as they completing assignments from their general education classes.

Mary Margaret went about her workday, motivated by the mission of her work that was to ensure that her students became “productive citizens” (AT1.I.10). To provide a clearer understanding of her work, the themes speak to the *how* of that work and the general and individual descriptions within the themes provide illustrations of how and why she engaged in that work. Those themes included: (a) reteaching and adapting materials provided by general education teachers; (b) providing students with tools for success; and (c) fulfilling procedural mandates. Each theme is illustrated in the following section.

Reteaching Material from General Educators: Helping Them Understand

The students bring all of their things back here in my room and I reteach it or do it a different way so they understand what they were supposed to understand in their other classes (AT1.I.3)

Reteaching and adapting materials provided by the general education teachers to her students with disabilities was how Mary Margaret spent a great portion of her instructional day. She guided her students in multiple academic activities, which had originated in their various general education classrooms. As she worked with them, she referred to general education textbooks and awarded points to attentive students. She assisted her students in the completion of homework assignments and preparation for upcoming tests and quizzes. Students were also guided in the completion of tests, quizzes, and in the correct usage of the school-mandated planners or agendas.

Students who attended Mary Margaret's resource room brought worksheets and homework assignments supplied by their science, social studies, math, and language arts teachers with them. She completed these tasks in her energetic business like manner, laced with humor. She told her students while laughing, "When they hired me they didn't tell me that I would get to be a nurse, counselor, mother, teacher of language arts, math, social studies, science, PE, let's see, did I leave anything out?" (FN.72).

How Mary Margaret helped students understand. She moved purposefully around the room, checking with each student to see if they understood their assignments. She reread directions, clarified directions, provided hints, and changed teaching strategies when a student struggled. "Let's try it another way," (AT1.O.1) she said to Brian, a large soft-faced boy as she directed him to the blackboard.

Why Mary-Margaret changed teaching strategies. Mary-Margaret used a variety of actions to guide her students in completing their assignments from their general education classes. She most frequently changed teaching strategies. She explained her decision to have students use the board, "It helps them to do their math on the board and see it there and then they put it on their paper. It's easier too--they can write as big as they want--they can erase it. It's not like paper where you have to erase all the time or start over" (AT1.38).

Students also completed math, science, social studies and language arts tests and quizzes supplied by their general education teachers while in Mary Margaret's resource room. As she assisted students with understanding the test directions, she would often ask, "Do you understand what you need to do?" (FN.15).

Checking student planners for assignments was a part of her daily routine in the resource room. Planners served as an important form of communication with the students' general education teachers and their parents. She explained their importance:

Planners are a way for me to be able to see what they're supposed to be doing. It's a way for the students, when they get home, to look back and say, hey, this is what I have to do. And it's a way for the parents to see what's going on" (AT1.I.23).

Planners were also an effective method for managing the 30 students with disabilities on her caseload because they served as a form of communication between Mary Margaret and the general education teachers. She said, "They'll give me a heads up when there is going to be a test, or a notebook, or a project due and I write it on the board for the students. . . . they let me know how the student is doing, if there's a problem somewhere. . . . That's important too because I can't be there all of the time" (AT1.I.23).

Why Mary Margaret supported progress in the general education curriculum. The above examples illustrate how Mary Margaret engaged in reteaching and adapting materials provided by her students' general education teachers. Why she engaged in those actions was based upon her belief that preparing her students for the general education curriculum was an important facet of her job. She believed that, "What we do in resource, it's really geared or comes from what they do in their regular classes" (AT1.I.25) and that "it's our job to prepare them. . . . to make sure they're passing all of their classes" (AT1.I.35).

Providing Students with Tools for Success: Giving Them a Safe Place

The purpose of the resource room for the majority my kids is just a safe place for them to be, a place to come and talk out whatever issues they may be having that day. Whether it's a friendship thing, whether its, 'I've forgot something, please help me' (AT1.I.34).

To ensure that her students were prepared to succeed with their middle school experiences, Mary Margaret provided them with a variety of tools that could foster their success in their school lives and that reinforced that her resource room was a "safe place" (AT1.I.34) for them to come. She made use of her time with her students to establish trusting relationships with them. She listened attentively to their numerous problems and assisted in their resolution. On one occasion, John, a slight boy with a withdrawn appearance, shared that a high school student had threatened to beat him up that morning. Mary Margaret took the time to talk with him about the problem and developed a solution. She recognized the importance of having her students'

trust that she would support them, “it wasn’t that big a situation—to him it was—but it was handled very easily. It’s little things like that or they’ll share something that might of happened at home that they’re parents may not have listened to them. So it’s nice for them to be able to do it in here” (AT2.I.30).

How Mary Margaret supported the development of social skills. Students were provided with opportunities to participate in activities intended to foster the development of their social skills. Each Thursday, she provided her largest group of students, 9 boys, with a 45-minute activity that was intended to develop their social skills. The students, Mary Margaret, a school psychologist, and her part-time paraprofessional, Mark, sat in a large circle while they tossed a fuzzy blue and yellow ball to each other. The recipient shared ‘something good’ that had happened to them during the week. This excerpt from my field notes reflected the conversations:

The students shared everything-- being happy that they were spending time with their fathers, succeeding in gymnastics classes, passing tests, being organized, making another teacher happy, and ill family members getting better- not fighting, not getting angry and solving problems. The adults shared things such as having opportunities to spend time with family members living far away to solving car problems. (FN.64)

Why Mary-Margaret fostered her students’ social skills. Mary Margaret believed that developing her students’ social skills would benefit them in their school lives and post school lives. They learned to take turns talking, listen attentively, and respecting the opinions of others. However, she was realistically cautious about the outcomes, “I think that it is difficult for some of the boys to take it seriously . . . but I think it will benefit them (AT1.I.30/31).

How Mary Margaret enhanced self-esteem. Other interactions with her students were intended to enhance and promote their self-esteem. During an observation, Jennifer, a tall pale black haired girl with EB/D, entered the room and bragged that she had received a letter that invited her to try out for the JIVE. soccer team. Another student, Laurence, loudly began to make fun of this letter and said, “That’s a scam, everybody on the bus got one of those” (AT1.O.1). Mary Margaret quickly intervened and provided Jennifer with the opportunity to share the letter with the class. This encompassed approximately five minutes of instructional time; however, Mary Margaret acted because she believed it was important for her to support Jennifer.

Why Mary-Margaret enhanced her students' self-esteem. Mary Margaret explained that Jennifer “is down on herself a lot. She doesn’t have a very good self-esteem. She plays on the soccer league for special ed kids. . . . that letter meant a lot. I didn’t want her to be knocked down from her excitement” (AT1.I.27). She would support her other students in a similar manner.

How Mary Margaret provided other tools. Mary Margaret also provided her students with miscellaneous school related supplies they may have forgotten or they did not have such as pencils, folders, and a lunch money loan. She offered these supplies to students with the understanding that she would help them to be prepared for their day “within reason. . . . If they’re constantly coming in saying they don’t have a pen or a pencil then sometimes I do draw the line. I say, “Okay, sorry, I’m not your store anymore. You need to start being responsible” (AT1.I.34).

Why Mary Margaret provided students with supplies. Providing students with necessary supplies was a way that Mary Margaret could ensure that her students were prepared for their other classes. She also wanted them to know that they could rely upon her to support them.

Why Mary Margaret provided students with tools for success. Mary Margaret provided her students with time for individual attention, opportunities to develop their social-skills, and with miscellaneous school related supplies as she went about her workday. She engaged in these actions and provided them with the fundamental tools to support them on their journeys toward becoming productive citizens. Mary Margaret was confident that her efforts on behalf of her students were an important part of her work. She said:

My room, it’s a kind of relaxing place for them as they work on their work. . . if they don’t feel comfortable in the regular class, you know, speaking up and saying ‘I don’t quite understand this. They can come in here and they’ll get the help. They can ask and nobody will laugh at them . . . they don’t have to feel that somebody might be laughing at them about it. (AT1.I.23)

Fulfilling Procedural Mandates: If I Could Just Teach My Kids All Day

The kids are fine. If I could just teach my kids all day long that would be great (AT1.I.8)

Mary Margaret’s days were filled with other responsibilities. She was the lead teacher for the special education department which required that she “supervise the other special education teachers making sure that they doing their paperwork and their teaching” (AT1.I.8).

However, significant portions of her days were spent conducting educational evaluations of students and attending meetings related to the provision of special education services. She also contended with the completion of the paperwork requirements related to IDEA.

How Mary Margaret fulfilled procedural mandates. Testing students and attending meetings made up a portion of Mary Margaret’s workdays. She was responsible for conducting the triennial educational evaluations for the seventh and eighth grade students on her caseload, writing, and distributing the reports to appropriate parties, discussing the results, and then attending the subsequent meetings to determine continued eligibilities for special education. For that school year, she identified 10 students that she must test, several of whom were to be tested within a short period. She reported, “And depending where they fall, like I’ve got these four all in a row” (AT1.I.41).

When asked to identify the most frustrating aspects of her work, Mary Margaret replied, with a laugh, “Keeping up with paperwork” (AT.I.8). Her frustrations with the paperwork resulted from changes in the forms that related to the provision of special education services and having to familiarize herself with those changes. She commented, “Every year the IEP forms change. And there seems to be a new page every year. Right now, we’re up to 7 and 8 pages. Excluding the goals and objectives” (AT1.I.9). This frustration increased during the data collection process. She remarked, “I just feel like I’m screwing things up and it’s mostly paperwork, that kind of thing. . . . Sometimes you just don’t have any control over it. Sometimes you just have to sit back” (AT1.I.59).

Why Mary Margaret fulfilled procedural mandates. Completing the required testing, attending meetings, and completing paperwork were an aspect of her work and they did cause her some frustration. Why she carried out these actions is reflected in her approach to that work. She contended that attending to the procedural mandates was a component of being an experienced teacher of students with EB/D. She noted, “You also have to know all of the legal parts of it. . . . You have to be organized to deal with the planning for the lessons and your teaching and dealing with the IEPs and all of the paperwork at the same time” (AT1.I.5).

Job Design Issues

The purpose of Mary Margaret’s work was to provide the 30 students on her teaching caseload with the appropriate tools to become productive citizens. She perceived her role in that preparation as ensuring that they experienced success in the general education curriculum. Her

efforts to provide her students with opportunities for that success were generally unhindered. She did experience difficulties with certain general education teachers.

On occasion, working with the general education teachers impeded Mary Margaret's ability to teach her students successfully. Certain teachers did not provide her with students' homework assignments and test preparation materials. This required that she obtain the materials from the teachers in order to support her students. However, other concerns were noted when certain general education teachers did not implement students' IEPs appropriately. On those occasions, she would attempt to address the problem with those teachers. There were instances when she relied upon the building level administrators for support in solving the problems. She noted, "If I'm having difficulty dealing with another teacher, maybe the social studies teacher, science teacher or whatever for one of my kids and I've tried helping or tried working with the teacher and we're not getting anywhere, we're butting heads or not following accommodations. . . I've gone to the administration" (AT1.I.15).

In summary, Mary Margaret went about her workday providing academic and social support to the students on her caseload and fulfilling procedural responsibilities. She indicated that she enjoyed her work and that she felt supported by her colleagues and administrators. She did experience some frustration with working with certain general education teachers, which affected her ability to support her students fully.

Interpreting the Data

Mary Margaret worked in her resource room supporting her 30 students with mild disabilities as they progressed in the general education curriculum. In order to understand further how Mary Margaret carried out her work at Jordon Middle School, a collective activity system is applied. It has been determined that the subject is Mary Margaret, that the objects are her students, and that the outcome of her actions was to ensure that her students become productive members of society. The tools, rules, community, and division of labor that factored into her work are discussed in the following section. Figure 4 provides a depiction of her activity system.

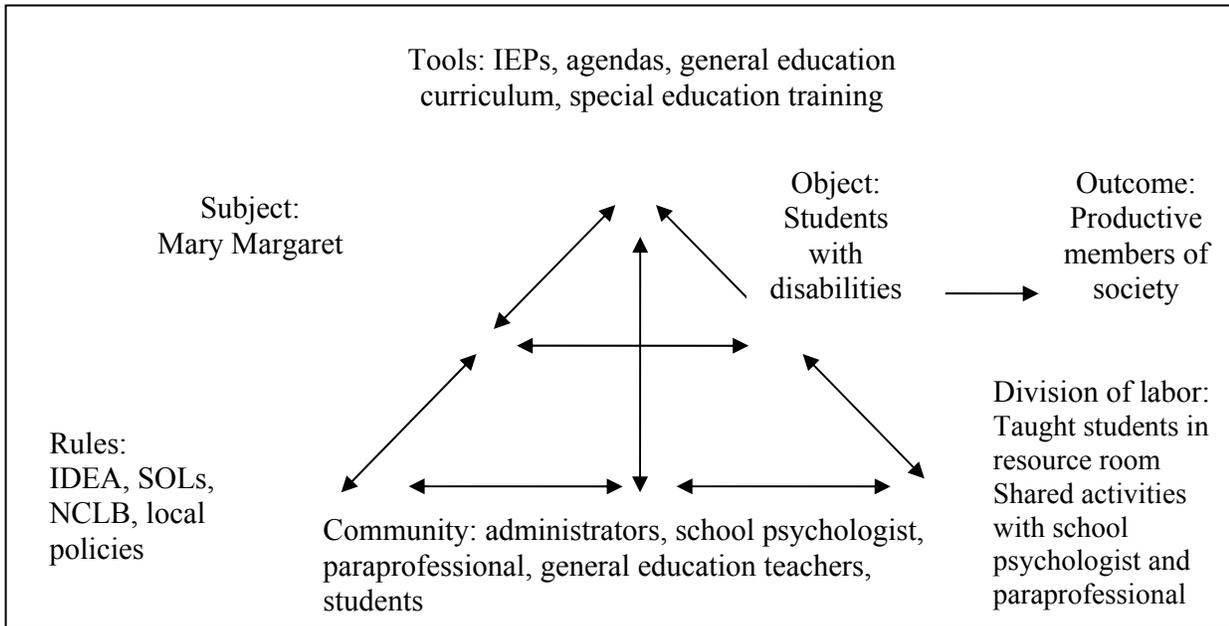


Figure 4. An activity theory systems perspective of Mary Margaret's work.

Tools of Mary Margaret's Work

Mary Margaret used a number of tools as she conducted her work. Recall that tools are those identified artifacts that the subject uses to meet the object of their activity and can be considered as being tangible or physiological in nature. Mary Margaret's work was conducted using tangible tools such as students' IEPs, school mandated agendas, and general education textbooks that she referred to for guidance. She also used numerous items supplied by the general education teachers such as math, science, and language arts worksheets, homework assignments, and tests as she worked with her students. She implemented a behavioral incentive plan where students earned points for completing academic assignments, showing respect for others, and following directions. The reward was a choice of an item of candy from a large jar. A computer and telephone located in her room were used as forms of communication with colleagues and parents. Other identified tools included a teacher plan book, pencils, pens, chalk, and chalkboards.

Mary Margaret employed psychological or intangible tools as she went about her work. She relied upon her special education knowledge gained through university coursework and teaching experiences to assist her in managing her many responsibilities. However, she noted that a lack of general education curricular knowledge was an area that needed strengthening. As she engaged with her students, Mary Margaret demonstrated the use of a sense of humor,

patience, and flexibility. These tools were identified through observations of her work with students and as she carried out other responsibilities.

Rules of Mary Margaret's Work

A number of federal, state, and local rules guided Mary Margaret's work. Primarily, the provisions set forth in IDEA to provide identified students with disabilities individualized and specialized instruction guided her work. The federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act did not appear to influence her work as significantly as the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Much of the time spent with her students was ensuring that they obtained the necessary skills to succeed in the general education curriculum and pass the SOL mandated tests.

Local rules also factored into her work. Although Mary Margaret recognized that a generic teacher job description was available to her, she did not indicate having seen it. She relied upon the rules set forth by her administrators at the school level. The absence of job description did not concern her because she knew what her work required.

The School Community

The community considers those individuals who share the same general object, in this case students with EB/D, as the subject. From my observations, I noted that Mary Margaret's community consisted of the central office special education coordinator, the principal, an assistant principal, a school psychologist, a part-time paraprofessional, several general educators, her students, and the parents of several students.

Mary Margaret spent most of her day in her resource room with her students. The school psychologist and the part-time paraprofessional would often come by to talk with her, check on various students, or engage in the social skills activities. Although, she reported that she could interact with as many as 27 general education teachers in one form or another, I observed that a seventh grade math teacher frequented her room either dropping off or clarifying an assignment. Several parents also came by her room to talk with her about their child. She dealt with each person in a friendly manner and did not indicate being frustrated by the interruptions.

Mary Margaret felt supported by the members of her community as she went about her work. She felt that she had a productive working relationship with the general educators. The building administrators contacted her if there were discipline problems with any of her students to ask for her advice on how it should be handled. She acknowledged that they might not take her advice, however, she appreciated that they asked. To support her in completing the required

paperwork and to administer tests to students, her teaching schedule included four 90-minute planning periods per week.

When the building level administrators were unable to assist her with a special education related problem, Mary Margaret contacted the special education coordinator at central office for assistance. She provided Mary Margaret with quick responses to issues with students and parents, provided teaching materials, assisted in developing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), and observed in the classroom when needed. Perhaps most importantly, she provided Mary Margaret with a compassionate ear when the work seemed overwhelming.

The Division of Labor

The division of labor considers ‘who does what in the community.’ As noted in the previous section, my observations reflected that Mary Margaret spent most of her day in her resource room, where she interacted primarily with her students, the school psychologist, and the paraprofessional. All of her students were included in general education settings where they received instruction from general education teachers. Yet, I infrequently noted interactions between Mary Margaret and general educators. She was concerned that her students made progress in the general education curriculum, however, she seemed to assume much of that responsibility.

In summary, Mary Margaret was motivated in her work by her mission to ensure that her students became productive members of society. She used a variety of tangible and intangible tools as she worked. Her job was structured by federal and state mandates that resulted in her assuming more teaching related tasks and fulfilling numerous non-teaching related responsibilities. She went about her work of teaching students with EB/D and other disabilities relying upon her skills learned through course work, teaching experiences, and her relationship with her colleagues and administrators.

Binns Middle School

Finding Binns Middle School proved more difficult to find as it was located within the city limits of Goldsmith but was considered a county school. I drove past more shopping centers, fast food restaurants, and both older and more recently built hotels looking for the four-lane road that would take me to the middle school. Huge old hardwood trees lined the neighborhood street and offered some privacy to the stately older well-tended homes that rested just behind them. As I drove, I noticed that the area transitioned into a 1950s style neighborhood

characterized by identical homes clustered closely together with indistinguishable driveways. Up ahead there was an expanse of cleared space, blacktopped areas, parking lots, and a large two-story brick building. In front of the building was a small neatly painted white sign with blue letters placed in the front of the school that read Binns Middle School-- *Home of the Binns Bears*.

Binns Middle School was a large two-story, air-conditioned brick structure built in 1951. The school sat atop a slight hill located on 15 acres situated on the outskirts of the older established downtown area of Goldsmith. Huge old hardwood trees surrounded the school, the parking areas, and the blacktopped areas designated for outdoor sports. Binns Middle School was considered an urban school and the play area, multi-purpose field, and baseball diamond served as a district park after school hours.

Binns Middle School had undergone three renovations since the late 1980s with the most recent in 1995. These renovations provided the students and faculty with an expansive library, a technology center, a computer lab, a full auditorium, a band room, an art room, a cafeteria, and a gymnasium. The building was well lit and offered a feeling of openness afforded by huge windows and expansive ceilings typical of schools built in the 1950s.

There were 46 individuals employed to provide services to the 420 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders enrolled at the school, six of whom were special education teachers. There was one special education teacher assistant employed to provide services to a class for students identified with severe and profound disabilities. Approximately 74% percent of the student population was White, 22% were African American, 3% were Asian, 1% were Hispanic, and 25% of the population were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Of the 420 students, 16% (65) were students identified as students with disabilities eligible for special education and related services. The high percentage represented a self-contained class for students identified as requiring intensive special education and related services who would not typically be enrolled in Binns Middle School.

One administrator, Larry, and an assistant principal, June, provided administrative leadership at Binns Middle School. They had been in those positions for 7 years. Larry, the principal, had the ultimate decision in determining the responsibilities for the special education teachers. Specific to teachers of students with EB/D, Larry perceived the primary responsibilities as “being an advocate for his or her students and to have a clear understanding

of the psychological makeup of individual students” (AGA2. I.6). He believed that an understanding of the psychological makeup of the students with EB/D was important for two reasons. First, if the teacher does not understand the “makeup of that kid, then that kid is in trouble” (AGA2. I.6). Second, those teachers were responsible for “articulating the disability to those around the kid” (AGA2.FI.6). He reported that Paul was also a mentor to new special education teachers at Binns.

Case Two

Paul

A straight wide sidewalk led me to the double doors of the school. I entered the building and was guided to the main office by clearly printed signs. A brightly colored bulletin board just outside of the office proudly proclaimed- -Binns Middle School. . . Students, parents, faculty, staff, administration and community- coming together is a beginning, working together is progress, staying together is success .

A woman, who sat behind a large credenza engaged in the well-practiced art of successfully managing several tasks at once, greeted me quickly. She asked me whom I was there to see, and absently told me to have a seat. She phoned up to Paul’s class, talked quietly, and told me I would have to wait, as Paul was busy. She then returned to her tasks of answering the phone, greeting other visitors, and filing papers.

A long bank of windows framed two sides of the office and allowed a view of the front hallway bustling with the activity of school dismissal. Students of various Ethnic groups piled out into the bright afternoon. Most were burdened with loaded backpacks. Several colorful framed posters directed at inspiring students to reach for success and high achievement hung on dusky grey walls. There were also bookshelves filled with pictures of students, office manuals, and potted plants. This office gave the appearance of serving as a home to many items and people. The steady flow of people in and out looked to be parents picking up students, teachers in search of a particular item, and students who had missed their busses, missed their rides or their parents. After a few moments, I was told that Paul was ready to see me. I easily found his room located on the second floor.

Paul was a study in calm as he greeted me at his schoolroom door with a firm handshake, a warm smile, and an apology for keeping me waiting. Paul was casually, but neatly, dressed in pressed khakis, a long, sleeved button-down neatly pressed shirt, and comfortable shoes. He

sported a precisely trimmed graying beard and a similar haircut that seemed to suit his fair complexion. Wire rimmed glasses framed sincere eyes that preferred contact when engaged in conversations with adults or students.

Our meeting was scheduled for 4 o'clock at the close of the school day. It was the only time that he could offer me for the interview that would be uninterrupted by students or teachers. The door to Paul's room was clear of any markings or papers except for a computer-generated nameplate that had been altered from reading Mr. Burton to "*Gangsta* Burton". Paul left the sign up for months because he enjoyed the memories of that group of students.

Fresh air came into the room through the slightly opened windows that offered a view of several large trees in the front schoolyard. The room presented the feel of a place that had seen much activity. Placed in the room were six student desks, a well-used teacher's desk, a table that could easily seat four teenagers, and a longer table that held a computer, printer, and a telephone. The contents of the room expanded over the months of this study to include two well-worn yet attractive sofas that the students coveted and a faded Oriental rug. A tall closet held both new and old books, workbooks, and school related manuals. A large bulletin board on one long wall contained several striking pictures cut either from magazines or from calendars and reflected Paul's interest in horses.

Teaching Experiences

Paul attended college with the intention of becoming a special education teacher prior to the passage of P.L. 94-142. He worked at a summer camp and shared the company of a group of "intercity youth . . . that turned the camp upside down. I found that I was attracted to children who don't follow the rules" (AT2.I.4). Paul obtained a bachelor's degree in special education and began his teaching career in 1975. His 28 years of teaching students with disabilities included teaching self-contained classes of students with EB/D and high-incidence resource classes. His work with children with EB/D was mainly in the primary grades prior to coming Binns Middle five years ago.

Teaching Responsibilities

Paul's primary responsibility was to ensure that he met the academic and social needs of the 12 students on his caseload. He also held the position of the eighth grade child study chairperson and was a mentor to newly hired special education teachers. As the child study chairperson, he had two roles. First, he assisted general education teachers in supporting

students experiencing problems in their classes. Second, he provided the required information if the child study team decided to refer a student for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services under IDEA. Other tasks related to the provision of special education services included completing the required paperwork and attending IEP and eligibility meetings. These tasks involved contacting parents, related service personnel such as a speech pathologist, administrators, and general education teachers.

Paul's work as a collaborative/resource teacher was not guided by a specific job description, rather he relied on his 28 years of experience and input from his general education colleagues. He noted that much of his responsibilities were determined spontaneously, "When the regular ed teacher and I figure what my responsibilities are going to be and we can do that on a weekly basis, on a unit basis, sometimes we do it on an hourly basis" (AT2.I.18).

That spontaneity was one of the attractive aspects of his work. He also noted that, "My responsibilities have differed from year to year. . . I mean, the beauty of these 28 years is no one year has ever been like the other one. So, here they have fallen into some rhyme or reason" (AT2.I.18).

An Illustration of Paul's Work

In his role as a collaborative teacher, Paul spent three of the four 90 minute blocks of instructional time working with 4 different general education teachers in their classrooms. During those periods, he supported many of the 12 students with disabilities on his caseload, one of whom was identified as a student with EB/D. Paul noted that he had one other student who should have been labeled EB/D, however, the family refused that label as her disability. Table 5 provides an overview of Paul and his work.

The boisterous voices of between 11 and 21 students filled the general education classes at times. Some students attempted to pay attention to the instruction while others appeared to nap with their heads resting on their desks. On occasion, classes were often interrupted when Amy and Sharon argued over a make-up item or pencil (AT2.O2/O3). Amy was a tall girl with long brown hair who wore little wired rimmed glasses and was identified as a student with EB/D. When Amy was in a room, everyone was aware of her presence. She generally greeted me with "Oh, god, you're here again" (FN.112). Sharon was a petite girl who had short straight black hair that appeared to have been straightened. She and Amy argued in well-rehearsed manner that normally ended with laughter (FN. 112). Other students argued among themselves,

grabbed pencils, and papers, while making fun of each other. In certain classes, the general education teachers appeared to struggle to maintain control. The teachers in other classes looked as if they had more control of the situation, however, they appeared to rely upon Paul for assistance with certain students.

Table 5

A Profile of Paul and his Work.

Teaching Position	Professional Degrees	Teaching Endorsements	Years of Experience	Students on Caseload	Breakdown of Students' Disabilities
Resource/ Collaborative Teacher	BS in Special Education	EB/D MR LD	28	12	LD-9 EB/D-1 OHI-2

Note: MR=mental retardation; LD=learning disabilities; OHI= other health impaired.

Paul's teaching schedule included two 45-minute blocks of resource time. During those sessions, he provided support to 8 different students who were separated into two groups of 4 students per block. Paul went about his workday moving between the general education classrooms and his resource room. His work primarily focused on (a) supporting his students with disabilities while they were in the general education classroom, (b) supporting the general education teacher in their classrooms, and (c) helping students understand their individual differences. Job design issues were related to (a) inflexible student schedules, (b) working with certain general education teachers, and (c) inadequate planning time.

Supporting Students in the General Education Classrooms: Get Them in the Groove of Things

It's my job to make sure. . . that I can get them into the groove of things (AT2.I.66).

Paul spent a considerable portion of his teaching day supporting his students while they attended their general education classes. He provided students with supports that he believed would facilitate their ability to succeed while in their regular education classrooms. These included keeping students organized and focused, providing students with encouragement, and providing information to the general education teachers.

How Paul focused students. While in the general education classrooms, Paul spent much of his time moving purposefully from student to student, checking to make sure that they had the

necessary materials and were organized for the task. The classes contained between 12 and 21 students, depending upon the class. He would ask those students who appeared to be struggling with the organizational aspects of the assignment, “Where’s your notebook? Let’s put this paper here and your book here. That will help you get started. Where’s your pencil” (AT2.O.1/O.3). Paul reordered papers in notebooks, put unnecessary items in backpacks or under desks, and provided pencils to those in need.

Paul dealt with those students struggling to stay focused in a similar manner. He would ask distracted students, “What are we doing here? Can you tell me? Come on guys, we need to focus-- the other ‘f’ word” (AT2.O.2). Generally, those distracted students would focus briefly and Paul would begin his rounds of the room again. These actions took place in each of the general education classes that Paul attended.

Why Paul organized students. Paul engaged in these actions, because he believed that his efforts at organizing and focusing would allow those students to succeed in the general education classes. He stated, “It’s sort of a constant thing with that. And once you get them organized and they see the flow of the class they can pretty much handle it” (AT2.I.13).

How Paul encouraged students. Paul also supported the students in the general education classrooms by consistently offering words of encouragement and praise. Whether leading the class instruction in a language arts class or walking around the classroom working with individual students, Paul encouraged the students. During those infrequent times when he provided whole group instruction, he told the students that, “You guys did a great job of reading this. . . . That’s a really good point. . . . I like the way you guys don’t correct each other, you let them go on reading until they can work it out from themselves” (AT2.O.1). While making his rounds in the general education classes similar words were often heard. Paul said, “I like the way you’re thinking. . . . You did a good job there” (FN.31).

Why Paul encouraged students. Paul engaged in these actions for multiple reasons. Primarily, he believed that many of his students’ prior school experiences were negative and that, as a result, many had negative self-images. Therefore, he endeavored to provide them with opportunities to take academic risks without the fear of ridicule. The belief that he could benefit the students more by teaching to their strengths instead of their weakness also provided the momentum for many of his actions.

How Paul informed the teachers. Paul supported the students on his caseload who received instruction in the general education classrooms in an additional manner. That is, he informed those teachers of the individual characteristics associated with the students' disabilities, particularly students with EB/D. Paul believed that if the teachers possessed an understanding the students and their disabilities, the students would succeed in those classes. He said, "The program that I run is accountable for helping the regular education teachers understand that some students are a little different than they are" (AT2.I14).

At the beginning of each academic year, Paul provided compiled student information to those general education teachers whose classes his students would attend. This was a matter of discussing the individual students, their specific disabilities, and the associated characteristics with the teachers. He also kept teachers informed throughout the school year of any changes with a student that might influence their performance in the general education classroom.

Why Paul informed teachers. Paul believed that the sharing of student information with the general education teachers would foster an understanding of the students, which would allow the students to benefit academically from their time spent in the general education classroom. He proposed that an informed teacher would understand the students and be more inclined to establish relationships, "If you don't connect with them, they tend not to do their work, and then they fail. That's what I deal with when they feel like their general education teacher doesn't like them or they don't like the teacher" (AT2.I. 28).

Paul engaged in those actions because he believed that a part of his job was to help his students succeed in those classes. During an informal interview, he indicated that many of his efforts to support his students were a result of standards based reform efforts, It's all SOL driven. That's the bottom line. It's who passes what. They have to know this stuff to pass the SOLs and get that regular diploma (FN.122).

Supporting the General Education Teachers

We have truly tracked kids Well, my students are placed in certain classes based upon ability . . . all of the students in the class need- - it takes two people in there (AT2.I.87).

While working in the general education classrooms, Paul spent much of his time providing supports to the general education teachers. The impetus of these supports apparently resulted from the classroom composition of students. Certain general education classes that Paul

attended contained as many as 21 students. In the most disruptive class, there were 19 students, 8 of whom were students identified with disabilities, and 9 who were eligible for Title I reading services.

How Paul addressed student behaviors. While in the general education classes, Paul spent some of his time addressing disruptive behaviors of certain students while the general education teacher provided the instruction. The behaviors were primarily not paying attention to the lesson, talking loudly with each other, and the occasional student comment, which received a firm response, “I wasn’t rude to you, there is no need to be rude to me” (AT2.O.2). Paul addressed those behaviors in a nonconfrontational manner that did not embarrass the student and allowed the general education teacher to continue their work. He explained his reasoning, “It’s like, what is your point here? The point is to get this lesson taught. But if your lesson is to change behavior, and work with behaviors, then yes you need to address them and that’s a slow process” (AT2.I.46).

Why Paul addressed the behaviors of students. Paul provided his assistance to those teachers because he considered himself as being a part of a supportive eighth grade team. He said, “This would be a tough position to be in when you’re not supported by your fellow teachers” (AT2.I. 63).

How Paul removed students. Paul also supported the efforts of the general education teachers on his team when the dynamics of a classroom became tense due to rowdy student behaviors or when a general education teacher tired at the end of a 90-minute class. He would remove certain students from the general education class and take them to his resource room. This allowed the teachers to continue with their instruction uninterrupted. On one occasion, when the climate of a civics class became uncomfortable for Paul and the teacher, he tapped the shoulders of three boys and two girls who were talking loudly among themselves and not paying attention, told them to collect their things, and to go wait in the hall. He then simply told the teacher, “I’m taking these guys with me” (AT2.O.2).

Why Paul removed students from the classroom. Paul removed certain students from the classrooms to allow the teacher to regain control of the classroom. He believed that several of the classes contained too many students that required additional support. When he took the students back to his room, they discussed what had happened in the regular education classroom, and completed their assignments from their classes

Why Paul supported the teachers. Paul carried out those actions to support the general education teachers, which enabled them to continue with their instruction. He believed that a part of his job was to carry out those actions so that “the regular teacher can continue to do their things and that’s where my support is” (AT2.I.66)

Helping Students Understand Their Disabilities: Telling the Kids the Way It is

Just telling kids the way it is sometimes--not trying to scoot around what their disability is or why they come in here. Telling them honestly what their problem is, ‘Look, this is what you’re doing and this is what I see as why they’re reacting to you this way (AT2.I.39).

When Paul was not supporting the general education teachers in their work, he spent time with eight of his students in his resource room working on a number of activities. Much of his efforts centered on teaching his students “the importance of getting along with others and understanding their differences” (AT2.I.103). While in the resource room, Paul assisted students in completing their general education assignments, understanding their disabilities, and developing their social skills.

There was a casual atmosphere to Paul’s resource room. Students’ jackets, backpacks, and other items rested casually on chairs, on the floor, and on desktops. Amy and Sharon generally entered the room first talking loudly and laughing with each other. Their actions required frequent attention from Paul. When they entered the room, he quickly told them of the expectations for the resource period. The other students were adolescent boys dressed in loose fitting jeans, t-shirts, who wandered in slowly. They gathered around a large table to work in a group, or sat independent of others in a student desk. Paul instructed them to get out what assignments they might have to complete for their classes with the promise that as soon as they finished there would be free time. Those students with assignments pulled them from backpacks or battered notebooks and began the process of completing them. Those students who did not have assignments to complete sat and generally listened while Paul worked with the other students.

How Paul supported students. As some students work independently, Paul assisted others in the completion of math tests and worksheets by explaining steps that they did not understand, rewording questions, and directing them to their textbooks. Civics assignments were also completed and reviewed. When they finish their class assignments, Paul would encourage

their participation in oral reading exercises with hope that they would “develop a sense of story and increase the love of reading” (AT2.O.3). He persisted in his efforts, although not all students took part. During two observations, I noted that Jim, a pale youth with a sad expression, generally walked around the classroom tossing a soft football (FN.48). Paul felt that Jim had many personal problems and that his role was to provide Jim with some freedom and support, “He needs somebody to watch [him] - there’s a lot of home mess” (AT2.I.45).

Why Paul supported students’ academic work. Paul continued in his efforts to prepare his students for their academic classes because they needed to receive passing grades in those classes and pass the SOL tests. He thought that a portion of their time spent in his resource room was to do “SOL reviews. . . I’ve got to get them to take those prompts” (AT2.I. 47). He determined that his role was to assist them in making progress in their general education classes as he provided them with other sources of support.

How Paul discussed students’ disabilities. As Paul guided his students in their academic work, they also talked among themselves about their problems at school and at home. Conversations that covered a variety of topics took place during these sessions. The students talked about problems they had experienced during the course of their school day with peers and other teachers. They discussed personal problems school such as broken down cars and the death of family members, but primarily they talked about issues related to their disabilities. Paul did not discourage these discussions and would often participate. They talked about some of the characteristics associated with their disabilities, such as problems with focusing, following directions, taking notes from the board in the classrooms, and comprehending information (FN.82).

Why Paul discussed students’ disabilities. Paul and his students engaged in these conversations because he believed that if the students understood their disabilities they would experience success. He explained:

First, we talk about their specific disabilities because they are at the age where they need to understand this [their disability] and some of them have been in special education since grades one and two. . . . [they want] to be accepted and to be looked upon as part of the group [and] not understanding why sometimes they are not [causes problems for them]. And that their reactions to things will trigger how people react to them. (AT1.I.83)

How Paul discussed individual students. One group talked among themselves about problems they were having in their general education with classes with Amy. Her behavior tended to be abrasive, oppositional, and many of her comments were offensive. Paul did not discourage nor encourage this conversation. He allowed it to continue until a student turned to him and asked, “Why does she have to be in all of my classes? She drives me nuts!” (AT2.O.3). Paul responded with a laugh, “Because she thinks you’re so cute. . . But seriously, she has impulse issues, you all know that, and you do really well having classes with her. You all do a really good job” (AT2.O.3).

Why Paul allowed students to discuss other students. Being honest with students is a method that Paul believed would foster an understanding of differences. When asked about the incident with Amy, Paul responded:

First, it was honest and real. It’s feeling and it’s right there. I mean, I just think that’s what you should do. . . I also think it would be a disservice to them if I ignored it and said ‘Oh, no, she’s fine.’ They would look at me like ‘He’s completely gone.’ (AT2.I.47)

How Paul encouraged students’ relationships. Paul also spent time in the resource room encouraging students to establish relationships with each other. He utilized several methods with his students. The first method was through working on any projects that the students might need to complete for their general education classes. The use of puzzles in the form of worksheets was a favorite tool of the eighth grade math teacher. Paul guided the students to sit together, share scissors, and tape to complete these assignments. This activity tended to be tedious and trying for Paul and the students as it could result in disagreements over sharing the materials. The second method, playing cards, was more fruitful.

Paul kept a deck of playing cards in his classroom for the students. Two to 4 students engaged in these games in a casual manner when they completed their work. When the games became overly competitive and disruptive, he intervened. Paul rarely engaged in the games.

Why Paul encouraged relationships among his students. When I asked Paul about the usefulness of the card games in establishing relationships, he responded:

It’s a way for them to start to build relationships other than just a verbal exchange or some social exchange. I’ve seen magic happen in card games. It has a competitive edge so they learn how to compete with each other, they have to use their brains to think a little bit, plus they will sit here and talk and relate to each other and they don’t really

even know they're doing it. So they are establishing appropriate communication and relationships (AT2.I.41).

Why Paul provided students with various levels of support. Paul believed that the purpose of his resource room was to help students complete their academic assignments and provide them with the social skills that allowed them to successfully interact with their peers and other teachers. He reasoned that if his students had those skills they would benefit from their school experiences. Paul went about his workday moving from classroom to classroom motivated by his objectives to provide the necessary guidance and instruction to his students while supporting the general education teachers. He engaged in those actions so that his students could remain in those classes and experience success. His work was not, however, with impediments.

Job Design Issues

Paul experienced certain difficulties in working with his students. These included problems related to student schedules, working with general education teachers, and inadequate planning time.

Primarily, the inability to schedule adequate time to work individually with the students on his caseload was a source of frustration for Paul. He noted, "It's a huge issue; that's the biggest thing you fight in middle school. Right down to the services of the students. Sure, those IEPs are written for individual needs, but let me tell you something, they are schedule driven" (AT2.I.63).

Initially, Paul did not recognize general education teachers as a source of frustration. The topic emerges during the course of the data collection. Paul relied upon the general educator to assist with his content material knowledge and indicated that he enjoyed a supportive relationship with those colleagues. When asked if he felt supported by his general education colleagues, he replied, "very much so" (AT2.I.62). Although he provided the general education teachers with various levels of support, this became a source of frustration for him. He took over teaching responsibilities when a language arts teacher was unprepared for class, he removed disruptive students from general education classes, and felt that some general educators did not understand the purpose of special education.

The lack of planning time also emerged as a concern for Paul. Initially, his teaching schedule included a 90-minute planning period. However, problems within a general education

classroom related to the diversity of the students’ academic needs and behavioral concerns resulted in Paul deciding to give up his planning period. He did not have time to plan formally with his colleagues. As a result, much of the planning for classes took place informally before or after school and between classes.

In summary, Paul went about his workday moving between the eighth grade general education classrooms and his resource room. His work primarily focused on supporting his students with disabilities while they attended general education classes, supporting the general education teacher in their classrooms, and helping students understand their individual differences. Paul indicated that he enjoyed his work and that it was generally free of frustrations. However, working with certain general education teachers and scheduling conflicts impeded his ability to support his students completely.

Interpreting the Data

The actions in which Paul engaged as he spent his workday moving between the eighth grade classrooms and his resource room have been identified in the previous section. An activity perspective of that work provides additional clarification. The subject in the system is Paul, the objects of his actions are the students on his caseload, and the outcome of his actions was to help his students experience academic and social success. The tools, rules, community, and division of labor are provided in figure 5.

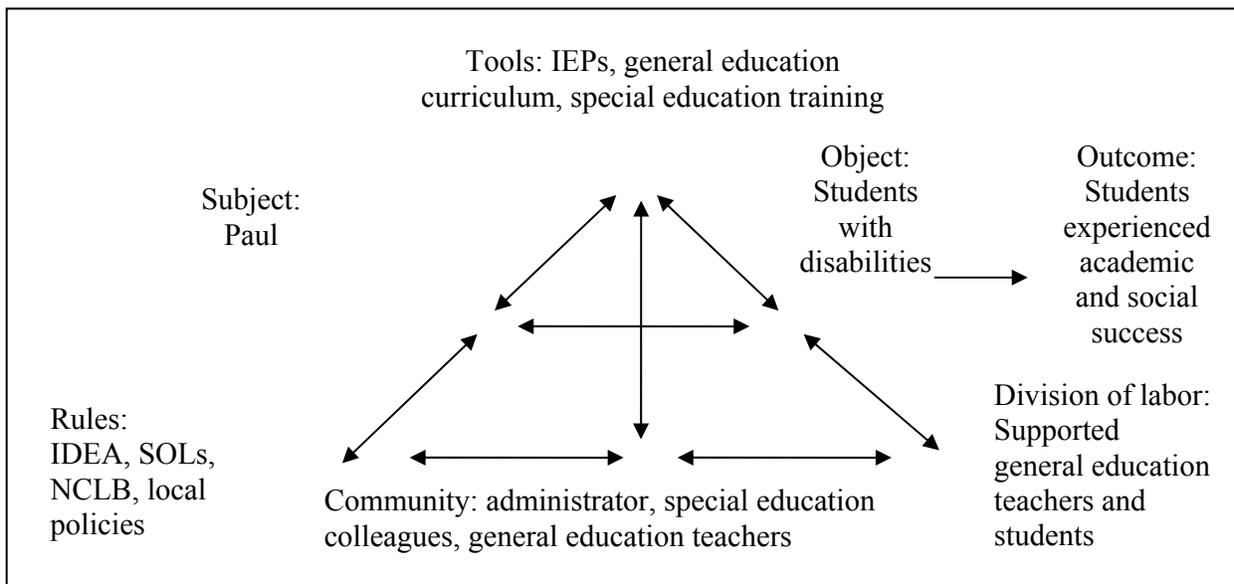


Figure 5. An activity theory systems perspective of Paul’s work.

Tools of Paul's Work

Paul carried out his work using a variety of tools such as student IEPs, general education curriculum civics, math, and language arts worksheets, tests, and books. He used the IEPs to inform general education teachers of the needs of his students and to guide him in providing students' with appropriate accommodations and services. During an earlier interview, the principal indicated that each student identified with EB/D had an IEP that included a behavior intervention plan (BIP). However, when I asked to see one, I was not provided one for review. I also observed that Paul infrequently used the computer and telephone in his room. Other tools he used with the students included pencils, paper, playing cards, chalkboard, and chalk.

The psychological or intangible tools that Paul used in his work included his prior special education training and teaching experiences. Both of these influenced his special education knowledge. He mentioned that a lack of general education content knowledge was a personal weakness. Paul demonstrated the use of a sense of humor, flexibility, and patience as other tools. His ability to ignore students' behaviors, that I found extremely distracting, was uncanny. I noted that he only intervened when the students' voices became loud or when it became apparent that an argument was impending.

Rules of Paul's Work

Federal, state, and local rules guided Paul's work. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was the primary source that structured his work. The mandates within the No Child Left Behind Act caused him some concern. He felt that students with disabilities were being forced into academic slots where they were almost assured to fail. He also felt that if the highly qualified teacher component required that he become certified to teach general education subjects he would probably retire.

State-mandated SOLs appeared to influence many of his actions. Paul talked emotionally about the SOLs and their impact on his students. He felt that much of his work with students with EB/D was being changed in reaction to the SOL tests. He indicated that he was unable to spend as much time providing students with individualized instruction. However, when I asked if he thought what was taking place in the resource room was actually specialized or direct instruction, he responded defensively that he was providing *some* direct instruction.

Local rules also guided his work. Paul reported that he was not aware of job description and that he relied upon input from the principal and the general education teachers to determine most of his responsibilities.

The School Community

The community considers those actors who share the same object as the subject. My observations suggest that Paul's community consisted of the principal, 4 general education teachers, 5 special education teachers, the students on his caseload, and their nondisabled peers.

Paul spent his workday moving around Binns Middle School. He was in and out of general education classrooms and his resource room. Lunch was purchased at the school cafeteria, where he talked casually with a guidance counselor and colleagues. During an informal observation, he attended a special education team meeting with his special education colleagues and the principal. Two of those colleagues briefly came by his room to ask student related questions during the data collection process.

Most of Paul's contact within his community was with the general education teachers. When he was not in their rooms, the general education teachers came to his room to drop off work for students, talk to him about an upcoming lesson, or to thank him for helping with a particular student.

Paul contended that he felt supported in his work from the administration and his colleagues. He indicated that the principal treated his students fairly and asked for Paul's input on disciplinary decisions with them. The principal was also knowledgeable of special education policies and procedures, which Paul found supportive. When the building level administrators could not resolve issues, the middle school special education coordinator provided elements of support. These included issues related to discipline, placement of students, and the involvement of legal authorities. As mentioned previously, time constraints limited the amount of time that Paul meets with the general education colleagues. However, because of the amount of time that he spent in their classes and the proximity of his room to their classes, he feels that they supported his efforts.

Paul's time with his students in the resource room appeared to provide him with the most pleasure. He joked easily with his students yet they appeared to treat him with respect. Students would stay in Paul's room during their free time instead of attending provided activities. They

would also come his room before the beginning and the end of the instructional day for no apparent reason.

The Division of Labor

The division of labor considers who does what in a community. Paul's work required that he divide his efforts between two settings. These were the general education classrooms and his resource room. His role in the general education classrooms depended upon the needs of the general educator and the composition of students. The civics class and the first block language arts classes required that he support his students with disabilities, their nondisabled peers, and the teachers. The teacher in the language arts class was a noncertified long-term substitute who was hired because of his ability to speak Spanish. This required that Paul assume the teaching responsibilities on two occasions when the teacher was unprepared to teach the class. The civics teacher was unable to adapt his instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of the students in his class. Once again, Paul's role shifted as he supported the teacher and attempted to support the students. He appeared frustrated by the situation with the long-term substitute and indicated that the principal had made an unwise decision in hiring him.

When Paul worked in his resource room, he focused his efforts on his students. He supported them in completing their assignments and talked with them about their various problems. He appeared to enjoy this time with his students, as his demeanor was less formal. I did not observe any shared responsibilities of the instruction of students as Paul worked in his resource room.

In summary, Paul was motivated by the mission of his work, which was to ensure that the students on his caseload experienced academic and social success in their school lives and post-school lives. He used a variety of tangible and intangible tools to carry out his work. Federal, state, and local rules provided the structure for his work. However, he relied upon his knowledge learned through his coursework, his teaching experiences, and input from his general education colleagues to guide his day-to-day responsibilities. Paul assumed much of the responsibility for the instruction of his students.

District 2

Eagle County

Eagle County is an agriculture-based community of 970 square miles located approximately 30 miles west of Warrior County. The county is in the central part of a spacious

valley and has a population of approximately 61,000 people. Two independent cities, Chanel and Mirado, are located in Eagle County, yielding a total population of over 100,000. Eagle County and the two cities have a combined labor force of 52,000 and an unemployment rate of 1.7%. Agricultural based industry provided approximately 70% of the income. Although Eagle County does not have a college within its county limits, there are eight public universities and two community colleges within a 30-mile proximity. One of the university teacher-preparation programs was engaged in a partnership with Eagle County Public Schools that allowed selected teachers to become full time faculty members for a period of time between one and three years. In this capacity, they taught courses, supervised student teachers and practicum students, and worked with university faculty on research and inquiry projects. Table 6 provides a demographic overview of Eagle County and Miles Middle School.

Eagle County Public Schools provided educational services to 10,714 students who attended one of the 12 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 5 secondary schools. Of that number of students, 95% were white, 3% were African American, 2.3% were Hispanic, Asian American, or American Indian. Fifteen percent or 1,628 were students identified with disabilities. Students are also afforded educational opportunities at a regional vocational technical center, a governor's school, a regional special education program, and a Head Start program. Miles Middle School served as the data collection site for Eagle County Public Schools.

Central Office Department of Pupil Services

Diane, the Director of Pupil Services for Eagle County, was responsible for the central office supervision of the 2 teachers from Eagle County who participated in this study. The administrative offices were located in five older oblong wooden structures covered in faded white paint. Diane greeted me cordially and answered each question thoughtfully.

Diane reported that local school board policies determined the job descriptions and responsibilities for teachers of students with EB/D and that those "job descriptions are similar to other teachers employed in the school district" (BSEA.I.1). Building level administrators ultimately determined the specific responsibilities for teachers. However, Diane indicated that she sees a distinctive difference between the responsibilities of the self-contained teachers of students with EB/D and those of the resource teachers providing services to students with EB/D.

Table 6.

Demographic profile of Eagle County and Miles Middle School

	Eagle County	Miles Middle School
Total County Population	61,000	-
Elementary Schools	12	-
Middle Schools	3	-
High Schools	5	-
Alternative Special Education Program	1	-
Student Enrollment	10,714	590
Racial Breakdown		
African American	327	59
White	10,150	460
Asian, American Indian, and Hispanic	236	71
Students with Disabilities	1,453	105
Autism	11	1
EB/D	58	9
Hearing Impairment	23	0
Other Health Impairment	134	23
Specific Learning Disabilities	628	62
Educable/Trainable Mental Retardation	88	4
Traumatic Brain Injury	9	4
Orthopedic Impairment	5	2

The teachers in the self-contained settings are responsible for providing all of the instruction in the class and providing students with the “best behavior intervention plan. . . to help them be successful” (BSEA.FI.3). They are also to act as an intermediary to protect students with EB/D from becoming “caught up in the regular discipline, the traditional discipline in the school division” (BSEA.FI.3). Resource teachers primarily ensured that the students with EB/D are experiencing success in their general education classes.

Diane indicated that both resource and self-contained special education teachers are expected to act as advocates for their students with disabilities. She stated, “I look for them to be the first line of defense for those kids. . . . be their best advocate. Whether LD, ED, I don’t care” (BSEA.I.5). She shared her belief that the mission of teachers of students with EB/D was to provide the students with the necessary tools and support to facilitate their placement in classroom resource settings and the general education classes. She explained, “I don’t think that you can make them not ED, but you can give them enough tools that they can go out and be successful. They need tools and they need support” (BSEA.I.9).

Miles Middle School.

The colorful mountains and a glimpse of sprawling valleys made the drive to Miles Middle School pleasant. Built in 1978, Miles Middle School was a one-level brick building located in a rural area approximately five miles from a major interstate. The middle school was on an expansive section of property shared with an elementary school and high school. The grounds that surrounded the schools were characterized by recently mown grass, neatly trimmed hedges, and spacious black tops areas that provided plentiful parking. A long sidewalk provided guidance to a set of dark metal double doors. Once inside, bright florescent lighting illuminated the pale tiled walls that were decorated with student artwork and posters describing upcoming school-related events. The primary focus of the wall décor related to the school wide behavior support program, STARS.

STARS was created by a faculty focus group to encourage and acknowledge “appropriate behaviors from our students as they strive to fit in and excel” (D.4). STARS is an acronym that stands for Start Prepared, Take Pride in Our School, Accept Responsibility, Respect Yourself and Others, and Strive for the Best. The posters inform students of what form STARS behavior might take in the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, busses, and every aspect of their educational setting (D.4). Students who exhibit expected behaviors are awarded STARS

currency that may be spent on school provided prizes. Students are also provided opportunities to purchase certain privileges such as being first in lunch lines and leaving the lunchroom before other students.

Mills Middle School was considered a high performance middle school in Virginia, based upon state mandated student test results and the efforts of the faculty and staff to facilitate student learning (D.4). The vision of Mills Middle reflected the philosophy that all children could learn and that learning was a worthwhile process. School personnel were encouraged to provide students with experiences that would allow them to become productive and self-sufficient adults. The school also received an exemplary rating during the Special Education Federal Monitoring Visitation, with a commendation for excellent parent communication (D4).

Miles Middle School was the largest middle school in the county. Originally built to accommodate 750 students, it housed 932 students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Of the 932 students, 18% are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Five percent were African American and the remaining 95% were White. There were 106 or 11% of students identified with disabilities. Miles Middle School employed 66 teachers; of that number, 7 provided services to students with disabilities. Four teaching assistants assisted in the provision of services to identified students with disabilities.

A principal and two assistant principals provided the administrative leadership. The principal and one of the assistant principals were former special education teachers and had experience teaching students with EB/D. They had been at Miles Middle School for three years.

Nancy, the principal, greeted me warmly in the main office. During our interview, she informed me that she was responsible for determining the responsibilities of the teachers of students with EB/D. She perceived that the primary responsibility of the teachers was to provide academic instruction to students “that meets their needs, whatever they might be” (BGA1.I.2). The teachers were also responsible for effectively communicating with various individuals on behalf of their students with EB/D. Nancy expected the teachers to inform other general education teachers of the characteristics of EB/D. She indicated that many general educators do not understand the disability and might treat a student inappropriately. She said that some teachers “don’t understand what ED behavior is, they think it’s anything. For example, they think that a kid who is socially maladjusted or just too squirrely to sit in a classroom is ED” (BGA.I.10).

Teachers of students with EB/D were also expected to ensure that meaningful communication with the parents of the students was established and maintained. Nancy explained, “when they have to call and tell the family that their child did so and so and we need help with this, the family is receptive” (BGA1.I.4). Those experienced teachers were to act as mentors to new special education teachers. This was important to her, as the special education department at Mills Middle has experienced turnover during the past three years due to the retirements of several special education teachers. She related that she attended the IEP meetings for students with EB/D and worked closely with the central office special education facilitator to ensure that the classrooms and the teachers were protected.

Case Three

Elaine

Nancy introduced me to somewhat preoccupied Elaine on the appointed day of our interview. She asked if we could talk on the way to her class, as she wanted to check on her students before we conducted our interview. We steadfastly made our way down the clear and quiet hallway. Large oak doors that lead to many of the classrooms were closed, muting the voices of teachers and students. Oblong windows provided brief glimpses into the classrooms Elaine offered few comments as we walked down the hall. She made clear in a firm but soft voice that she was unsure of how she can help me but she would do her best.

We stopped by Elaine’s classroom to allow her to check on the three students who were under the watchful eye of the full-time paraprofessional assigned to her room, Mrs. D. The women shared the classroom with the eight students on Elaine’s caseload. One student, a gangly adolescent wearing a green Army fatigue jacket and jeans, lounged on one of the two couches centrally located in the room while taking a test. Peter, a dark haired petite boy dressed in jeans and a white t-shirt sat at a student desk and appeared deeply engaged in completing a color by number painting. Only tufts of brown hair and scuffed white tennis shoes of a third student were visible. The student was engrossed in working on one of three computers that was located at a round table toward the back of the room.

The classroom was located toward the end of a wing on a centrally located hallway. Accessibility to the other sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes was a benefit of the room’s location. A door in the back of the classroom conveniently opened into a suite of rooms that was home to the guidance counselors and other support personnel. It also provided a quick access for

the administrators when they responded to Elaine's infrequent requests for assistance with one of her students. When Elaine was satisfied that all was well we made our way to the library for the interview. She answered my questions thoughtfully and without elaboration. Although she was provided with an interview protocol, she chose to answer my questions spontaneously.

Teaching Experiences

Elaine entered the work of teaching students with disabilities directly from a teacher preparation program at a local university possessing a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in special education. Her preferred job would have been teaching students with EB/D or mental retardation (MR). However, eight years ago those jobs were difficult to secure in the Eagle County Public School system. So she accepted an offer to teach in a special education resource setting for students identified with learning disabilities (LD), MR, other health impaired (OHI), and EB/D at Miles Middle.

Elaine brought to her current position the desire to strengthen, what she perceived as, "a weak point" (BT1.I.1.) in the special education program at Miles Middle School. Prior to Elaine taking over the position of teaching in the self-contained classroom two years ago, there had been significant turnover. She modestly but candidly stated:

I wanted to make the program stronger, not saying that I knew I could do it, but I was hoping that I could and maybe we would make this class not such a burden to the rest of the school and to the department" (BT1.1.2).

Teaching Responsibilities

Elaine recognized that her most important responsibility was to her 8 sixth, seventh, and grade students with EB/D on her caseload. Her role as their teacher was to make sure that "they're in school and not having conflicts with other kids. . . and then secondly, just the academic part of it" (BT1.I.12). Additional responsibilities included mentoring a recently hired special education teacher, special education department chair, and acting in the place of an administrator in special education service related meetings. In the role of special education department chair, Elaine assisted other special education teachers in writing IEPs and preparing for meetings related to IDEA. In the position of acting as an administrator in IEP and eligibility meetings, Elaine directed the meetings and signed the related documents as the administrator. Under IDEA, an administrator is required to attend each program related meeting. The

completion of required paperwork and attending meetings associated with the provision of special education services under IDEA were also a part of her workday.

Elaine established that her responsibilities were unguided by a formal job description. She relied upon her experiences as a special educator, guidance from administrators, and her personal work ethic. She said that when “somebody tells me I have to do something, then I go, ‘Ok’ and I do it” (BT1.I.13).

Neatly coiffed, chin-length, brown hair framed her pleasant face. A gift for seeing the humor in situations softened the sincere stance that characterized Elaine. She preferred to wear comfortable looking polished leather shoes and muted-colored clothing such as pressed khaki pants, light colored sweater sets. She sported the occasional denim jumper with a Christmas theme as she moved around her classroom and the building keeping a watchful eye on the 8 young men who were under her charge.

An Illustration of Elaine’s Work

Elaine spent the majority of her 6 class periods of her day in her classroom accompanied by her paraprofessional, Mrs. D., and several of her students. She described her job as being, “very frustrating some days, very frustrating, but for the most part, I do like being here, I like being with those guys. They’re funny (BT1.I.36). During certain times of the day, there were between 2 and 6 students in her classroom and she would interact with numerous general and special education teachers and administrators. Table 7 provides an overview of Elaine and her work.

While in Elaine’s classroom, the students busily painted pictures, completed academic assignments, and talked with Elaine and Mrs. D. Everyone appeared to understand their individual routines as students came and left the room making their ways to and from physical education classes, vocational technical programs, and the occasional math or science class. On a normal day, students would sit at separate student desks, while Elaine and Mrs. D walked from student to student, checking for understanding, attention to tasks, and awarding points on their daily point sheets.

Elaine went about her workday, driven by the hope that her efforts would allow the students to return successfully to their general education classes, which in turn would prepare them to become independent citizens. She remarked, “I’d like to just see them become members

of society without ending up in jail” (BT1.I.6). To provide the reader with a clearer understanding of her work, the following themes and illustrations speak to the *how* and the *why* of her actions. Her workday consisted of (a) providing her students with opportunities to develop their social skills, (b) advancing her students’ academic abilities, and (c) advocating for her students. Job design issues included, (a) working with certain general education teachers and (b) feelings of isolation.

Table 7

A Profile of Elaine and her Work.

Teaching Position	Professional Degrees	Teaching Endorsements	Years of Experience	Students on Caseload	Breakdown of Students’ Disabilities
Self-Contained Teacher	BS in Psychology and Special Education	EB/D LD MR	8	8	EB/D

Note: EB/D= emotional and/or behavioral disorder.

Developing Students Social Skills: Don’t Yell at Us

Social skills; manners; you know, how you talk with your peers; interacting with adults especially. You know, don’t yell at us; don’t yell at each other; keep your hands to yourself. Things like that. That’s what we work on. (BT1.56)

One of the ways that Elaine worked toward helping her student to return to the general education classroom was to provide them with opportunities to develop their social skills. A task that she admitted was difficult to accomplish because of the isolated nature of her program. She said, “We work on social skills in here, but it’s hard in isolation but we try” (FN.41). Modeling expected behaviors and talking with students were two methods of addressing the social needs of the students.

How Elaine and Mrs. D modeled behaviors. Elaine and her paraprofessional, Mrs. D, worked together, in an easy manner that was established early in their relationship. Elaine remarked that, “we just clicked in the beginning” (FN.86). During classroom observations, they

engaged in an effortless rhythm of talking with each other and the students as they moved around the classroom. Elaine and Mrs. D both used even calm tones and did not raise their voices with each other or with the students. When they talked among themselves their conversations centered on mundane topics such as the daily lunch menu, their families, and decorating for the upcoming holidays.

As Elaine and Mrs. D made their way around the classroom working with individual students, they would occasionally question a student's answer. On one occasion, Nick attempted to argue with Elaine about her reaction to one of his answers. In an even tone, she told him that he can leave it the way it is if he is convinced that the answer is correct "but please show or tell me how you got that answer" (BT1.O.1). Nick grumbled as he changed the answer. Their efforts were reinforced by the words boldly written on a poster that hung in front of the room that reflected the classroom rules: Be Polite, Respect Other People's Space (Hands and Feet to Yourself), 3. Respect Others Property. References to these rules were also a part of the day.

Why they showed students what to do. Elaine and Mrs. D. modeled expected behavior to students based upon her training to teach students EB/D. She believed that if she and Mrs. D would model those behaviors, her students might understand what behaviors were expected of them.

How Elaine and Mrs. D engaged students in talks. Elaine and Mrs. Dean also engaged their students in, what Elaine referred to as, "little talks" (BT1.I.36). The couches and beanbags in Elaine's room served as the spot for a session during an informal observation. Peter was a student assigned to Elaine's caseload during the course of this data collection. He was a slight, pale-faced boy with light brown hair who had problems with controlling his anger toward others. His general education teachers reported that he exhibited angry outbursts such as yelling at teachers and his peers, throwing books, and charging at his peers while in their classes. Peter's mother stated that his behavior at home was as equally troubling (BT2.O.3). Peter listened impassively while they talked with him until Elaine told him that he could leave.

Why Elaine and Mrs. D engaged in the little talks. The intention of these talks was to assist students in understanding how some of their behaviors caused others to react to them and how those behaviors influenced their ability to establish relationships with others. Elaine was realistic about the influence that such talks would have with her students. She stated:

I think the little talks and things that we have with them--I'm hoping that the little talks we're having with [Peter]--that maybe he'll go home and be nicer to his Mom. I really hope so. He's in counseling and that doesn't seem to be helping. Who knows, but we're trying. (BT1.I.36)

Why Elaine addressed their social skills. Elaine remained hopeful that her efforts in addressing their social skills would influence Peter and the other students on her caseload and improve their school and post-school lives. She related a success that she and Mrs. D experienced with a student who went from a full-time placement in her class to attending 30 minutes per day. She said:

We went from having angry outbursts every day, throwing books on the floor, breaking pencils, punching walls, yelling to ½ hour days in my room. . . . he still has issues but he's dealing with it. . . . before if he got mad, he automatically lashed out and now when he gets mad, he leaves the situation, which is great for him. (BT1. I.7).

Advancing Students' Academic Abilities: The Academic Part of It

Addressing the academic skills of her students was a portion of how Elaine went about her workday. She provided her students with exposure to "the academic part of it" (BT1.I.12). She provided her students with academic instruction in her classroom and attended a seventh grade science class with 2 of her students.

How Elaine approached academic instruction. Elaine provided her students with curriculum-based materials and opportunities to strengthen their academic skills with the assistance of Mrs. D. Sessions would begin with Elaine seated in a comfortable rocking chair at the front of the room as she explained an upcoming lesson. She first informed students of her expectations. On one occasion, she said, "We're going to reread Chapter 2 of the BFG and answer some questions. That's all we're going to do. Then it's lunch time" (FN.88). As she led the lesson, Mrs. D walked around the classroom awarding points to those students who attended to the task and congratulated them for paying attention. Students were encouraged to participate, however, their participation was not required.

Why Elaine approached academics. Elaine appeared to have an understanding of what she could expect from her students and what their limits were academically. She stated, "I don't push them to read or do any of the academic stuff. I think that makes all the ED stuff come out; not wanting to do it. . . . and we can come back and do it later" (BT1.18). Elaine created the

point system as a form of rewarding them for attending to task, “Doing the points- - I was hoping would help them stay focused” (BT1.I.18). The accumulated points could be used to purchase items from the classroom store, items that she purchased with her special education money (FN.88).

How Elaine attended the science classes. Elaine attended seventh grade science classes with 2 of her students. She made this decision after making what she perceived as futile attempts to teach science in her classroom. She explained:

I did teach science, but I felt like they missed out on labs and things like that. Because we did some lab-type stuff, but I just feel like they missed [out] like they did pig dissections and we didn’t do that [and] I feel like that was something they probably would’ve enjoyed. So, I just said, no, you guys are going to science this year. (BT1.I.10)

While in that class, Elaine spent her time keeping an eye on her students, Mark and Joe, as they sat among the warm room crowded with 24 students. She watched as the science teacher reviewed homework and provided them with instructions for the period. As the students worked independently, she would check to see that Joe and Mark were organized and on task. When it became apparent that her students were attending to task, Elaine took a seat at one of the student desks and began to work on lesson plans and other paperwork until the end of class.

Why Elaine went to science classes. Elaine accompanied her students to the science classes to ensure that they received appropriate instruction. She was realistic about her role while in the science room. It was primarily to make certain that her students were included in that class and to keep the teacher content. She noted:

Most of the time what I do is I stay in the back; I get the worksheets and I take the notes in case a kid needs them. . . . A lot of times I don’t mess with my kids at all. I’m helping the other special ED kids or helping the regular kids in class. . . . I just try to keep them focused; keep up where she wants them to be. (BT1.I.43)

Why Elaine addressed her students’ academic needs. Elaine believed that the program she designed structured around the general education curriculum would benefit her students. She explained, “Since I’ve been in this classroom; the curriculum is just a tool for the rest of it; just to piece it all together. It provides the structure that the kids need to get through the day” (BT1.I.53).

Advocating for Her Students

I've felt like I've been an advocate more since I've been in ED than I ever have. I did feel like it when I was in LD but I didn't feel like it was as necessary as it is now.

(BT1.I.26)

Elaine's workday included advocating for several students when she attended meetings on their behalf. These included a functional behavior assessment (FBA) meeting and an IEP meeting. Definitions for these meetings are provided in Chapter 1. While her attendance at those meetings was related directly to her responsibilities as a teacher of students with EB/D, she had dual roles. As she completed the necessary paperwork, she firmly insisted that those students received appropriate services related to their disabilities.

Elaine attended a FBA meeting on behalf of Peter, the sixth grader with EB/D whom she described as being very bright (FN.92). He received special education services in a resource room setting and general education instruction in three general education classes. The general education teachers requested the meeting to discuss Peter's behaviors that were keeping other students from learning and contributing to his academic failures. Elaine went to the meeting under the assumption that the team would complete a functional behavioral assessment and develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP) that would become a part of Peter's IEP, which would allow him to remain in the regular education classes.

As the meeting progressed, Elaine perceived that the teachers' intentions were not to develop a FBA for Peter but to have his placement changed to a more restrictive environment. One teacher commented, "He just wants to go to your room, the fun room. . . you know, all the noises, that's fun, isn't it?" (BT1.O2). Elaine ignored the comments while she read the FBA form and asked for input from the teachers that would create an appropriate BIP. Ultimately, the team members developed a BIP that would support Peter's continued placement in the general education classroom with the opportunity to leave difficult situations.

This meeting placed Elaine in the position where she needed to advocate for the student to receive appropriate services, which she believed was in the general education classroom. She was committed to her belief that Peter could succeed in the general education classroom given the proper supports. However, a subsequent interview revealed that the general education teachers had not implemented the BIP in their classrooms and that Peter's placement was to be changed to a more restricted environment. She said, "After all of that fighting and everything. . .

he's the one getting hurt and by trying to prove a point, that you can't just raise a big stink and get a kid out of your class, he's the one that's ultimately affected" (BT1.24).

How Elaine advocated for her students. Elaine attended the IEP meeting to change the placement for Peter from a resource placement to a more restrictive environment for all subjects except science. The science teacher balked at this decision, implying that Peter was failing in her classes and needed placement elsewhere. Once again, Elaine was placed in the position of advocating for Peter. Using a firm tone, Elaine stated, I can't do labs in my class, he needs to be in there. . . they also need time away from me. . . He can come down to my classroom but he needs to try to stay in the science class (BT1.O.3).

Why Elaine advocated for her students. Elaine advocated for her students with EB/D based upon her belief that unless she did so, they would not receive appropriate treatment or services from certain general education teachers. She indicated that many of the general educators simply did not want students with EB/D in their classes because they did not want to contend with the behaviors associated with the disability. Further, she believed that the general education was the more appropriate placement for most of her students because of gaining access to the general education curriculum.

In summary, Elaine conducted her work driven by her mission to assist her students in returning to the general education classes and lead independent lives. She provided her students with opportunities to develop their social and academic skills. She also advocated for her students with EB/D, a necessary and perhaps unpleasant aspect of her work. Elaine generally enjoyed her work with her students with her colleagues. There were other aspects related to the design of her work that hindered her ability to teach her students effectively. These were working with general education colleagues and feelings of isolation.

Job Design Issues

Elaine experienced problems with her job that related to working with certain general education teachers and feelings of isolation. The greatest source of frustration for Elaine was working with certain general education teachers. These feelings of frustration resulted from the situations with the general education teachers and providing appropriate services for Peter. On a separate occasion, a general education science teacher verbally accosted Elaine. During the initial interview, Elaine indicated that she had several general education colleagues whom she could turn to for support. She said, "There's a couple that I could go to but I just don't. . . but I

know who I can go to ask” (BT1.I.20). These positive feelings deteriorated over the course of data collection. A general education teacher questioned Elaine’s student caseload and instructional decisions in her classroom. She reported:

What it all boils down to is the teacher is mad that I’ve said I don’t teach science. She doesn’t think that it’s right. When she came in that day, she only saw 2 kids and her attitude is that if she only has 2 kids and I have a class of 20, how come she can’t do what she needs to do? And she doesn’t understand that I have 3 grade levels; she saw one snapshot of my day when there’s not always just 2 kids in here. There’s not over 20 but at the same time she has been in here to see what goes on sometimes and now chaotic it can be. (BT1.I.45)

Elaine always felt isolated in her work to a certain degree. She did not always receive information from the front office about field trips and other events. She said, “Sometimes I feel like we’re on our own little island. We get left out of stuff. . . I don’t get some of the homeroom information. . . so the kids don’t get included on field trips and things like that a lot” (BT1.I.4). When she had questions about curriculum issues, she generally tried to work them out on her own. She remarked, “I don’t know, there really isn’t anybody” (BT1.I.19).

Some of Elaine’s feelings of isolation related to a recent turnover in the special education department at Miles Middle School. She worked with only one teacher who was there when she began working there. She remarked, “It hard to find somebody to go to that I think has sage advice” (BT1.I.40). Problems associated with time constraints also caused her feelings of isolation. Elaine commented, “We just don’t have enough opportunity to go in and see the other teachers and see what they’re doing to help you” (BT1.I.44).

Elaine did enjoy some of the freedoms associated with being in a self-contained class. She simply said, “I can do what I want to do” (BT1.I.9).

Although certain aspects of her work caused her frustration, Elaine enjoyed her time spent with her students. She believed that her efforts with her students would help them as they made their made into the world. She was also realistic regarding her hopes that her students recognized and appreciated her efforts. She said:

Mrs. [D] and I have talked about how great it would be for these guys to come back and say, ‘You know, I learned so much from you!’ . . . That’s what I would like to think. Do I really think that’s what I’m doing? Some days and some days not. (BT1.I.57).

In summary, Elaine spent her most of her workday in her self-contained classroom providing the eight sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students identified with EB/D with opportunities to develop their social skills and addressing their academic needs. She also acted as an advocate for her students. Her efforts to support her students were impeded by certain general education teachers and feelings of isolation.

Interpreting the Data

The identification of the variety of actions in which Elaine engaged as she worked in her self-contained classroom, accompanied students to the seventh grade science class, and attended a number of meetings related to the provision of services under IDEA provided an understanding of her work. An activity perspective of that work provides additional clarification. The subject in the system is Elaine, the object of her actions are the students with EB/D on her caseload, and the outcome of her actions was to support her students so they could spend more time in the general education classrooms. The tools, rules, community, and division of labor are provided in Figure 6.

Tools of Elaine's Work

Elaine employed several tangible and intangible tools as she went about her work. The tangible tools included her students' IEPs, her classroom point system, the school-wide behavioral support system, general education textbooks, specially developed texts for students with disabilities, and materials from the general education curriculum. She was particularly proud of her accomplishment in creating an academic component in the self-contained program for students with EB/D. Apparently, the previous teachers had spent much of the class time watching movies and letting the students play games on the computers. Several tools were more important to her than others were. These were the behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) in her students IEPs and the point systems. The BIPs were central to her students' inclusion in their general education classes. Her classroom point system motivated her students to complete their academic assignments and encouraged the development of their social skills. She thought that the school-wide behavioral support system provided a meaningful method for her students to do well outside of her classroom.

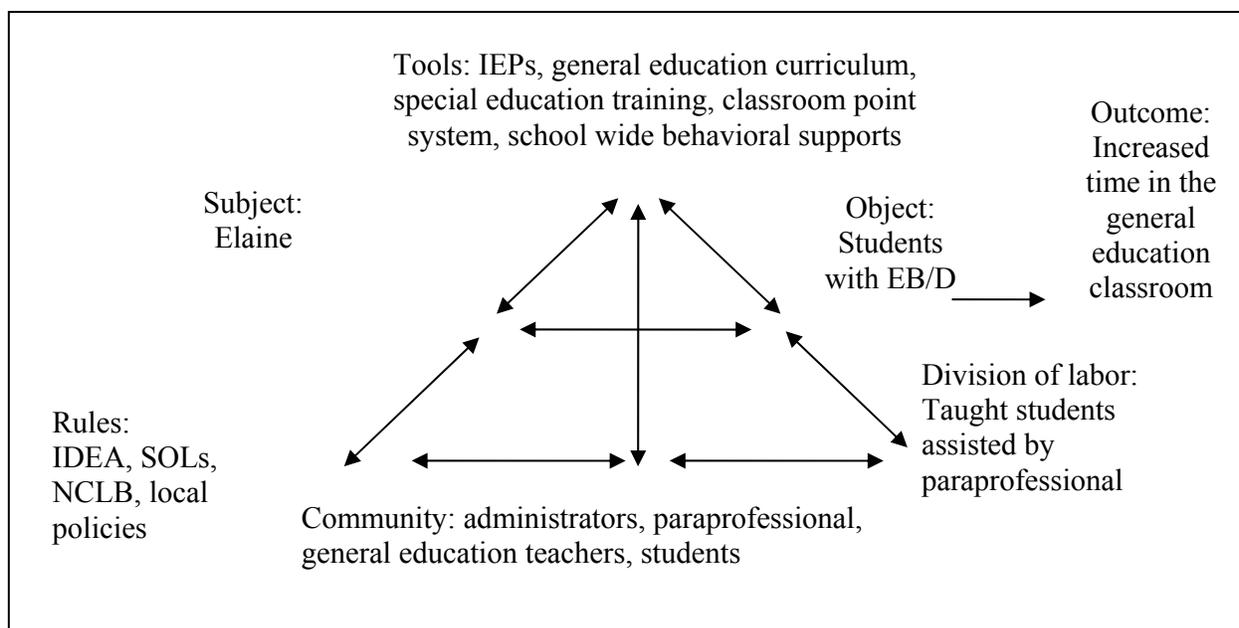


Figure 6. An activity theory systems perspective of Elaine's work.

Elaine used intangible tools such as her special education teaching knowledge and her knowledge of the legal aspects of IDEA in her work. She also relied upon her teaching experiences. She considered that her teaching experiences provided her with adequate skills to carry out her work. Elaine had a wry sense of humor that her students appeared to enjoy. She was also patient with her students and went to great lengths to offer them choices and explain the consequences of their actions. Yet, she was also firm and stood her ground with the students.

Rules of Elaine's Work

The IDEA provided the framework for Elaine's work. She fulfilled her obligations related to IDEA generally uncomplaining. When we talked about other federal mandates such as the highly-qualified teacher component of the No Child Left Behind Act she was ambiguous. She suggested that if she were required to obtain additional endorsement to keep her job as a special educator, she would do so. However, she did not see the actual benefit to her or to students with disabilities.

The Standards of Learning (SOLs) were not a great source of concern for Elaine. She did provide students with necessary supports to help them pass those tests. Yet, greater portions of her efforts centered on addressing her students' emotional needs.

Although, local rules such as school board policies guided Elaine's work, she was unaware of a job description and indicated that it would not provide her much guidance. She

relied upon her discussions with the principal to determine what her responsibilities would be each year. She was confident in her ability to fulfill the obligations of her job.

The School Community

From observations of her work, I noted that Elaine's community consisted of Mrs. D., the principal, the assistant principal with special education experience, several general education teachers, 3 special education colleagues, and her students. Elaine appeared to be an independent teacher who enjoyed the freedom of working in a self-contained classroom.

Elaine spent most of her day in her resource room with Mrs. D and several students. Special education colleagues asking for help completing a special education related forms or needing assistance with teaching a topic interrupted her work with her students occasionally. Elaine assisted each teacher in a pleasant manner and then returned to her work with her students. She appeared to have a close relationship with one of the special education teachers, Ann, and Mrs. D.

The administrators were also members of Elaine's community. She relied upon their special education experience to assist her with behavioral related problems with her students. Her relationship with the assistant principal was stable throughout the data collection process. He provided her with art supplies for her students and the occasional pizza party as a reward for helping out the office staff. Her relationship with the principal, Nancy, was less stable. Elaine felt that Nancy did not provide her with adequate support and favored the general education teachers over student placement issues.

The community included sixth, seventh, and eight grade general education teachers. Elaine's relationship with the sixth grade level teachers took on a negative tone during the data collection period. It began with the functional behavioral assessment meeting and the comments about Elaine's room being 'the fun room.' The situation deteriorated when I informally observed the science teacher yelling at Elaine regarding her insistence that Peter attend her science class. Elaine listened and did not respond. When the science teacher finished her tirade, Elaine walked quietly into her classroom. When she talked with me later about the situation, Elaine was angry with the teacher and with Nancy because Nancy had not reprimanded the science teacher for her behavior.

Elaine's students were the bits of light in her community. She sincerely enjoyed working with her students. She greeted students individually and did not pressure them if they did not

respond. She treated them with respect and asked the same from them. She commented that her greatest pleasure was helping them become successful and having them shine.

The Division of Labor

Elaine's community included several actors, however, most of her time was spent in her classroom working with her students supported by Mrs. D. She assumed the primary role of providing her students with the various elements of academic and social support. She shared those responsibilities with Mrs. D.

As noted previously, Elaine seemed to enjoy the freedom associated with being in a self-contained classroom. She liked being the primary source of support when her students asked for help and guidance with their problems as they worked toward becoming independent young men.

In summary, Elaine was motivated in her work by her desire to help her students to eventually spend more time in the general education classrooms and become independent citizens. She employed a variety of tangible and intangible tools to carry out her work. Federal, state, and local rules provided the structure for her work. Yet, she relied upon her knowledge learned through her teaching experiences, the needs of her students, and input from an administrator to guide her day-to-day responsibilities. Elaine assumed the primary responsibility for the instruction of her students.

Teacher Four

Joan

Elaine provided the formal introductions to Joan, an eighth grade resource/collaborative teacher of students with disabilities identified with mild disabilities. Joan indicated that she had received the interview protocol and would be pleased to participate in the study. She wore her straight, salt and pepper hair cut in an attractive, chin-length style. Wire rimmed glasses with softly tinted lenses complemented her hair color, fair complexion, and ready smile. Neatly pressed, loose-fitting, pastel colored clothing and comfortable shoes were Joan's preferred attire.

Joan led me purposefully through the hallways of the building, now crowded with students changing classes, who moved slowly and loudly in both directions. Nearly all of the students wore denim jeans of various shades, shapes, and sizes. Several students wore oversized t-shirts decorated with the names of musical groups or a neighboring university. Others wore well-worn flannel shirts, western-style shirts, or the hip-length navy blue jackets adorned with

the oversized gold letters that proclaimed them as members of the FFA- Future Farmers of America. The halls were filled with the cracking voices and the activity of teenagers, teasing, flirting, laughing, and the slamming of lockers.

We made our way through the crush of students toward Joan's classroom, which she hoped was unoccupied. As we walked, she expressed her frustrations with the shortage of adequate classroom space at Miles Middle School due to overcrowding. She shared a resource room located on an outer wing of the school with two other special education teachers.

The windowless room was crowded with the teaching supplies of the special education teachers. Three teachers' desks and 8 student desks faced the front of the room. In the back were several long worktables. Colorful pictures of a variety of automobiles covered a bulletin board on a back wall. According to Joan, it was a reward program belonging to one of the other teachers (FN.98). The blackboard was separated into two sections. A smaller section provided an area for the teachers to post student assignments, while a larger section was used for daily instruction. Joan's desk was covered with books, papers, colored coded files, and miscellaneous knickknacks.

As we sat at a back table, Joan gave each of the questions thought before she responded and asked for clarification when the question was unclear. She often strayed from the interview protocol and reminisced about her previous job of teaching a self-contained class of students with EB/D in another state.

Teaching Experiences

Joan entered the field of teaching students with disabilities in the 1960s for the security that the job offered. She explained, "In the '60s there was a glut of teachers and teacher education was concerned there wouldn't be enough jobs for everybody. So I thought with a special education certification, I'd have a better chance of getting a job" (BT2.I.2). This entry into the field led to the completion of the coursework necessary to obtain a master's degree in special education with an emphasis in EB/D. Her early interest in the work was instilled through contact with a childhood friend's brother with Down Syndrome. Joan had 18 years of experience working with students with disabilities. Her prior experience included 8 years as a self-contained teacher of students with EB/D in a neighboring state. Her job at Miles Middle School as a resource/collaborative teacher involved teaching 17 eighth grade students identified as being eligible to receive services under IDEA. Table 8 provides a profile of Joan and her work.

Teaching Responsibilities

Joan believed that as resource/collaborative teacher her primary responsibility was to make certain that her students succeeded in the general education classroom. She said that, “It’s my responsibility to support my students so they can make it in the regular classroom like everybody else. So they’re not so different from everybody else” (BT2.I.23). Joan also mentored recently hired special education teachers and performed the role of an administrator at IEP meetings and reevaluations to determine students’ continued eligibility under IDEA.

Table 8

A Profile of Joan and her Work.

Teaching Position	Professional Degrees	Teaching Endorsements	Years of Teaching Experience	Students on Caseload	Disabilities of Students on Caseload
Resource/ Collaborative Teacher	BS in Special Education MS in Special Education	LD EB/D MR	18	17	EB/D-1 LD-10 MR 2 OHI 4

Note: EB/D= emotional and behavior disorder; LD=learning disabilities; MR= mental retardation; OHI- other health impaired

A portion of her day included assignments such as hall duty and bus duties. Joan also volunteered for lunch duty and in-school suspension (AES) duties to support her eighth grade team members.

When asked if she had a job description, Joan indicated that she was unaware of a job description and relied upon input from her administrators and general education team members to determine specific responsibilities. She also relied on her previous teaching experiences to guide her in her work. The nonexistence of a specific job description did not concern her and she implied that if a job description were necessary, administrators would give that assignment to the special education teacher. She remarked, “They’d probably say, ‘Make up your own.’ That’s what they’ll tell us. Oh my God, another thing to do before Friday” (BT2.I.25).

Joan's workday was guided by a teaching schedule divided into six-45 minute class periods. During three of those periods, she provided small group instruction to between six and seven students with disabilities. Two periods per day, she accompanied students with disabilities as they attended their general education classes. Her schedule included a daily planning period.

An Illustration of Joan's Work

During Elaine's workday, she steadily moved from classroom to classroom, navigating the crowded hallways, interacting with a variety of students, general education, and special education teachers.

Joan went about her workday, guided by her belief that the purpose of her work was to provide her students with the necessary supports so that they could succeed in the general education classroom. The following themes provide the reader with an understanding of how and why she conducted her work, (a) supporting her students while they were in their general education classes, (b) guiding her students in the completion of general education curriculum materials, and (c) supporting the general education teachers. Job design concerns were working with certain general education teachers and scheduling constraints.

Accompanying Students to Their General Education Classes

Joan spent two class periods per day accompanying her students to their eighth grade language arts and social studies classes. There were approximately 20 students in each class. As the classes began, Joan and the teacher talked among themselves as they watched boisterous students enter the classrooms. Upon entering the rooms, most students quieted their voices, wandered over to their assigned seats where they opened their pack backs, and began to prepare for the business of the class. Other students required guidance from Joan to be seated and get organized.

How Joan supported students. Joan went about her time in those classes providing her students with organizational and academic supports. She also took those opportunities to learn from the general education teachers, teachers whom she described as having the ability to provide for her students because they "run a tight ship behavior-wise; I don't like the loose ones; I can't hack that. These are good teachers; the four teachers on this team are strong teachers and strong disciplinarians and I like that; it serves my kids better" (BT2.I.49/50).

During an observation, Joan stood at the back of the classroom, while the general education teacher attended to a review of homework assignments and provided instructions for

the upcoming lesson. Once the teacher instructed students to begin their individual work, Joan moved quietly from student to student helping those who appeared in need of support. She used a soft voice as she asked questions, “What does this mean?” (BT2.O.2) and provided guidance, “You don’t put names of books in quotes, you underline them. Look at the notes that I made on your paper last time” (BT2.O.2). As the classes wore on and students became restless, Joan also provided warnings to students teetering on the disciplinary edge, “Shh, you’re going to get in trouble for talking” (BT2.O.2). She tapped the shoulders of distracted students, made eye contact, and made sure that they were completing their assignments before moving on to another student.

Why Joan supported the students. Joan accompanied her students in those classes “to make sure that my kids can do what everybody else is doing. Like having [them on] a level playing field. . . . Sometimes it’s a matter of keeping them on task. . . . keeping them focused on what they’re supposed to be doing” (BT2.I.47). She provided support to any student who appeared in need because, “Some of those kids in that class that don’t have disabilities [and they] don’t function [as well as] my kids do” (BT2.I.46).

While in the general education classes, Joan took those opportunities to improve her core academic subject knowledge and observe classroom management techniques. Joan reasoned that, as a collaborative teacher, when “you go into a person’s room or different people’s rooms you pick the best of everybody. You know, you pick what you think is best from everybody” (BT2.I.26).

Joan remarked that being a special education teacher in the current context of public middle schools required certain skills:

If I’m going to teach middle school, then I need to know the math that’s taught in middle school. You need to be able to teach the SOL skills credibly. . . . So, if I’m a special educator and I’m going to teach math, I need to get through pre-algebra anyway.” (BT2.I.15).

Learning those skills from general education colleagues was a method for her to learn the subject material in order to support her students. She recognized that her math skills were a personal weakness and explained that spending three years working in a eighth grade pre-algebra collaborative setting “really spiffed me up a bit” (BT2.I.10). Joan also indicated that

spending time in the eighth grade language arts class improved her ability to teach her students. She said:

Even Mrs. [B], I've learned a lot. . . she believes strongly in the reading and writing component to improve comprehension and everything else. She has them [her students] read every night. They have a reading log so do mine. I do everything she does in a paired down level but I very much mirror exactly what she is doing. She does editing everyday. So do I. (BT2.I.25)

Why Joan attended the general education classes. Attending the general education classes with her students was one on the responsibilities of Joan's work. She reasoned that time spent in the general education classes also provided her with opportunities to learn general education content material. She alleged that, "I learn every day. I'm learning all the time" (BT2.I.10). Besides learning core-content material while in those classrooms, Joan believed that she could learn useful classroom management techniques that she could use when working with her students in small settings. She remarked, "One thing about being a special ed teacher is you go into a lot of other teachers' classrooms. . . . You get to take the best of what you see and make it be part of your own" (BT2.I.13).

Guiding Students in the General Education Curriculum

I'm doing the regular curriculum and guess what, I don't have the luxury of reading a book; because if I'm reading a book--unless I can make the parallel to the SOLs, I [better] not spend my time on it (BT2.I.29).

Joan supported her students in making progress in the general education curriculum by providing instruction based on that curriculum. She utilized the two 45-minute resource periods to guide her students in preparing them to pass the state-mandated SOL (Standards of Learning) tests. Daily planning periods afforded her the limited opportunities to work individually with students to support their success in the general education curriculum.

How Joan instructed students. During the daily resource periods, Joan generally engaged between six or seven students identified with disabilities in whole group instruction that focused on math and language arts. She also spent a portion of each class reviewing the SOL test related skills with her students.

During an observation, Joan stood in front of the blackboard and instructed students to "get ready for the next activity. This is a SOL thing" (BT2.O.1). She provided them with their

previously written reactions to a story entitled, *Staying Sober*, which was about alcoholism among an Indian tribe in 1997. Each student was asked to read his or her story aloud, an exercise that caused, John, some embarrassment. John was a tall brown haired boy with early signs of acne, who appeared to be uncomfortable with his reading ability. He blushed as he stumbled over certain words, however, continued reading while being reassured by Joan that he was “doing a nice job” (BT2.O.1). When his turn was over, he quickly returned to his seat.

Joan acknowledged that exercises such as this example could be difficult for students. She said, “It’s very trying. . . but I try to make it work that they can do because if it’s too hard then they don’t learn; they get frustrated” (BT2.I. 32). She also recognized that much of her efforts to support students such as John might not facilitate his passage of the SOL tests. She said that, “Now, I can get the work cut down for him or something but it doesn’t serve him--it won’t serve him well on the SOL” (BT2.I.35).

Why Joan supported students’ progress in the general education curriculum. When asked why she spent so much of her time addressing the general education curriculum and SOL information, Joan candidly remarked, “These guys have to take the SOLs and in my planning book I have the SOLs I’m doing. . . I have what is expected--I always look at the general curriculum guide for the SOL. (BT2.I.35)

How Joan supported students individually. Joan used her planning time to assist her students in preparing written papers for their eighth grade language arts classes, a demanding task that she described as being “a killer” (BT2.I.36). She sat side by side with Bob in the library as she laboriously asked question after question to guide him in completing his paper. Bob was a brown-haired youth with big, brown eyes, and a shy smile who steadfastly wrote and erased sentences until his eraser wore down and I lent him mine. He continued writing encouraged by Joan’s persistent questions, “Do you see how this is your opening sentence?. . . . Do you get yourself up?. . . . What else do you do in the morning?” (BT2.O.3).

During an informal observation, I watched as Joan assisted another student with her writing. Amy, a blond- haired girl required less guidance than Bob, however, Joan’s efforts were similar. She asked Amy guiding questions, provided her with several answers until a rough draft of the paper was completed. Joan noted that Amy was “a good student. She had all As and Bs but she can’t write very well and I needed to work with her to help her [finish her paper]” (BT2.I.50).

Why Joan worked individually with students. Providing individual instruction to her students to support them in the general education curriculum was a task that Joan accepted as being a part of her work--a task that she admitted was tiresome at times. She related the following example of her efforts with Larry, an eighth student reading at a third grade level, "He moans and groans and grumbles about that but he does it. Each little hurdle is very trying [for him]. . . . Some days I'm just worn out listening but he plows along" (BT2.I.35).

Supporting the General Education Teachers

I'll do things like that. A lot of things like for a regular teacher to have these kids in their classroom (BT2.I.38)

In her efforts to sustain her students' participation in their regular education classes, Joan supported the four eighth grade general education team members. She dedicated a portion of her workday to assisting those teachers guided by the certainty that her efforts would have positive outcomes for her students. Joan provided supports to her team members while working in their classrooms and by assuming additional responsibilities.

How Joan supported the general education teachers. While attending a language arts classroom with her students, Joan assisted Mrs. B with getting the 21 students organized and ready for the instruction to begin. Mrs. B sat on a stool at the front of the class and asked each student about the completion of their homework assignments, as Joan walked from student to student writing in their school-mandated agendas. At one point, she asked Joan, "Could you write a note in his agenda that we don't have homework again" (BT2.O.2). Joan continued her rotation around the room until each student's agenda had been signed.

Joan would also contact the parents of students not on her caseload in order to assist the general education teachers. She explained, "They have 108 kids on the team. That can't call four parents a day. So, I talk to all of mine and I sometimes call for other kids if the teacher asks me to" (BT2.I.38).

Why she supported the general education teachers in their classrooms. Joan completed non-teaching related tasks in the general education classroom because she believed that if she supported the general education teachers her students would benefit. She indicated that the agendas were a school wide requirement and that each teacher was to sign them. The signing of the agendas was a way to support her teachers, "Every teacher does that, and sometimes she asks me to do it just to speed things up. . . . I do anything that she asks me to do" (BT2.I.48).

How Joan supported the teachers. In her efforts to ensure that her students were accepted in the general education classrooms, Joan supported her colleagues by taking on additional responsibilities. Her original workday schedule was free of a lunch duty assignment. When she learned that certain team members had 2 days of lunch duty per week, she volunteered to add that duty to her schedule. She explained that this action would benefit her students, “My kids are on one team, and I work with those teachers. I volunteered to do lunch duty. . . so each only had to do it one day a week” (BT2.I.20).

Moreover, Joan volunteered to spend one planning period per week to work in the alternative education setting room (AES), an action that relieved team members from that responsibility. On one occasion, a team member had phoned Joan early that morning to ask her to cover her assigned day of duty. This duty required that Joan spend 45 minutes kept as many as 10 students quiet and busy. During an observation, she used that time to complete work related paperwork and complete lesson plans while three young boys worked independently on various assignments (BT2.O4). When asked how she felt about covering that duty on such short notice she replied, “I think them calling me this morning is a good idea because these kids are not my kids--they’re everybody’s kids and they’ve got me to help--having me helps them a little bit” (BT2.I.49).

Why Joan assumed additional duties. Joan believed that her students would benefit from her earnest efforts to support those general education team members. She explained her actions:

I want my kids on the team they’re on because these teachers are very accommodating. . . these kids for the most part need a stricter classroom environment and this team has it. Every person on the team has the same expectations. The homework is always on the board; they sign the agendas; they all have the same expectations; and it makes it nice. (BT2.I.38)

In summary, Joan enjoyed her work with her students and felt the most valuable part of her work was opportunities to “help the child know himself” (BT2.I.10). Her mission to ensure that her students with disabilities succeeded in the general education curriculum provided the motivation for her work. She supported her students academically and socially to help them succeed. However, there were certain aspects of her work that impeded her ability to fulfill her mission to her students. These were time and space constraints and working with certain general educators.

Job Design Issues

Joan experienced some frustrations with her work related to the lack of adequate space and time constraints. Due to the crowded classroom situation, Joan expressed her frustration with locating places to complete her paperwork, test students, and work individually with students:

I don't like to come to the library because people see me and come to talk to me. . . . We have to pull our kids to read them tests and work individually with them. . . . There's a class in my room right now. I don't have a room. I have a room in the morning. Period, that's it. (BT2. I.42)

Time to work with her students individually was also difficult to obtain because of inflexible student schedules. Several of the general education teachers on her team were reluctant to have Joan remove them from their classes for individual instruction. This caused her some frustration, particularly for the language arts students. She noted, "When we have a paper [due], God help us all, I have to work with the kids to get a good paper" (BT2.I.36). On the occasions when she obtained permission to pull a student from his or her class, it was during her planning period. During those periods, she worked one-on-one on whatever academic task needed to be completed.

Joan also noted that she would benefit from opportunities to observe other teachers. She wished that she had "more time to go around and see what other people are doing so I can learn things. I'm like in a cave, unless I happen upon somebody doing something" (BT1.I.58).

In summary, Joan went about her workday moving about the school building as she supported her students while they attended their general education classes. She also guided her students in the completion of general education curriculum materials and supported the general education teachers. Job design concerns were scheduling constraints and working with certain general education teachers.

Interpreting the Data

The identification of the actions in which Joan engaged as she worked at Miles Middle School as resource/collaborative teacher provided an understanding of how and why she conducted her work. Reviewing her work within an activity systems perspective provides additional understanding. The tools, rules, community, and division of labor are provided in Figure 7 and discussed in the following section.

Tools of Joan's Work

An analysis of the data reflected that Joan used several tangible and intangible tools in her work. The tangible tools included her students' IEPs, general education curriculum materials, SOL guides, school-mandated agendas, the school-wide behavioral support system, and student writing journals. Joan relied upon the SOL guides and the general education curriculum guides when she made instructional decisions for her students. IEPs appeared to be secondary as she stated that she referred to them infrequently. Joan indicated that the school-wide behavioral support program, STARS, was an important tool for her students. She thought that it allowed them to participate in activities in a manner similar to their non-disabled peers.

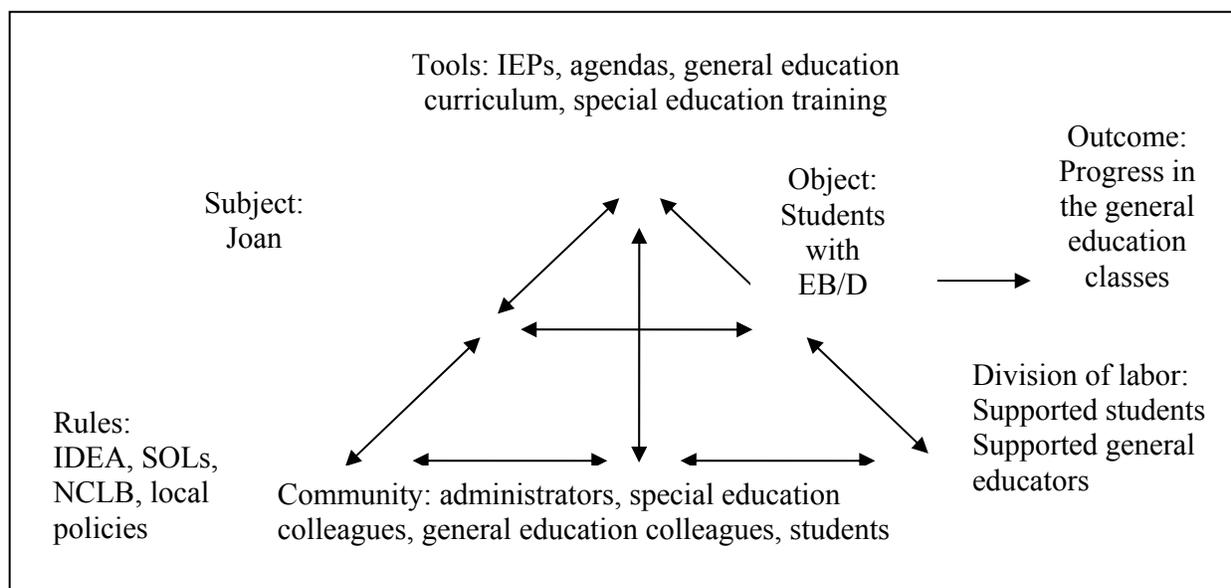


Figure 7. An activity theory systems perspective of Joan's work.

Joan used several intangible tools in her work. She relied upon her special education teacher training and years of experience to guide her in her work. Of particular importance was her training in working with students with EB/D. Although her current caseload was primarily students with LD, she relied upon the behavioral component of that training. Other intangible tools included patience when working with her students and a sense of humor.

Rules of Joan's Work

Federal, state, and local rules framed Joan's work. The mandates set forth in IDEA provided the key elements for her work. She fulfilled her obligations to the special education procedural component of her work willingly and carefully. Other federal rules such as No Child Left Behind did not cause her great concern. She was unconcerned regarding the highly

qualified teacher mandate. She reasoned that if she had to comply with that mandate, she would do so.

The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) factored into Joan teaching decisions significantly. She believed that her job was to help her students with disabilities pass the SOLs in order to obtain general education diplomas. The specialized instruction component of special education services appeared to a secondary aspect of her work.

Local school board policies certainly influenced her work. However, she was unaware of being informed of particular aspects of local policies, such as a teaching job description. She reasoned that her work changed frequently, in response to new students or changing student needs. Joan was secure in her ability to fulfill the requirements of her work.

The School Community

Observations of Joan's work revealed that her community consisted of the administrators, the eighth grade general education team members, the special education colleagues with whom she shared a classroom, and her students.

Joan spent her workday moving around the school building interacting with students and her colleagues. She appeared to prefer the company of her general education colleagues. I spent several lunch periods at Miles Middle School informally talking with teachers and administrators. Most of the special education teachers ate their lunches with the students on their cases. Joan was the only special educator who joined the general education teachers. Joan infrequently interacted with the other special education teachers during the data collection period.

Other members of her community included the building level administrators. Joan relied upon the special education expertise of the principal to support her in her work. She thought the principal had enhanced the relationships between the general education teachers and the special education teachers during her leadership, which had benefited the special education teachers and their students.

Joan took pleasure in spending time with her students. During informal conversations, she implied that a source of frustration was having to deal with the lower functioning students on her caseload who should be placed at a separate school. Her interactions with students did not reflect this opinion.

Division of Labor

Joan's community included several actors and her job required that she interact with them in a number of settings. The work efforts focused on the students on her caseload and the eighth grade general education team members. When Joan worked with her students, she assumed the primary role of providing them with various supports. However, when she spent time with the general educators she assumed two roles. First, she looked after the needs of the teachers and then supported her students. I did not observe the general education teachers reciprocating these actions.

In summary, Joan was motivated in her work by her wish that her students experience success in the general education classrooms and obtain high school diplomas. She relied upon her years of experience and specialized training as sources of guidance. Federal, state, and local policies provided the structure for her work. Joan believed one of the primary functions of her job was to sustain the teaching efforts of the general education teachers. Her efforts would allow the students with disabilities on her caseload access to those classes.

Conclusion

In the above section of this chapter, I provided individual profiles for the primary participants in this case study, the 4 teachers of students with EB/D working in public middle schools. These profiles were provided to supply readers with thick, rich descriptions of the participants and settings under study to allow readers to make individual determinations of transferability. Detailed descriptions also allow the reader to understand the phenomenon under inquiry and draw interpretations about meanings and significance (Patton, 2002). In Chapter 5, I provide an illustration of the cross-case analysis and a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS PART II: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The Cross-Case Analysis

In the following section, I provide the findings of the cross-case analysis of the work illustrations provided in Chapter 4 and discussions of the actions and job design issues as they relate to the work of teaching students with EB/D at the middle school level and to the research literature. In the presentation of the 4 individual cases, described in Chapter 4, I identified the actors, actions, tools, rules, communities, and divisions of labor as they unfolded in the daily lives of those teachers. The cross-case analysis identified the collective actions of those teachers in order to gain a better understanding of their work. Table 9 provides the profiles of the teachers in this study. Each case contained contextual factors that influenced the findings, which are addressed in the text.

The middle school special education teachers in this study engaged in teaching their students and were motivated by their desires to see their students graduate from high school with general education diplomas and become productive members of society. It is important to note that three of the teachers in this study taught in cross-categorical settings and provided services to students identified with a diversity of disabilities. The following section provides a discussion of the major themes that speak to *how* the teachers went about their work. These themes included (a) supporting their students' progress in the general education curriculum, (b) fostering the development of their students' prosocial behaviors, and (c) fulfilling multiple non-teaching related responsibilities. Illustrations of their work are provided in narrative text. Discussions of *why* they engaged in those actions are also provided in the text.

Job design issues were identified and included, (a) difficulties in working with general educators and (b) meeting the conflicting responsibilities of being a special educator in contemporary middle school settings. Figure 8 on page 150 provides a macro-level depiction of the findings as they occurred in an activity system related to the work of teaching students with EB/D in middle school settings.

Table 9

Profiles of the Special Education Teachers

Teacher	Purpose of their Work	Teaching Position	Years of Experience	Students on Caseload	Students with EB/D
Mary Margaret	Provide students with necessary supports to allow them to receive a high school diploma and become productive members of society	Resource Teacher	18	30	3
Paul	Provide students with an understanding of their disabilities that would allow them to succeed in their school experiences	Resource/Collaborative Teacher	28	12	1
Elaine	Support students to allow them to return to general education classes and to lead independent adult lives	Self-contained Teacher	8	8	8
Joan	Provide students with necessary supports to allow them to succeed in the general education classroom	Resource/Collaborative Teacher	18	17	1

*Supporting Students' Progress in the General Education Curriculum: It's All SOL
Driven*

That's the bottom line. It's all SOL driven. This stuff is on the SOL test. If my kids want to get a regular diploma--or their parents do and most of them do--then they have to master this. It's 'who passes what.' They have to know this stuff to pass the SOLs and get that regular diploma. Some will pass and some, well, they're just not going to pass. (FN.122).

The above quote demonstrates how the Standards of Learning (SOLs) influenced the work of the teachers in this study. A definition of SOLs was provided in Chapter 1. All of the teachers provided their students with varying methods of support to assist those students in making progress in the general education curriculum. The teachers afforded those supports to their students based upon their beliefs that success in the general education curriculum assured students a productive and independent life. The teachers provided those services in (a) small group settings or (b) in the general education classrooms.

The amount of time that each teacher spent providing that instruction differed, depending upon his or her teaching assignment.

Working in Small Group Settings

Guiding students in the completion of materials provided by their general education teachers encompassed a significant portion of most of the special education teachers' instructional time in their individual classrooms or small settings such a room in a library. These teachers helped their students complete homework assignments, prepare for tests and quizzes, complete projects, and review for SOL tests. The sessions generally began with the teachers telling the students to produce assignments that they needed to complete for their other classes.

How the teachers worked with their students. Instruction took the forms of reading directions to students, demonstrating how to solve math problems, listening for comprehension of materials, practicing language arts skills, and guiding students toward reference materials. Each teacher used a different approach to the task.

Joan used the two resource periods per day to prepare her students to pass the SOL tests and to prepare students for their general education classes. During an observation, Joan led her 11 students in a whole group instruction activity that was intended to review them for the

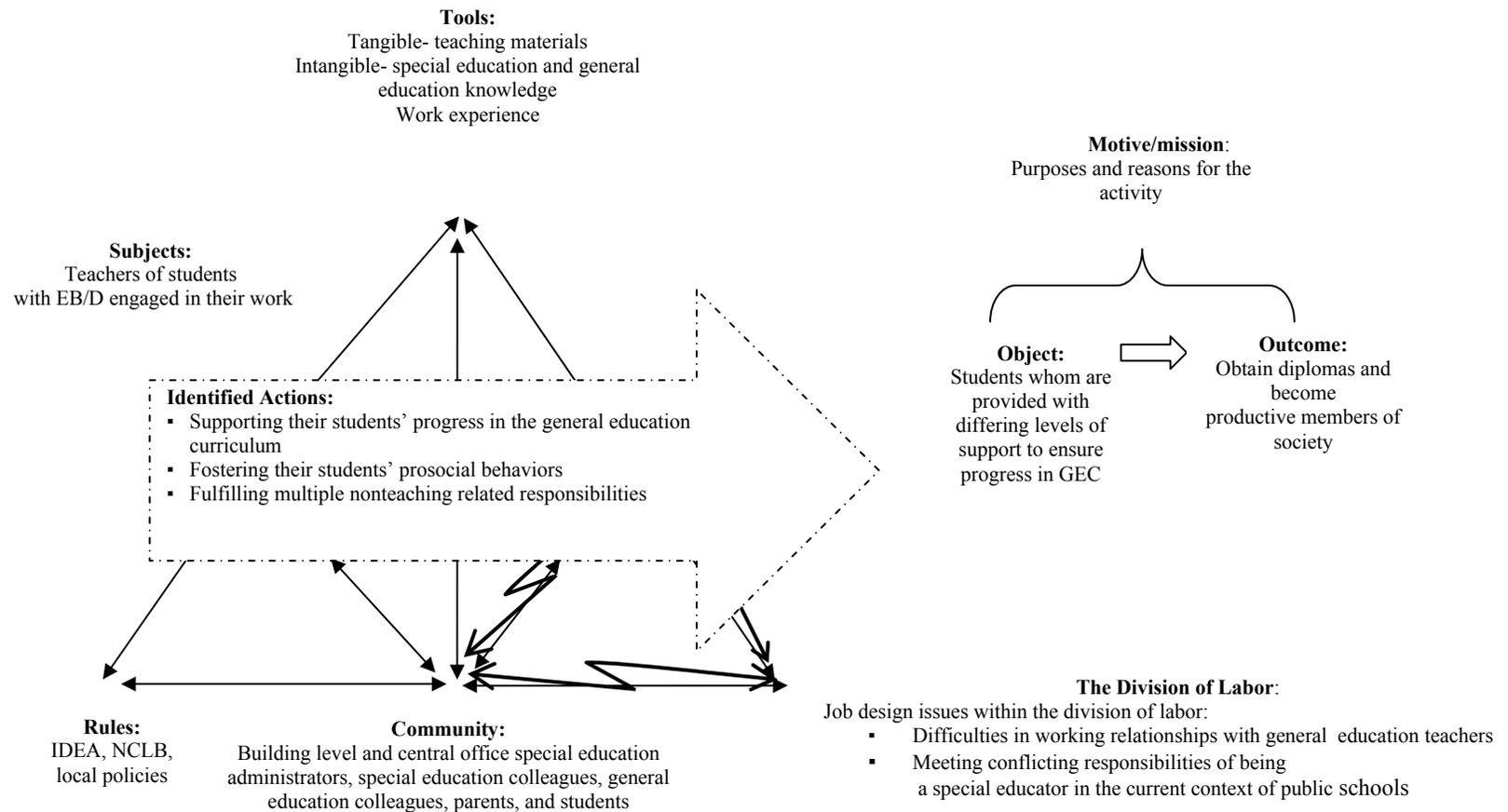


Figure 8. Overview of the cross-case analysis. Identified activities and job design issues related to the work of teaching students with EB/D at the middle school level. *Note:* GEC= general education curriculum

math portion of the SOL tests. She provided students with white boards, markers, a calculator, and demonstrated how to solve several math problems. As the students worked independently, she walked around the room while talking, “We did this before. You need this for the SOL. . . . You have a calculator. Use it. We’ll practice this so you’ll know how to use them for the SOLs” (BT2.O4). When asked why Joan instructed her students in that manner, she replied, “I’m SOL driven. These guys have to take the SOLs and in my planning book I have the SOL” (BT2.I.26). Joan also worked individually with the students on her caseload to support their progress in the general education curriculum during her planning period.

Mary Margaret spent the majority of her four blocks of resource time moving energetically around her room, which contained between 4 to 15 students depending upon the day of the week and the period. As she moved, she checked for students’ understanding of their assignments. She redirected, clarified directions, and offered hints to struggling students. When asked why resource time was spent on assignments from other classes, Mary-Margaret replied, “What we do in resource, it’s really geared or comes from what they do in their regular classes. . . . It’s our job to prepare them- -well [to] make sure that they’re passing all of their classes” (AT1.I.25-26).

Elaine approached the completion of the assignments in a more relaxed manner. She began each session, while seated in her rocking chair, by telling her three or four students exactly what she expected of them. She said, “Ok, as soon as you finish your projects, we’re going to finish the science projects that you have due tomorrow. . . . All you have to do is read each one and attempt to answer it” (BT1.O.5). She and the para-professional, Mrs. D, walked from student to student, reading their answers, and occasionally asking questions to clarify an answer. Elaine spent less of her time with her students addressing the general education curriculum than the other teachers. However, she did ensure that she provided her students exposure to it. She realistically noted that her students had to take the SOL tests and that she needed “to cover the SOLs so [that] they’ll understand them” (BT1.I.47).

Paul worked with four of his students while seated around a small table during his two daily 45-minute resource periods (AT1.O3). Students completed their assignments either independently or with his assistance and as they worked, their conversations might stray to problems with home and school. Unless he decided their problems needed immediate attention,

he generally redirected the students back to solving math problems, completing language arts assignments, and answering questions from the civics class. He would often ask students to explain, “What are you doing here?” or “How did you get that answer?” (AT2.O.3/O.4).

Paul’s work was often interrupted by Amy’s eagerness to have Paul’s attention. During an observation, Amy sat next to Paul as they worked on a math paper and told him that he “smelled like an old man” (AT2.O.4). He responded calmly and with a slight chuckle, “That’s because I am old-- now let’s finish this worksheet” (AT2.O.4). She laughed and returned to her work as Paul continued guiding the other students in the completion of their assignments. Paul explained that he conducted his work in the resource room in that manner because, “That’s the purpose of this resource room--complete homework, class work, and deal with any problems that occurred that day or the potential for problems” (AT2.O.3).

Why the special educators completed general education work with their students. The teachers in this study provided their students with guidance in the completion of general education curriculum because they believed that their students’ academic success relied upon mastering that material. The passage of the SOLs factored significantly into their instructional decisions.

The observation and interview data reflect that teachers in this study spent time assisting students in the completion general education curriculum materials while working in small group settings such as resource rooms. While working with their students in their classrooms, the teachers joked with their students, engaged them in conversations about their families, and hobbies as they worked to complete assignments from their general education classes.

Daily communication with the general education teachers kept the special education teachers informed of the majority of the assignments, upcoming tests, and projects. Mary Margaret relied upon the school-mandated planners to keep her informed of her students’ assignments. However, the primary form of communication between the general educators and special educators was informal. Teachers talked before, during, and after classes, meeting in the hallways or meeting briefly in their classrooms. The students brought assignments to their special education teachers. While in the schools, I noted that the other 3 teachers spent more time than Mary Margaret in the general educators’ classes, which provided them opportunities to interact and gain the information (FN.116). The design of Mary Margaret’s job required that she spend most of her instructional day providing services to students on her caseload while she

worked in her resource room. This restricted her ability to interact with general education colleagues as readily as the other teachers did. Their jobs provided them with more opportunities to interact with their general education colleagues.

Working in the General Education Classrooms

The individual special education teachers' work in the general education classroom differed dependent upon his or her teaching assignments. For example, Mary Margaret infrequently attended a general education classroom. Her attendance was brief and generally was to talk with a teacher about a student's assignment or to return a student to his class after a testing session. The other 3 teachers attended the classes more frequently.

How the special education teachers supported students in the general education classrooms. While in the general education classrooms with their students, Paul, Joan, and Elaine began the sessions standing in the back of the room watching the general educators review homework and introduce the activity for the period (AT2.O.1/BT1.O.4/BT2.O.2). When the students became involved in their assignments, the special education teachers would begin moving around the room from student to student while the general educator remained in the front of the room or returned to their desks. Their interactions with students varied from case to case.

Paul confidently and smoothly moved around the classrooms occupied with between 11 to 21 students, checking to ensure that his five or six students had the necessary materials in an organized manner and that they were focused on the lesson or assignment. He would ask students who appeared to be struggling with organizational aspects of the assignment in his easy joking manner, "Where's your notebook?" Let's put this here. Now, where's your pencil?" (FN.31). He dealt with those students who were experiencing difficulties focusing in a similar manner, "Come on guys, we need to focus, the other 'f' word" (FN.51). Generally, those distracted students would laugh in response and focus briefly, while Paul began his rounds of the room again, providing pencils to those students in need. Paul engaged in those actions because he believed that his organizing and focusing efforts would allow his students to succeed in their general education classrooms, "once you get them organized and they see the flow of the class, they can pretty much handle it" (AT2.I.13). Those actions took place in each of the four general education classes that he attended.

Joan moved with ease around a warm classroom crowded with 21 eighth grade students, eight of whom were identified as students with disabilities (BT2.O.2). As she circulated the room, she tapped the shoulders of distracted students and, in a low voice, directed them to return to their work. When she reached each student, she read and then signed their school mandated student agenda. Joan also checked their work, provided comments, and instruction, “Ok, think about what’s important in this paragraph; that’s not. Think about *who* and then you have to tell what happened in your story” (BT2.O2). As the noise level in the room increased, she warned chatty and distracted students to “turn around before you get in trouble for talking” (BT2.O2). Joan worked with her students in the general education classes because she considered that one of her responsibilities was to support her students with disabilities “so that they can make it in the regular classroom like everybody else” (BT2.I.7).

On a daily basis, Elaine attended the seventh grade science classes with two of her students (BT1.I.10). She stood at the back of the overheated room, keeping a watchful eye on her students with EB/D, Mark, and Joe, who sat among the other 24 students (BT1.O.4). Mark was a petite brown-headed boy with a serious demeanor and Joe was a gangly blond-headed boy with an easy smile. As their attentions wavered, she made her way over to each boy, leaned over, and talked lowly while she moved papers around on each desk. She stopped and checked with several other students on her way back to her post at the back of the class. When it seemed apparent that her students were attending to their work, she sat down at the desk and began to work on her lesson plans. She indicated that her job was primarily:

To get the worksheets and I take the notes in case a kid needs them. Most of the kids seem to do pretty well with keeping up with her [the science teacher] except for the occasional [student]. . . . like with [Mark], I can go over and just hand him the worksheet and say copy this. That way, if he gets a little behind he can finish copying that because she goes pretty fast. A lot of times I don’t mess with my kids at all. I’m helping the other special ed kids or helping the regular kids in class. (BT1.I.43)

Why the teachers supported their students in the general education classrooms. The special education teachers in this study supported their student’s efforts in the general education classrooms so that their students could attend those classes successfully. They believed that it was a facet of their jobs to do what was needed in order for their students to meet academic success in the general education curriculum.

Three of the teachers were observed supporting their students in general education classrooms. Paul was the only teacher that I observed who provided whole group instruction. While in the classrooms, the teachers generally walked around the room providing support to any student who appeared to require assistance.

Interpreting the Data

The data collected in this study, through interviews and observations, revealed that the teachers of students with EB/D teaching in middle school settings spent a considerable amount of instructional time with their students addressing general education curriculum material. This occurred in both the resource settings and general education classrooms. These teachers carried out that work in response to standards-based reform efforts and their belief that students with disabilities would benefit from instruction in the general education curriculum. The teachers also believed that their efforts would guide their students toward obtaining a general education diploma.

These findings are in line with the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2, which revealed that teachers of students with disabilities working at the secondary level often support their students' progress in the general education curriculum (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Specifically, Weiss and Lloyd found that special educators working in secondary school settings provided instruction in general education classrooms and in special education classrooms because "they believed they were doing what was best for their situations and for the students." (p. 63). Klinger and Vaughn (2002) also noted that special educators considered how to ensure that their students would be successful in the general education classroom when making instructional decisions. Crockett (2004) cautioned that these instructional actions need to should ensure access to the general curriculum while considering the primary directive of IDEA, which is to "address the disability-related needs of the child" (p. 3). The concern is that the current movement to ensure that students with disabilities are provided access to the general education curriculum supersedes the primary component of IDEA, which is providing specially-designed instruction based upon the individual needs of each student.

Paul's time in the general education classroom was less stable when compared to the other special education teachers in this study. He would remove certain students from a classroom when it became apparent that the students could not remain due to issues related to

their academic and behavioral skill levels. His time was also divided between two classes during the 90-minute language arts block, which left some students unsupported. These findings align with those of Weiss and Lloyd (2002) that co-teaching efforts at the secondary level were difficult due to gaps in students' academic and behavioral levels and splitting time between classes.

Although this study did not investigate the provision of specially-designed instruction to students with disabilities in the current context of middle schools, a review of observation and interview data indicated that little of the special education teachers' time and energies were spent providing instruction that directly addressed their students' disability related needs. Some direct instruction was observed when they worked in their resource rooms, more than when the teachers worked in the general education classrooms. That instruction in the small settings consisted primarily of reading directions to students, clarifying directions, and providing additional information when an incorrect answer was given. This aligns with the findings of Weiss and Lloyd (2002) regarding the roles of special educators in secondary settings. That is, students with disabilities were provided with more direct instruction and specialized instruction while in the resource rooms than in general education classrooms.

An interesting finding was that the special education teachers in this study considered their lack of core content knowledge as a weakness in their ability to teach their students when working with the general education curriculum. Three of the teachers reported having supportive relationships with their general education colleagues that provided opportunities to acquire needed information. In addition, the proximity of their classrooms to the general education classrooms allowed for access to general education teachers when questions arose.

The special education teachers in this study looked upon their time spent in general education classes as opportunities to increase their own content knowledge. This is similar to Vance's (2001) study finding that most special education teachers working in co-teaching situations cited an increase of their content knowledge as a benefit of that experience.

The special education teachers appeared to accept that their efforts toward helping their students succeed in the general education curriculum was an integral part of their work. The data reflect no frustration associated with that aspect of their work lives. However, these were seasoned special education teachers with an average of 18 years experience teaching students with EB/D. These teachers also described the students with EB/D that they taught as having

mild behavioral disorders. It is also important to note that three of the four special educators provided services to students with a variety of disabilities. I noted no major behavioral concerns while spending time in the schools.

Fostering Their Students' Prosocial Behaviors: We Don't Just Work on Their Academic Work
We don't just work on their academic work. We work on their organization skills, listening skills, social skills, what to do if they are trying to get a job. What are the right ways to handle situations. Just whatever might encompass their life so that they can be productive (AT1.I.9)

The teachers in this study provided students with opportunities that encouraged the development of what Kauffman referred to as “prosocial behavior” (2001, p.544). He defined a prosocial behavior as a behavior “that facilitates or maintains positive social contacts” (p. 544). These teachers encouraged and facilitated the development of their students’ prosocial behaviors (AT1.O.1/AT2.O1/BT1.O1/BT2.O.1).

Their efforts focused on (a) developing the social skills of their students and (b) enhancing the self-esteem of their students. The manner in which the teachers addressed these areas varied from case to case and corresponded to the needs of their students.

Developing their Students' Social Skills

Special education teachers spent a portion of the workday addressing the social skills development of the students (AT1.O.2/AT2.O.3/BT1.O.4/BT2.I.40). Their efforts were focused on the differing needs of the students. Several teachers engaged their students in planned activities, while other efforts appeared to be incorporated into their daily actions.

How the teachers developed social skills. Elaine preferred to use “little talks” (BT1.I.36) with her students. The intention of these talks was to assist students in understanding how certain behaviors caused others to react negatively to them and how those behaviors influenced their inability to establish relationships with others. Elaine and Mrs. D spent time talking with Peter about his behavior and how it affected his relationship with his mother as well as his peers. She indicated that her little talks were one method of helping her students experience success in the school setting and that combined with her other efforts “helps all the other things along and I think it helps them get along better with us [and] get along better with each other” (BT1.I.53).

Joan drew upon teaching opportunities to address the social skills of her students. On one occasion, while teaching a math resource class, a student, Jane, a thin, brown haired girl with a

sullen expression, repeatedly talked to Joan in a rude manner. The comments continued until Joan said, “You know, we just don’t need any smart ass answers” (BT2.I.40). Joan immediately apologized to Jane, however, the student insisted on reporting the incident to the principal. The other students offered to inform the principal that Jane was not telling the truth. Instead, Joan took that opportunity to talk with her students about the importance of accepting responsibility for actions. She said to her students, “but you know I did say it and my advice is to own up to what you did and take your lumps” (BT2.I.41). Joan acknowledged that what she had said was inappropriate and unprofessional. She indicated that it was important that her students knew “that I wasn’t going to try to get out of my responsibility for what I did. Every situation is a learning thing and you decide how it’s going to go” (BT21.I.42).

Mary Margaret formally approached the development of her students’ social skills through the provision of a weekly structured 45-minute group activity, however, she also spontaneously attended to the development of the social skills for her students. During an informal observation, she prepared for one of the weekly group sessions. The students were responsible for organizing chairs into a circle for the session. One student glanced at me and asked Mary Margaret if they should put a chair in for me. She answered that they would discuss it when the session began (FN.63). Once the session was underway, she asked the students if they remembered me from other sessions and if they minded whether I stayed and observed. After several moments of discussion, one student said that he was not comfortable with my staying. Mary Margaret then suggested that the group vote on whether I could stay. The vote was unanimous! I was allowed to stay and, furthermore, I was invited to participate in the session. The dissenter appeared to forget his disagreement with my presence as he engaged me in a side conversation later. Mary Margaret wanted her students to succeed socially in their school lives and made use of opportune moments.

Paul spent time encouraging his students to establish relationships with each other. He utilized several methods with his students, however, a deck of battered blue and white Diamond brand cards appeared frequently (FN.50). He kept the deck of playing cards in his classroom for the use of the students. Two to four students engaged in these games in a competitive and generally loud manner after the completion of their other assignments. Infrequently, Paul engaged in the games, preferring to talk with them as they played. I asked Paul about the usefulness of the card games. He responded:

It's a way for them to start to build relationships other than just a verbal exchange or some social exchange. I've seen magic happen in card games. It has a competitive edge so they learn how to compete with each other, they have to use their brains to think a little bit, plus they will sit here, talk, and relate to each other and they don't really even know they're doing it. So they are establishing appropriate communication and relationships (AT2.I.41).

Other efforts to develop and reinforce social skills included the use of point systems. Elaine and Mary Margaret utilized a point system in their classrooms that reinforced their students' efforts to follow the posted rules. Teachers at Miles Middle School were supported in their efforts to promote the social skills of their students by a school-wide behavioral support program called STARS. The acronym stands for Start Prepared, Take Pride in our School, Accept Responsibility, Respect Yourself, and Others, and Strive for the Best. Students were rewarded for expected behavior with STARS currency that they could spend on school supplied prizes or privileges. Elaine and Joan reported that their students participated in the program and that they found it helpful in managing their students.

Why the special education teachers promoted their students social skills development.

These teachers provided those experiences to their students based upon their beliefs that the enhancement of those skills would allow their students academic and social success in their school lives, as well as in their post-school lives. They based their actions on their prior teaching experiences and special education training that emphasized the importance of social skills promotion for students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders.

Enhancing the Self-Esteem of Their Students

As the special education teachers made their way through their days working with their students, certain actions centered on enhancing the self-esteem of their students. Their daily encounters with their students provided examples of how they bolstered their students.

How the teacher enhanced self-esteem. Elaine's interactions with her students reflected her awareness of the need to nurture the self-esteem of her students. She offered words of encouragement for completing academic tasks, for not being rude to peers and adults, and handling situations in a thoughtful manner. She would often tell a student "how smart" (FN.89) he was. She commented that many of her students "had bad situations in the elementary school

and then they come to us and we have to deal with all those negative feelings towards teachers in general” (BT1.I.16).

Much of Mary Margaret’s casual conversations with her students appeared to be intended to encourage their feelings of confidence and self-worth (AT1.O.1/AT1.02). She often told students that she was proud of them and that she liked “the way you’re thinking” (FN. 17). She would ask her students to share their good news with each other and then suggested a “round of applause” (FN.17). Her other efforts were more explicit, as in the situation with Jan bragging that she had received a letter inviting her to try out for the local J.V. soccer team. When another student implied that the letter was “a scam” (FN.57), she quickly intervened and allowed Jan the opportunity to share her letter with the class. Mary Margaret explained, “[Jan] is down on herself a lot. She doesn’t have a very good self-esteem. . . . I didn’t want her to be knocked down from her excitement” (AT1.I.27). She explained that her efforts to develop the students’ self-esteem were intended to “make them more comfortable. You know, make them feel more successful” (AT1.I.46).

Paul’s efforts were deeply incorporated into his daily routine with his students. When working in the general education classroom or in the resource room, he offered words of encouragement and praise to students. He was heard saying, “Good job. . . . You guys did a great job of reading this. . . . I like the way you guys don’t correct each other, you let them go on reading until they work it out for themselves” (AT2.O1). He offered those words and others because he saw that it was part of his job to provide students with opportunities to take academic risks with the fear of ridicule. He explained:

Because they are kind of walking around in the dark sometimes. . . . so I want them to feel good about what they are doing and that we are on the right page here. Because they are [so] used to doing bad jobs that they need to hear about the good jobs stuff twice as much. Because at this age it latches right on to all the things that they can’t do and all of the things that they make mistakes on. They may smile and they have fun but when you talk to them and find out what kinds of self-images some of them have-- it’s horrible. (AT2.I.27)

Joan’s conversations with her students while they worked in their various classes conveyed her efforts to bolster the self-esteem of her students. These efforts occurred more frequently in the resource settings. As she went about her work, Joan talked constantly to her

students, “Ok, you did a great job on that one. . . . nice job. . . . Good, now the one thing that I liked about [Mary’s] paper. . . . that was an important point that you made” (BT2.O1). Joan provided her these words to her students because “we’re real quick to tell kids what’s wrong with them. But we don’t tell them what’s good about them. They don’t know what’s good about themselves. They don’t know what they can do. And in the little settings. . . you can point it out” (BT2.I.10).

Why the special education teachers promoted their students’ self-esteem. The teachers believed that many of their students’ prior educational experiences had been negative and, as a result, their students’ self-esteem suffered. They reasoned that if they could improve the self-images of their students, the students would benefit.

Interpreting the Data

The data collected in this study through interviews and observations reflect that experienced teachers of students with EB/D in middle school settings spend a portion of their teaching day addressing the development of the prosocial behaviors of their students. That is, they fostered the development of social skills and encouraged students’ self-esteem. This finding comports with Conderman and Katsiyannis’s (2002) study, which found that a significant percentage of secondary special educators used social and emotional instruction with their students. Research literature on the importance of social skills instruction for students with EB/D to experience success in school settings supports their actions (Gresham, 1997; Lo, Loe, & Cartledge, 2002; Walker, Schwarz, Nipold, Irvin, & Noell as cited in Landrum, Tankersly, & Kauffman, 2003).

Researchers contend that the development of social skills, which allows students with behavioral concerns to interact appropriately with peers, adults, and the environment are important for peer acceptance, interpersonal development, and school achievement (Cartledge & Milburn as cited in Lo et al., 2002). The special education teachers in this study created opportunities to enhance social skills development by clearly defining their expectations to students, engaging them in casual conversations, answering questions honestly, and establishing personal relationships with students. These actions align with those Cartledge and Johnson (1996) identified as being critical teacher variables that could enhance positive school experiences for students with EB/D and promote the development of social skills.

It is important to note that the majority of the social skill activities with students took place in the special education classrooms and not in the general education classroom. Each approach appeared intentional and earnest. Although I questioned the use of the playing cards, Paul defended their use vigorously. The students generally responded positively to their teachers' attempts to address their prosocial skills. I did not note any resistance or disrespect on behalf of the students. It is unclear whether the students understood the intent of their teachers' actions. For the most part, they listened and interacted with their special education teachers and peers when prompted.

Teachers in this study frequently praised their students while in the general education classrooms and in the special education classrooms. In the general education classroom, much of the praise was focused primarily on students' academic efforts. Although exchanges within the special education classroom were also academically directed, the praise was more personal.

Teachers in this study believed that their efforts would result in the creation of constructive relationships with their students, which would in turn promote positive outcomes for those students. These actions are supported by identified effective teaching practices of teachers of students with EB/D. Cartledge and Johnson (1996) noted that students with EB/D tended to form positive relationships with teachers who praised rather than criticized them. Gunter, Hummel, and Venn (1998) identified the use of praise by teachers as an integral component of effective academic instruction for students with EB/D.

As noted previously, the teachers engaged in these actions primarily while in their special education classrooms and without input from the general education teacher. Teachers did not indicate that they experienced any frustration with this lack of input from their general education colleagues.

Fulfilling Multiple Non-Teaching Related Responsibilities

The kids are fine. If I could just teach my kids all day long that would be great (AT1.I.8)

Teachers spent a portion of their days engaged in non-teaching related activities (AT1.O.4/AT2.I.17/BT1.O2/BT2.O.5). That is, they conducted certain duties or responsibilities that were not directly student oriented, however, they were related to their work as teachers of students with EB/D and other disabilities. Those actions varied and correlated to the specific teaching assignment of each teacher. Sub-categories provide a clarification of those

responsibilities. These are (a) acting in leadership roles, (b) mentoring new special education teachers, (c) attending multiple meetings, and (d) completing paperwork.

Acting in Leadership Positions

Teachers were assigned responsibilities that placed them in a leadership position in their schools. The titles of the positions differed from school to school, yet several of the responsibilities were similar.

How the teachers acted in leadership roles. In his role as the eighth-grade child study chair, Paul provided general education teachers with information that could facilitate the success of a struggling student in the general education classroom. He reviewed compiled academic information on students to inform the teachers of “what’s been done and what’s been written, what works for them, and what doesn’t work” (AT2.I.15). These efforts were attempted prior to referring a student for a special education evaluation to determine eligibility for special education and/or related services. When and if the child study committee decided to refer a student for an evaluation for special education services, Paul facilitated the events that allowed the evaluation to take place.

Mary Margaret was the special education lead teacher at her school, which required that she supervise the other six special education teachers and the part-time paraprofessional at Jordon Middle School. She noted that a part of that work required that she made “sure that they’re doing their paperwork and they’re teaching--Making sure that teaching is actually going on in their rooms and sometimes that is a big deal” (AT1.I.7). She attended to those tasks during her planning periods as well as meeting with teachers before and after the instructional day began.

Elaine held a similar position in her school under the title of Teacher Assessment Team Leader (BT1.I.13). She also provided general educators with information that could support students in their general education classes. Many of her efforts focused on assisting teachers in understanding behavioral concerns of certain students. This could take the form of discussing the concerns with the teachers or assisting teachers in “writing a behavior contract, something similar to a functional behavior assessment or a behavior intervention plan” (BGA.I.2).

Elaine also assisted many of the special education teachers in her school with their teaching efforts. She provided certain teachers with suggestions on classroom management techniques and adapting instructional materials. This task took time away from her teaching as

there were several new special education teachers in her school and caused her some frustration because “everybody is coming and asking me questions” (BT1.I. 13).

To assist in ensuring that special education teachers developed meaningful and legally sound Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), the administrators at Joan and Elaine’s school trained them to be Local Education Agency (LEAs) representatives. They were to fulfill the role of an administrator during IEP meetings. In that capacity, they provided guidance to special education teachers during the development of the IEPs and completing other paperwork related to the provision of special education services under IDEA. Joan indicated that she appreciated the opportunity to assist her administrators and the flexibility that the role afforded her in scheduling IEP meetings for her students, as “now we can do our own” (BT2.I.17). Elaine established that the role of LEA allowed her to ensure that other special education teachers were creating appropriate IEPs for students with disabilities:

I don’t mind doing it. . . because I’ve seen things in IEPs that I’m not very comfortable with what’s happening. . . I’ve tried to tell them and I don’t think they’re listening to me. So I feel a little uncomfortable putting my name on papers that. . . they didn’t fill something in or they filled it in incorrectly or something and they just wanted me to sign off on in and I’m like ‘no.’ (BT1.I.59)

Why the special education teachers fulfilled leadership roles. Each teacher fulfilled a leadership role in his or her school assigned by his or her administrator. Their comments indicated that they accepted those responsibilities as a part of their work. They also suggested that they were opportunities to inform other educators of issues related to providing students with disabilities appropriate services.

Mentoring New Special Education Teachers

Each teacher acted as a mentor to at least one recently hired special education teacher in his or her schools (AT1.I.11/AT2.I.63/BT1.I.13/BT2.I.12). This responsibility could consume a significant amount of their time and depended upon the individual needs of the newly hired teacher.

How teachers acted as mentors. Paul was mentor to a recently hired special education teacher assigned to teach students with disabilities in a self-contained setting. That teacher had previous teaching experience yet he was a new hire to Binns Middle School. Paul infrequently had contact with the teacher due to the physical distance between their classrooms and

conflicting teaching schedules. Their primary contacts took place during special education team meetings. Paul indicated that he experienced some frustration with the difficulty in supporting that teacher:

Part of my mentorship job is to touch base with him and the day seems to end. He comes late because he has two kids and then he leaves immediately to get them. We don't have any common planning time during the day. I need to make [more of] an effort to see if he's hanging in there. (AT2.I.63)

Mary Margaret also mentored recently hired special education teachers in her school. Providing supports and guidance to those new teachers was a part of her work that she enjoyed. She filled the role of a mentor in her practical and straightforward manner, "there's always a need, there's always turnover and new people. I enjoy doing that. I enjoy helping them out. Seeing what advice they take, what works for them, what doesn't work" (AT1.I.11).

Elaine and Joan also acted as mentors. Elaine's mentee required an insignificant amount of time due to the teacher's previous teaching experiences. Elaine commented that the teacher "doesn't need me to help her that much" (BT1. I.13). Joan spent more time with her mentee providing what she called "mom support" (BT2.I.12) as the teacher apparently needed little teaching support. She explained, "She needed Mom support. You know, like, 'Yeah, you have to stay home sometimes and do your laundry. You can't forget to go to the DMV!' You know, that type of deal, not so much teaching stuff, because she has great, natural instincts" (BT1.I.16).

Why the special education teachers acted as mentors. The role of mentoring new special education teachers was assigned to each experienced special education in each of the schools in this study. They accepted the responsibility for fulfilling that assignment as another aspect of their jobs.

Attending Multiple Meetings

Teachers attended a number of meetings associated with their work as special education teachers (AT1.O5/AT2.I.15/BT1.O2/BT2.I.40). All teachers were expected to attend IEP meetings and eligibility meetings. The number of meetings each attended would correlate to their student caseload numbers and to students transferring into each school eligible for services under IDEA.

Mary Margaret provided special education services to 30 students with disabilities. She noted that she would attend each student's IEP meeting and at least "four or five eligibilities a

year” (AT1.I.13). When possible, she scheduled times to hold the meetings prior to the beginning of the instructional day (FN.117). She also used those meetings as opportunities to discuss other student related issues with parents, administrators, and general education teachers. During an observation of an eligibility meeting, Mary Margaret took the opportunity to discuss her concerns that the paraprofessional assigned to Jerry, a student with muscular dystrophy, was unable to fulfill the responsibilities of her work (AT1.O5). The team ultimately decided that the situation could not be improved due to a lack of qualified paraprofessionals and that Mary Margaret would continue to monitor the situation.

Paul indicated that he organized and attended IEP meetings for the students with disabilities to whom he provided special education services and for any students who might transfer to the school with an IEP (AT2.I.17). Although, he was not observed attending meetings during the data collection process, the attending of meetings could potentially consume a significant part of his workday. He remarked, “I can spend a lot of time. . . . setting up the IEP meetings, writing the IEPs” (AT2.I.15).

In their roles as LEA representatives, combined with their student caseloads, Joan and Elaine could attend a significant number of IEP meetings and reevaluations (BT1.I.13/BT2.I.17). Joan provided educational services to 17 students with disabilities and would attend at least that many meetings. There were eight students with EB/D on Elaine’s caseload. These student numbers combined with the additional meetings could require that they attend multiple meetings. Elaine noted, “I end up going to a lot of other people’s IEP meetings” (BT1.I.13).

Special education teachers also attended meetings to develop behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) for some students on their caseloads. During the course of this study, I observed Elaine attending a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) meeting where the team developed a BIP for Peter (BT1.O.2). The other teachers indicated that they were involved in the development of BIPs for several of their students.

Why the special education teachers attended multiple meetings. The data reflect that these special education teachers’ workdays were encumbered with attending multiple meetings related to the provision of special education services under IDEA. Although they acknowledged that attending the various meetings took up a considerable amount of their time, they indicated that it was another necessary aspect of their work.

Completing Paperwork Related to the Work

Each teacher indicated that completing the paperwork associated with the provision of special education services under IDEA encompassed a significant part of their work lives (AT1.I.8/AT2.I.17/BT1.I.13/BT2.I.40). They suggested that that paperwork was fundamental to their work and that it was, indeed, frustrating at certain time. Teachers relied upon the information in students' IEPs and BIPs as a means to inform general education teachers of the particular program needs for their students with disabilities (AT1.I.15/AT2.I.16/BT1.O3/BT2.I.40).

Mary Margaret's student caseload required that she write at least 30 IEPs. This number of students did not cause her concern until time to complete the paperwork associated with the provision of their specialized education, "it just doesn't seem like that much to me until it's . . . time to do IEPs" (AT1.I.19). The completion of the IEPs and staying current with local changes to those documents were a source of concern for her as she noted "every year the IEP forms change. And there seems to be a new page every year. Right now, we're up to 7 and 8 pages" (AT1.I.9). Each of her students with EB/D had BIPs in place. These forms were seen as a means to inform the general education teachers of the specific needs of her students. She explained, "In [Joe's] present level of performance, we have made note of the fact that he definitely still has those ED characteristics just so that everybody will be aware of it" (AT1.I.40).

Paul implied that the paperwork part was an essential component of the numerous responsibilities associated with the provision of services to students with disabilities, "Some of [the responsibilities] like the IEPs and all of the paperwork are required to set all of this in motion" (AT2.I.18). Paul indicated that while the completion of the paperwork was a responsibility associated with this work, it was not a great cause of concern to him, "there is the paperwork piece, but. . . . I just didn't think about it as a responsibility, but as-- well it is a part of it. . . since we're special ed, I just assumed" (AT2.I. 17). His students with EB/D were expected to have BIPs.

Elaine's teaching assignment required that she also complete numerous IEPs. She pragmatically compared her work as a self-contained teacher of students with EB/D to her previous position as a resource teacher. She remarked:

It kind of cracks me up when I hear [other] ED teachers complaining about all of the paperwork they have and I'm thinking, you guys should've been in LD when I had like

27 IEPs I had to do in a year. You know, this is nothing, to me it isn't. So it's like a little vacation" (BT1.I.13).

Her work assignment as a teacher of students with EB/D in a self-contained setting required that she complete other sources of paperwork, such as the Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) forms and BIP forms (BT2.I.O.3). Each of her eight students had BIPs which she was responsible for developing. In her efforts to inform general education teachers of the needs of her students, she created behavioral charts to be included in the BIPs with the intention that the students would take them "from room to room" (FN.93).

Joan indicated that in addition to developing IEPs for each students, she was also responsible for developing BIPs for students with EB/D as well as any student on her caseload whose behaviors were a concern. These were developed with the participation of an IEP team. She provided this example of a student whom she described as a "pip" (BT2.I.40). She explained:

We've rewritten that plan with the team. He has a behavior problem along the lines of macho, bullying-type. . . every class he gets it signed and we've pinpointed the things that he has problems with. For instance, he's impulsive; like he'll stick his foot out when somebody walks by, pick at people in a group; he's way off the wall and stuff like that; just different things. (BT2.I.40)

Why special education teachers completed paperwork. The completion of the paperwork related to the provision of special education services under IDEA was a responsibility associated with each special educator's job assignment. Paul provided an explanation for why they conducted those responsibilities; they were seen as "given responsibilities that just sort of come with the work" (AT2. I.7).

Interpreting the Data

Teachers in this study indicated that a significant amount of their work lives encompassed carrying out multiple responsibilities associated with the provision of special education services under IDEA. These included acting in numerous leadership roles, providing mentorship supports to new special education teachers, attending multiple meetings, and the completion of paperwork. Their individual teaching assignments determined explicit responsibilities and determined the amount of required paperwork. While they indicated some

frustration with those responsibilities, the teachers appeared to accept them as requirements of their work. Their efforts appeared to be primarily to benefit the students.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the work of teaching students with disabilities, including EB/D, is burdened with multiple roles and responsibilities (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Teachers in this study indicated minor frustrations with fulfilling their obligations. Yet, overall, they indicated that they did not experience significant frustration with their multiple roles and knew what was expected of them. These findings comport with those of Singh and Billingsley's (1996) study, which indicated that teachers of students with EB/D experience fewer role related problems when compared to other special educators. The findings in this study could also relate to the fact that the average teaching experience of the teachers in this study was 18 years.

Special education teachers in this study were responsible for mentoring new special education teachers. A review of the data suggested that some of them were unable to spend adequate time with their mentees due to time constraints, while others determined that their mentee did not require significant levels of their support. This finding aligns with Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein's (2004) study finding that the availability of mentoring programs to newly hired special education teachers is increasing. That study also indicated that approximately one third of the new teachers did not find their formal mentoring experiences beneficial. Although teachers in this study did not indicate any frustration associated with mentoring new teachers, it appeared to be considered as another responsibility. Only Mary Margaret indicated deriving any satisfaction from being a mentor.

An additional non-teaching related responsibility was attending multiple meetings. Two teachers were observed attending several meetings related to their work of teaching students with EB/D and other disabilities. Interview data suggested that this was a given function of the work of the teachers in this study and only Mary Margaret indicated any frustration associated with that responsibility. However, this was related to the high numbers of students on her teaching caseload. Problems associated with special education teachers attending meetings that interfered with their abilities to teach are noted in the research literature (Conderman & Katsiyannis; 2002; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Pullis, 1991). As mentioned previously, teachers in this study were experienced and appeared to be capable of coping with the required number of meetings that they could attend.

The completion of paperwork associated with the provision of special education services was a recurring action. Teachers were observed completing paperwork and were open about the excessive amount of paperwork associated with their work. Although some frustration with the completion of paperwork was noted, it was primarily related to changes from the central office level. This finding supports several studies that indicated that special education teachers spend a significant amount of their workdays completing related paperwork and that it is a source of stress or frustration (George et al., McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002; Paperwork in Special Education, 2002).

Interestingly, teachers in this study appeared to accept the paperwork requirement as a part of their jobs. They also relied on certain information in the IEPs to inform general educators of the individual needs of their students. Yet, the volumes of paperwork associated with the provision of special education services has contributed to the high attrition of special educators. These teachers apparently have developed methods to manage the paperwork burden, which allowed them to go about their work.

Job Design Issues

An additional purpose of this study was to identify job design issues associated with the work of teaching students with EB/D in middle school settings. Job design can be thought of as “the set of structures, systems, and processes through which the work of teaching is conducted” (Morvant, et al., 1995). For the purposes of this study, job design considers the day-to-day working conditions confronting teachers of students with EB/D as they reported to their work assignments. An analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of two themes related to the notion of job design (a) working relationships with general education colleagues and (b) meeting the conflicting responsibilities associated with being a special educator in the current context of public middle schools. These themes are discussed in the following section.

Working with General Education Colleagues

The design of their jobs required that the special education teachers in this study coordinated their teaching efforts with certain general education teachers. There were instances when general education teachers did not support the special education teachers’ endeavors. These occurrences created difficulties for the special education teachers in carrying out their work.

Mary Margaret's teaching assignment as a special education resource teacher required that she interact with 27 general education teachers. Although most of those teachers supported her efforts, she experienced some frustration associated with general education teachers who did not fulfill their obligations to students with disabilities. These included teachers not implementing the instructional components of students' IEPs and not following through on Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs). She related a problem with a general education teacher not following a student's IEP:

I've had to go to the administration and say, you know, we really need to make sure this is happening, the parents are starting to complain. . . . We're going through a situation right now where there's some tension within our department--not everybody working together and doing their part. (AT1.I.15).

Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) were an integral part of several students' IEPs. The effective use of these plans required input from the general education teachers with whom the students had contact. However, certain general education teachers did not always complete the required daily point sheets. This resulted in more work for Mary Margaret. She said, "I have to back track and that becomes a hassle" (AT1.I.44). The lack of follow through also influenced the meaningfulness of the BIP for the student. The following example illustrates this point.

Marcus's IEP contained a BIP, which relied heavily on earned points in his general education classes. When teachers did not complete the point sheets, this created more work for Mary Margaret and caused frustration for Marcus. She noted her concerns:

I try to update [the point sheet] each day so he sees where his total points are. . . . It's just not as meaningful to him. If he's in math and he's had such a great experience, he needs to know that right then. If he sees the teacher writing it down and the teacher telling him why he got them, that means more [and] if he's a jerk in there and doesn't get his points. . . he needs to know right then. (AT1.I.44)

Paul's role as a resource/collaborative teacher required that he work with five general education teachers. While the majority of those teachers supported Paul in his work, there were occasions when he felt unsupported. A long-term substitute language arts teacher experienced difficulties preparing appropriate lesson plans for a collaborative class, which caused problems for Paul. He noted:

This morning there were shades of--I don't know where he was coming from; not a clue; just sort of rattling things off about this unit he'd put together. Well, that's fine that you put it together. Now, what are we going to do? What are we going to do today in there? This, this, this, and they [the students] need the consistency of that. They are a good bunch of students and it's tough for them. (AT2.I.58)

Paul also indicated some general education teachers were intolerant of the behaviors associated with individual students with disabilities. This intolerance required a shift in the focus of his work efforts. According to Paul, certain general educators were inflexible in their willingness to accept particular students in their classes, "because 'if you can't do what I'm doing you're out of here'. . . . It's my job to make sure they're not really ousted" (AT2.I.65).

Paul spoke passionately in response to being asked if anyone made his work difficult: Yes, there have been a couple of regular education teachers who don't see [the purpose of special education] and they're still in the punitive phase--well they don't understand accommodating students. They think that accommodations are enabling students--not understanding that practicing handwriting is not necessarily going to correct dysgraphia and that behavior that they see is not particularly connected to what is going on [in their class] it may be in a reaction to something else that went on. (AT1.I.29)

Joan experienced similar difficulties in her efforts to work individually with students on her caseload. Eight of her students with disabilities attended a regular education eighth grade language arts class and were expected to complete the same coursework assignments as their nondisabled peers. Meeting those expectations required that Joan provide several of her students with individual instruction. The language arts teachers would not consent to Joan removing the students during their general education class time so that she could provide them with individual instruction. This caused problems for her:

I had these papers I needed to edit, I need to see each kid alone and I can't do it in that class. I asked if I could pull my kids and work with them on their papers. . . and she said 'no'. . . . That's her call. She said 'no'. . . so I've got some kid coming in at 7:30. . . and we'll work until 8:00 and then [I have another] one from 8:00 to 8:30. (BT2.I.36)

Elaine experienced similar frustrations with certain general educators in her teaching assignment. When she attended a meeting to conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) for one of her students, two general education teachers repeatedly referred to Elaine's self-

contained classroom as “the fun room” (BT1.O2). This continued until Elaine defended her role as a special education teacher, “Now wait a minute, I’m getting pretty perturbed about your use of the phrase the ‘fun room.’ We do lots of work down there” (BT1.O2). She related her annoyance with the experience afterward, “I was very angry and hurt. I was angry at that teacher because I had felt like we had a relationship before and I was hurt by what she said making it seem like I wasn’t a professional” (BT1.I.26).

Interpreting the Data

Working with individual general education colleagues impeded these special education teachers’ abilities to carry out certain aspects of their work with their students. Some teachers experienced more difficulties than others did.

During the data collection period, Elaine’s work placed her in the position of having to defend her position as a professional. My field notes reflected tension between Elaine and certain general education teachers. During a meeting to discuss concerns with a student, I noted, “She (Elaine) does not make eye contact with the other teachers. There is an uncomfortable feeling in the room--tense almost hostile? It appears from the conversation that the general education teachers want this student out of their classrooms” (FN.91). There was also an incident where a general education teacher verbally accosted her. Elaine indicated that she had experienced problems with that particular teacher in the past.

Paul’s work with the general education teachers appeared to be influenced by the makeup of the students in each class. Some classes were active, noisy, and almost chaotic, giving the appearance that the teachers were attempting to maintain some control over the students. Paul relied upon the strength of the general education teachers to allow him to support his students. In several situations, he provided more support to the teachers than to his students, which impeded his ability to carry out his work with his students.

Mary Margaret and Joan experienced fewer problems related to working with individual general educators. Yet, those instances did occur. Elaine and Paul openly expressed their frustrations with those teachers, while Mary Margaret and Joan were less forthcoming. The data suggested that positive and productive relationships with their general education colleagues were important to these teachers as they went about their work. The need for teachers of students with EB/D to establish productive relationships with general education colleagues is supported by findings in the research literature discussed in Chapter 2 (George et al., 1995;

McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Pullis, 1992; Nelson, 2001). Those studies indicated that the lack of collegial support from general educators could contribute to frustrations with job assignments.

Meeting the Conflicting Responsibilities of being a Special Educator in Middle Schools
It's a huge issue [schedules and time] -- that's the biggest thing you fight in middle school. Right down to the services of the students (AT2.I.63.)

Another area that impeded the teachers' efforts to successfully conduct their work was that of meeting the conflicting responsibilities due to scheduling and time constraints. The special education teachers implied that the provision of instruction at the middle school level centered on their students' academic schedules. This resulted in frustrations related to their inability to find adequate time to complete work related responsibilities during the workday and provide individual instruction to students.

Special education teachers working at the middle school level experienced difficulties in creating adequate time during their workdays to complete their job related responsibilities (AT1.25/AT2.I.50/BT1.I.10/BT2.I.43). These included time to complete paperwork, complete lesson plans, and time to meet with colleagues.

Mary Margaret's work required that she collaborate with 27 seventh and eighth grade general education teachers. Although her teaching schedule did include two 90-minute planning periods two days per week, scheduling conflicts between the grade levels limited her ability to meet with all team members. This was a particular problem with the seventh grade team members. She remarked:

I don't have a common planning time with them [seventh grade teachers]. So, if I need them it's in the morning or it's by e-mail or I'll go and interrupt their class. I'll try to make sure they're not up in front lecturing; but I'll just go right in and ask them something. And they know where to find me too. They'll come here if they know I need something. I wish I did [have a common planning time]. (AT2.I.25)

Paul's teaching assignment required that he team with the eighth grade level general education teachers. His teaching schedule included a daily planning period, however, it did not correlate with the eighth grade team's planning time. His interactions with his team members were primarily happenstance, "most of it is informal, we catch up with each other between classes or at the end of the day" (FN.32). Paul also spent most his planning time providing

assistance to a general education teacher who struggled with the management of a disruptive group of students. He simply stated, "All of the students in there need [support]. . . it takes two people in there" (AT2.I.13).

Joan's teaching schedule included a daily planning period. However, much of that planning time was spent attending meetings, covering the alternative educational setting (AES) room, and providing individual instruction to students (FN.116). Room scheduling conflicts hindered her ability to take advantage of her limited planning time. She shared her classroom with two special education teachers and the other classrooms at Miles Middle School were used continuously. Joan indicated that this caused her some frustration. When asked where she did her planning, she replied, "Wherever I find a place. I don't like to come to the library because people see me and come to talk to me. I have to work. If I have work I have to do, I do it at home--certain work. I write all my IEPs at home. It's just easier and I'm not interrupted all the time" (BT2.I.43).

Elaine's days passed quickly as she juggled the schedules of the eight sixth, seventh and eighth grade students on her caseload. She carried out these duties without the benefit of a daily planning time. This lack of time created several dilemmas for her. First, she indicated that much of her paperwork was completed while in the general education science classroom with her students or during downtimes in her classroom with the explanation, "I don't have a planning time so I get them done where and when I can" (FN.108). Second, she relied upon her general education colleagues for guidance on certain core content area information. The lack of time to meet with those teachers created an obstacle for her:

If I need a book or if I need an answer or something--I know who I can go to ask. . . .
They help me, but it is more of a matter of time because I don't have a planning period. If I did have a planning period, it wouldn't be a common planning with them. So, you know, just finding the time to go out and find somebody is kind of difficult sometimes.
(BT2.I.20)

Scheduling problems also encumbered teachers' abilities to provide students with individual instruction (AT1.I.24/AT2.I.63/BT2.I.50). Teachers were creative and flexible in their attempts to meet the needs of their students.

Mary Margaret experienced some difficulty in her attempts to support her seventh and eight grade students because of scheduling conflicts. She managed to meet with her students when her scheduled allowed the time:

I'll find extra time here at school to work with the kids, have them come in and see me as soon as they get off the bus, and I'll pull them at lunch if I have to. . . . You know, we pull them whenever we can. (AT1.I.24)

Paul spoke directly to the problems he experienced with finding the time to meet with his eighth grade students individually:

Scheduling in the middle school, particularly the block schedule is very frustrating because when you need time with a student or more time to work on something you don't necessarily have it. You watch children or students try to fit into the schedule. . . in elementary school, scheduling is very flexible and you can change things around and fix it for the student. And in the middle school that is much harder to do. I need to make that clearer. Maybe 90 minutes is too long to do language arts for some of these kids and you push through that because of the scheduling. You can't flip flop this [classes or content] because you are locked into this master schedule. That can be a problem sometimes and it can be frustrating. (AT2.I.19)

When needed, he would also stay after contract hours to provide individual support to his students.

Finding time to provide individual instruction to her eighth graders was particularly difficult for Joan. She managed to find some time to work with students during her duty free periods. Once she gained permission from their general education teachers for the students to miss a portion of a class, Joan would work individually with them. During a planning period, I observed her working with Joe, a shy, tall, brown-haired boy, developing an outline for a language arts paper (BT2.O3). She explained, "I asked the PE teacher if he could come late to PE because this was my planning period and I could spend 20 minutes helping him with his paper" (BT2.I.50-51). She indicated that there were certain classes that her students could not miss, "If they have health, like where they're learning sex education, I can't pull them from that. They have to have that class. It would be like pulling them from math, I can't do that. That's the hard part" (BT2.I.51).

As indicated by the illustrations above, teachers found meeting the complex responsibilities associated with their work frustrating. They needed time to work individually with their students with disabilities and to complete the procedural aspects of their work related to providing students with services related to IDEA.

Interpreting the Data

Finding adequate time during their workdays impeded the ability of the special education teachers in this study to complete their work effectively. Each teacher had different concerns with finding adequate time to complete the work related to providing services to students with disabilities under IDEA. Lawrenson and McKinnon (1982) also found that teachers of students with EB/D were dissatisfied with the amount of time required to attend to the paperwork aspect of their work because it took time away from working with their students. These findings date back 22 years, prior to the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA. That reauthorization emphasized access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities who received services under IDEA and shifted the focus of the work of special educators toward meeting the demands of standards-based reforms (Stodden, Galloway, & Stodden, 2003). It is interesting to note that the paperwork issue has remained a consistent theme in research literature (George et al., 1995; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Nicols & Snow, 2002; Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

Teachers in this study were forthcoming regarding their frustrations with finding adequate time during the instructional day to fulfill the obligations of their work, primarily with finding time to work with the students on their caseloads. While observing these teachers as they went about their work, it appeared that they utilized their time during the instructional day either working with students, working with colleagues in classrooms, or attending to various duties and responsibilities. I noted that the teachers spent little of their time engaging in casual conversations or socially interacting with colleagues and administrators. Their primary focus appeared to be on their students and completing other work related responsibilities.

Discussion of the Findings

The primary purpose of this case study was to illustrate the work lives of experienced special teachers of students with EB/D in middle school settings by identifying the actions and job design issues related to that work. In the following discussion, the special education teachers are referred to as SET. Experienced and qualified special education teachers were selected as the

primary participants because of the positive role that they play in the school lives and post-school lives of students with EB/D (Simpson, 1999). Activity theory provided the theoretical framework for the design of the study and the data collection protocols. This section offers a discussion of the cross-case analysis of the study using the framework of activity theory to guide the discussion. A model illustrating the findings of the cross-case analysis was provided in Chapter 5 (Figure 8, p. 149).

Recall that the conceptual framework for activity theory “considers actions as events in a collective activity system” (Engeström, 1999, p.30). The focal point of the model is the object, as it is the object that connects the actions to the activity. Within this framework, analysis considers the activity of the actor (subject) as work is performed toward meeting the object and the outcome. The interactions with the tools (mediating artifacts), the rules, the community, and the division of labor are also parts of the activity system. Figure 9 provides an illustration of an activity system.

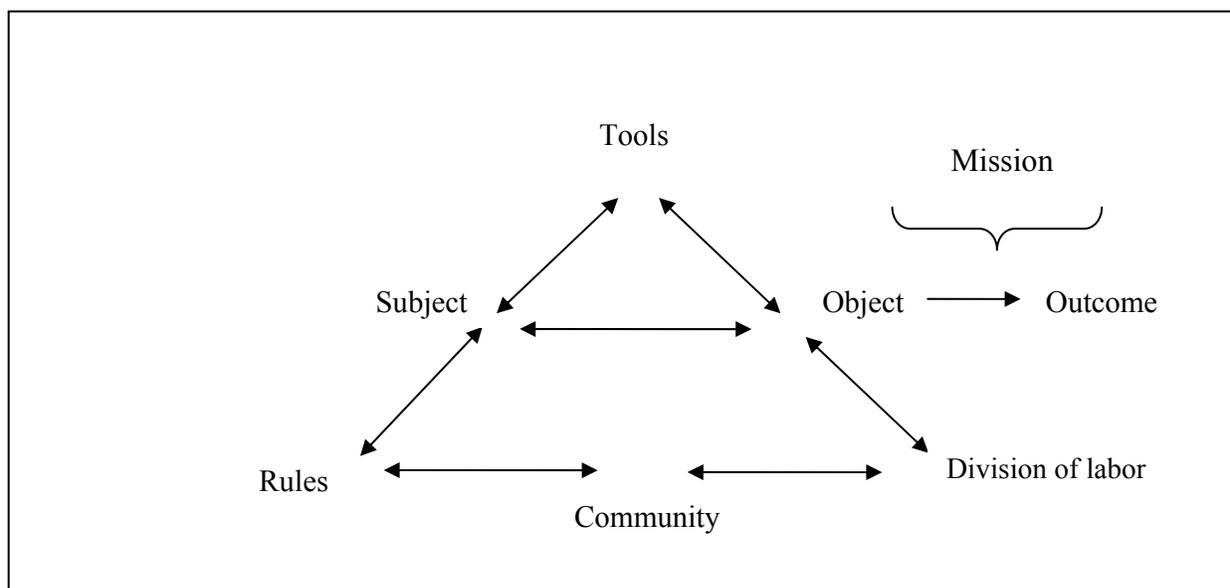


Figure 9. An activity systems triangle.

Subjects

The subjects in an activity system are the identified workers in an activity system whose activities are being examined. The subjects in this study were 4 seasoned SETs with an average of 18 years of experience teaching students with disabilities working at public middle schools in Virginia. Three of them taught in cross-categorical settings providing services to students with a variety of disabilities. Each teacher had always been a special educator, was endorsed to teach

EB/D, had at least 3 years of experience teaching students with EB/D, and was considered effective by supervisory personnel. The SETs appeared to be dedicated to their work as special educators and did not indicate any desire to leave their current teaching positions. The data reflect that, overall, the SETs were satisfied with their work and did not experience significant levels of frustration given the complex nature of their work. This finding suggests that experienced special education teachers are less frustrated with their work.

Objects of the Teachers' Work

The objects in an activity system are the recipients of the actions. The objects of the actions of the SETs in this study were middle school students identified with diverse disabilities. The majority of the students received special education services in resource settings and did not demonstrate some of the troubling behaviors often associated with EB/D. This finding may imply that students with more severe behaviors are placed in more restrictive settings in the selected districts.

Mission of the Work

The mission of the actions in an activity systems are the identified purposes or reasons for the actions. The SETs believed that the purpose or the mission of their work was to provide their students with the necessary supports or tools that would allow them to succeed in general education classrooms, obtain general education diplomas, and become productive members of society. They engaged in certain activities as they worked to meet the mission of their work.

Actions Associated with the Work

The actions were identified through observations and interviews. These were (a) supporting their students' progress in the general education curriculum, (b) fostering the development of their students' prosocial skills, and (c) fulfilling multiple non-teaching related responsibilities.

The SETs in this study spent a considerable portion of their instructional time supporting their students' progress in the general education curriculum. They believed that their efforts would support their students in obtaining general education diplomas. They spent time in their resource rooms providing students with instruction on completing assignments from their general education teachers and preparing students for taking SOL tests. Time was also spent in the general education classes supporting students as they completed assignments based upon the general education curriculum.

The SETs accepted these aspects of their work and deemed that their time spent in the general education classrooms or working with the general education material were opportunities to increase their own content knowledge. They did not indicate frustration with the lack of opportunities to provide students with specialized instruction. However, these were experienced teachers, who had been working in their schools for at least four years. A novice special education teacher placed in a similar situation may not fair as well. The practice of placing specially trained teachers in positions that hinder their abilities to utilize their skills could encourage job dissatisfaction and decisions to leave special education classrooms.

SETs promoted the prosocial behaviors of their students by providing opportunities for their students to develop their social skills and enhance their self-esteem. Some of the methods to promote the students prosocial skills were somewhat unorthodox, such as the use of playing cards. However, they believed that many of their efforts provided opportunities to establish constructive relationships with their students. These positive relationships could encourage certain students to attend school more frequently, which might decrease the likelihood of retention and/or academic failure.

The SETs carried out their promotion of prosocial skills in their classrooms and without input from the general education teachers. Time in the general education classrooms focused on academic work. It is important to note that most of the students with EB/D in this study did not display some of the troubling behaviors often associated with the disability and that they were included in general education classes for a portion of their academic day. However, joint efforts between general educators and special educators to develop students' prosocial skills could certainly benefit students, encourage feelings of collegiality, and promote job satisfaction.

SETs spent a considerable amount of their workdays engaged in non-teaching related actions such as completing required paperwork, attending meetings, and acting in leadership roles. Many of these actions were related to the provision of specialized services under IDEA. They did not indicate significant levels of frustration associated with those actions and accepted them as necessary aspects of their work. However, as noted earlier, these teachers were experienced special educators and may have developed methods to manage the multiple responsibilities. An interesting finding was the role of acting as a mentor. All of the teachers were mentors, however, they found their roles perfunctory. They did not indicate finding the experience particularly meaningful or as being especially helpful to their mentees. When

responsibilities are assigned, it is important that administrators support teachers to allow them to see the benefit of their time spent on the task.

Tools of the Work

The mediating artifacts (tools) in an environment or activity system mediate the interactions between the subject and the object. The tools, or mediating artifacts, are those that I identified through observations and interviews and were used by the subjects to meet the object of their work. The SETs employed a number of tangible and intangible tools as they engaged in their work. The primary tangible tools were students' IEPs, which they used to inform the general education teachers of the individual needs of students as far as necessary accommodations and adapting materials. The behavioral intervention plans (BIP) were also important to teachers. Teachers experienced some frustration when general education teachers did not implement certain components of the IEPs. Other important tangible tools included general education curriculum materials, SOL guides, school mandated agendas, and behavioral point systems. The reliance on general education curriculum materials to guide instructional decisions calls into question the specialized and individualized aspect of the requirement of IDEA, which is to provide students with disabilities instruction based upon their individual needs.

Intangible tools used by the SETs included their special education knowledge that was a result of their special education teacher training and special education teaching experiences. They indicated that the lack of core content knowledge was a professional weakness. This may mean that special education teachers believed that it was their responsibility to have adequate knowledge of special education and general education, a task that appears overwhelming and could lead to role conflict.

Rules of the Work

The rules provide guidance for an activity system and can be thought of constraining the system. The actions in which the SETs engaged were constrained by federal, state, and local policies. The IDEA provided the principle guidelines that controlled much of their work. This required fulfilling the procedural mandates related to the law such as the paperwork requirements and attending multiple meetings. However, many of their teaching efforts were conducted in response to standards based reform movements such as the No Child Left Behind Act and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). For these SETs, the primary source driving

their efforts was the SOLs. It is important to note that the SOLs have been in place as a method of method of assessing student achievement since 1995.

Specialized instruction was secondary to ensuring that students made adequate progress on the SOLs and in the general education curriculum. This means that students with disabilities are not provided with meaningful opportunities for the provision of specialized instruction. It also places experienced professionals in positions of reteaching materials or acting in the role of a teaching assistant while general educators provide the instruction. For some special educators, these actions could result in feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration with their work.

Although local rules such as school board policies guided their work, the SETs were unaware of any specific job descriptions. They relied upon input from their building level administrators to determine their primary responsibilities. The individual needs of their students also predisposed many of their teaching responsibilities. The resource teachers' responsibilities were influenced by input from the general educators with whom they worked. This implies that the roles for special educators are dictated by the situations in which they teach. This lack of inconsistency may appeal to more seasoned teachers, however, an inexperienced teacher may become overwhelmed by the lack of guidance.

Community in Which They Worked

The community in an activity system is the larger group of which the subject is a part. The teaching community was fairly large and consisted of central office special education administrators, building level administrators, special education colleagues, general education colleagues, special education support personnel, parents, and students. The SETs relied primarily upon support from their administrators and colleagues as they went about their work. Reported levels of administrative support at the building level and central office levels were high. These SETs were included in disciplinary decisions with their students. Generally, teachers indicated being supported by their general education colleagues and special education colleagues. Although observations contradicted some aspects of support, the teachers insisted that they felt supported in their work. Levels of administrative and collegial support are important to decisions to remain in the work of special education.

The students with whom the SETs worked provided them with the motive for their work. They indicated receiving pleasure in seeing the academic and social progress that their students

made each year. Special educators are drawn to this work to teach students with disabilities and can become frustrated when not provided opportunities to spend adequate time with them.

Division of Labor

The division of labor considers who does what in the community to achieve the outcomes of the activity. It describes how tasks are distributed within an activity system. Although, the SETs shared the teaching responsibilities of their students with general educators, they were primarily responsible for the instruction. Job design issues were identified within the area of division of labor.

The job design of each teacher in this study required that he or she work with general education teachers in several capacities. They would support the general educators when working in classrooms and interact with them in determining program services and placements for students with disabilities. However, the efforts of the special education teachers were occasionally thwarted when general educators did not follow through on their obligations to students with disabilities. Additional burdens were placed upon the teachers of students with EB/D when their efforts were unsupported.

The work of the SETs took the appearance of being somewhat one sided. That is, they were assuming a portion of the general education teachers' responsibility to ensure that their students were being provided with appropriate instruction in the general education curriculum. Yet, the general educators did not take responsibility for providing accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities consistently.

The primary responsibility of the SETs in this study was the provision of services under IDEA to identified students with disabilities. They also responded to pressures placed upon them by standards based reform efforts. Their actions and comments demonstrated that they did provide services to identified students with disabilities. Yet, they also spent a portion of their workdays assisting general educators in their efforts to instruct nondisabled students. Much of their limited duty free time was spent supporting their students' progress in the general education curriculum. Teachers in this study had limited unhindered planning periods and inadequate time to address the complex nature of their work.

As I reflected on this finding, several images come to mind. First, there is the image of IDEA as being a soft, spongy ball being indented by the pressures of standards based efforts. Second, special educators at the middle school level are placed in the position of wearing two

hats, a special education hat, and a general education hat. A responsibility that seems overwhelming and frustrating.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to illustrate the work lives of well-qualified teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (EB/D) working in middle school settings. Activity theory provided the theoretical lens to frame the inquiry. This chapter provides conclusions based upon the findings, a discussion of the implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. Results of this study support the research findings previously reported in the literature review in Chapter 2. This study contributed to the research on special education personnel by identifying *how* and *why* experienced teachers of students with EB/D engage in their work in response to the standards based reforms efforts in public education.

Conclusions

Data to illustrate the work lives of the special educators in this study were obtained from observations, interviews, and a review of relevant documents in three middle schools located in two school districts in Virginia. The results were aligned with previous research on the topic of the work of teaching students with disabilities in middle school settings. Conclusions related to the key findings are provided in the following section.

Conclusion #1. Experienced Teachers Understand the Expectations of their Work

Experienced special educators understand the complex nature of their work. The veteran teachers in this study completed multiple responsibilities and filled several teaching roles. The absence of a specific job description did not influence their abilities to understand the expectations of their work. However, less experienced special educators might become overwhelmed by their work expectations and a formal job description could provide some guidance.

Findings indicate that experienced special education teachers do not experience frustration related to the mission of their work. Frustrations do exist with regard to issues of collegiality, particularly with general education colleagues. Administrative support in negotiating the tensions and work-related problems between special education teachers and general education teachers could improve this aspect of the work.

Conclusion #2. Teaching Responsibilities Are Determined by Individual Situations

The data suggested that the teaching responsibilities of special educators are determined by the individual situations of their work assignments. Input from administrators, general educators, and the size and character of student caseloads determined the responsibilities of each teacher. Although certain teachers may enjoy the flexibility of this arrangement, others might experience dissatisfaction or frustration with this situation.

Conclusion #3. Special Education Teachers Promote Students' Progress in the General Education Curriculum.

These teachers of students with EB/D in middle schools believed that the mission of their work was to promote their students' progress in the general education curriculum. They fulfilled that mission by assuming many of the responsibilities of ensuring that their students learned the general education materials and progressed in the general education curriculum. Their efforts resulted from pressures placed upon public schools to address federal and state level standards-based reform efforts. Special educators feel that they need to learn core content material to support their students. This finding has several conclusions. First, specially trained educators are placed in roles that do not utilize their skills, knowledge, or abilities. Teachers in this study did not indicate problems related to supporting the teaching efforts of general educators. Other special education teachers may experience a devaluation of their teaching roles when placed in similar working conditions and become frustrated with their work.

Second, this finding suggests that special educators are asked to fill multiple roles, that of being a special educator and a general educator. The role of a special educator requires clarification and professional recognition by both administrators and general education colleagues. [I moved this sentence up to this paragraph.] Finally, this finding suggests that students with disabilities are not consistently being provided with specially- designed instruction as defined in IDEA. It is important to note that this study was not intended to evaluate the merits or the worth of the teaching methods used by these special educators who teach students with EB/D. However, a review of the standards addressing knowledge and skills for beginning special education teachers of students with EB/D (CEC, 1998) indicated that reliance upon the general education curriculum to guide instructional decisions does not permit teachers to consider the individual needs of students. This conclusion raises the question of how clearly

these educators understood the professional standards that have been designed in recent years to guide their work with challenging children.

Conclusion #4. Promotion of Prosocial Behaviors is Important

The promotion of students' prosocial behaviors is important to special educators working with students with EB/D. They address these skills based upon their belief that the students will benefit in their school lives and their post school lives. Although their students attended general education classes, the teachers chose to teach these skills in the more private resource room setting and not in general education classrooms. While the resource room may facilitate the instruction of these skills, practice in their use should be promoted in the general education classroom.

Conclusion #5. Special Educators Complete Multiple Non-Teaching Related Tasks

The data suggested that special educators completed multiple non-teaching related duties such as attending multiple meetings, completing volumes of paperwork, and fulfilling leadership positions. Completing the paperwork related to IDEA and attending various meetings were determined to be somewhat meaningful. However, other assignments such as mentoring new special educators were deemed as being less meaningful to these veterans. Responsibilities associated with the work must be meaningful to special education teachers so that they do not become frustrated with that work.

Conclusion #6. Time Constraints Hindered their Ability to Complete their Work

The unavailability of time to meet the requirements of their work impeded the special education teachers' abilities to fulfill the mission of their work. They were unable to meet the complex demands of their jobs due to inflexible teaching schedules and inadequate planning periods. As a result, they were unable to provide their students with individualized instruction, meet formally with colleagues, and complete the required paperwork. Special educators need to be provided with adequate time to fulfill the requirements associated with their work or be relieved of some of the responsibilities.

Conclusion # 7. Tensions between General Educators and Special Educators Exist

There was not a reciprocal relationship between special educators and general educators regarding instructional responsibilities to students with disabilities. General educators did not consistently fulfill their instructional obligations to students with IEPs, a practice that placed additional burdens on the special educators. Despite the increased inclusion of students with

disabilities in general education classrooms, it was clear that some general educators in this study had a limited commitment to sharing the responsibilities for educating students with EB/D. The teaching roles and responsibilities of general educators and special educators must be clearly defined to decrease feelings of frustration.

Conclusion # 8. Activity theory is an appropriate framework to examine special education teachers.

Activity theory provided an appropriate tool to analyze the work of teachers of students with EB/D working in middle school settings. This theoretical model allowed for an illustration of that work by identifying the specific actions in which the teachers engaged as they conducted their work and by identifying job design concerns. The identification of the tools, rules, community, and division of labor allowed for a deeper understanding of *how* and *why* they engaged in their work. Viewing teachers' work lives in this systematic manner provided for descriptions from both a day-to-day perspective or from a micro-level perspective, and from a large-scale view or the macro-level perspective.

The results of this study raise questions regarding the work of teachers of students with EB/D working in middle school settings and the best ways to prepare professional educators to assume these roles. These questions include (a) What are the sources of tension between general educators and special educators that lead to feelings of frustration; (b) do [or should] preservice preparation programs prepare special education teachers to address the content knowledge required for their work in inclusive settings; (c) does preservice preparation for general education teachers adequately address issues of diversity and the disability needs of students with disabilities; (d) are general educators and special educators prepared for the responsibilities associated with co-teaching and/or collaborative roles in secondary school settings; and (e) do preservice programs prepare administrators to provide the supports necessary for special educators to be successful in teaching students with EB/D?

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Several implications and recommendations for practice that may be informative to teachers and administrators can be drawn from this study's conclusions.

1. Implication: The roles of special educators are diverse and complex. They are expected to fill the role of a general educator and special educator.

Recommendations: Building level administrators should work collaboratively with

special education leaders and school personnel to clarify the roles that special education teachers are expected to fulfill. Principals should also afford on-going opportunities for special educators and general educators to discuss and clarify their evolving roles. This may be a difficult task for some administrators as they may not have adequate experience with special education programs or have adequate training to support the special education teachers. Leadership training programs need to provide administrators with the practical knowledge needed to support special education teachers and school systems need to encourage partnerships between general and special education leadership personnel.

Teacher training programs should realistically prepare special education teachers for the multiple roles that they will be expected to fill when working at the middle school level. This is not an easy task, as teaching roles vary from state to state, district to district, and school to school. But the increasing demands to use effective teaching practices validated by research and to attend to the disability-related needs of students with EB/C cannot be overlooked.

In addition, general education teacher preparation programs generally do not address special education programs and their expected roles in educating students with disabilities. Teacher training programs need to address the role that general education teachers play in the education of students with disabilities in the current context of public schooling. A single 3-credit-hour course, as required for licensure by many states, is insufficient in helping teachers differentiate academic lessons and address the mandates to provide appropriate instruction for the students with emotional and behavioral difficulties in their classrooms.

2. Implication: Special educators assume responsibilities for teaching general education curriculum materials to students with disabilities.

Recommendation: Administrators must ensure that the goals of the IEP, not just the goals of the general education curriculum, are being met.

3. Implication: Special educators in middle school settings lack adequate time to complete the responsibilities of their work.

Recommendations: Administrators should relieve special educators of certain responsibilities or provide adequate planning time to complete their responsibilities.

Other options for supporting special education teachers in fulfilling multiple responsibilities include utilizing paraprofessionals or a clerical staff member to assist with some of the paperwork requirements.

4. Implications: Students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders are not consistently provided adequate opportunities to receive specially-designed instruction.

Recommendation: Administrators should ensure that special educators are provided adequate opportunities to address their students' disability related needs as well as to ensure their access to the general education curriculum.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study utilized activity theory to gain a greater understanding of the work of well-qualified teachers of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (EB/D) working in select middle school settings. Key findings suggest that those special educators support their students with instruction in the general education curriculum, promote their prosocial skills, and fulfill multiple non-teaching related responsibilities. Their efforts are often hindered by tense relationships with general educators and a lack of time to complete their complex work. The results of these findings are limited, because it was conducted in two similar sized school districts and examined the work of experienced teachers of students with EB/D. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in order to test the theory's applicability to other environments. Similar studies could be conducted in urban districts to gain an understanding of how and why teachers of students with EB/D engage in their work in those settings.

Future research is also needed to understand how experienced teachers of students with EB/D perceive their work at different levels of schools. This study addressed middle schools only. Future studies of elementary schools and high schools could provide useful illustrations of how and why those teachers engage in their work.

This study investigated the work of experienced special education teachers. Future studies could consider the work of novice special education teachers working in similar school settings to gain a better understanding of their work.

Special education personnel studies are receiving increased attention in the field. Of particular interest to researchers are factors that encourage retention in the field. Future studies

could utilize activity theory to investigate specific elements of an activity system that encourage decisions to remain in the field of teaching students with EB/D.

This study focused on how special education teachers perceived their work. Future studies could utilize activity theory to investigate building level administrators' perception of the work of teaching students with EB/D. Such studies could address disconnections between administrators and special educators' expectations of that work.

Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Reflecting on the process involved in this study, I make recommendations for future researchers. First, gaining access into the field is important. I have noted my difficulties in finding participants related to an oversight in the stated selection criterion. Certain directors simply did not respond to my repeated attempts to contact them. Additionally, several special education directors were reluctant to have their special education teachers participate in this study because of the time requirements. Second, participation in this study required a significant amount of time on behalf of the participants. They became unenthusiastic about participating in the multiple interviews required for the pre and post observations. Less intensive data collection over a period could eliminate frustrations on behalf of the participants.

Concluding Statements

When I began this study, I expected to find special education teachers who were frustrated, suffered from burnout, and eager to leave the field. This did not prove to be the case. Instead, I enjoyed the company of four committed individuals who were enthusiastic about their work. They appeared to enjoy their time spent with their students and found their work meaningful. As I reflect on those teachers, I am reminded of the following parable, "In the middle ages, a man approached two stonemasons and asked them what they were doing. The first stonemason replied: 'I am laying stones'. The other answered: 'I am building a cathedral'" (Kamp, 2003, p. 33). I believe that these teachers are building cathedrals.

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APPENDIX A
TABLE OF STUDIES

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Cook, L. S., Smagorinsky, Fry, P. G., Konopak, B., & Moore, C., 2002)	To understand the experience of in applying the concept of constructivism to the actual act of teaching, Researchers identified tools for teaching and the ways in which those tools were supported by the situations of teaching.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> One elementary school teacher <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> Activity theory provided the analytical lens for this study. Qualitative approach using observations, interviews, and review of relevant documents. Data were analyzed using a qualitative software tool, Alas/ti Data collection took place during her last semester at the university and during her first year of employment of a teacher	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings</i></p> Student teachers in this teacher preparation program had not been properly prepared to teach using a constructivist approach, as they were lead to believe. Thus, they entered into the work of teaching without a solid understanding of the concept and experienced frustration.

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Conderman, G., & Katsiyannis, A. (2002)	Examined the roles and responsibilities of secondary educators. Specifically, the researchers were interested in (a) the level of teachers' involvement in providing direct services to students with disabilities, (b) the types of commonly used instructional models, (c) perceived effectiveness of these approaches, (d) the relationship between years teaching experience and the use of teaching approaches, and (e) the level of involvement in transition services (p. 170).	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> <p>199 special educators teaching grades 7 through 12 from Wisconsin participated in this study. Teachers indicated holding endorsements in the following areas, emotional disturbance (n=45), K-12 special education (n=45), learning disabilities (n=42), mental retardation (n=36), secondary special education (n=28), general education (n=21), elementary special education (n=5), and speech pathology (<1). 1/3 taught in self-contained classrooms >50% of the time. 1/4 taught in resource rooms >50% of the time.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> <p>2-page field tested survey was mailed to participants. A 66% return rate was reported.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings</i></p> <p>Teachers of students with disabilities at the secondary level have multiple roles and responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1/3 were teaching in self-contained settings for 50% of their day - 1/4 were teaching in resource rooms for 50% of their day. - Remaining 42% reported spending their day –when not teaching in the special education classroom— conducting multiple tasks such as (a) consulting with general education teachers (b) co-teaching, (c) coordinating work experiences, (d) providing vocational education, and (e) teaching in the general education classroom. - Other responsibilities included developing and writing IEPs, scheduling and attending, IEP meetings, conducting assessments, and writing lesson plans.

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Cross & Billingsley (1994)	Determined the extent that work related variables such as principal support, stress, role problems, and job satisfaction, teaching assignment, and personal characteristics could be used in a causal model to explain teachers' intention to stay in teaching.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample:</i></p> 642 special educators from Virginia Total response rate was 82% (n=412 special education teachers and n=130 teachers of ED students). <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology:</i></p> Mail survey of two samples. Questionnaire measured 12 identified variables. .	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings:</i></p> Influences on intent to stay in teaching. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job satisfaction <li style="padding-left: 20px;">Influences on commitment: - Fewer role problems - Less stress - Higher levels of support <li style="padding-left: 20px;">Influences on job satisfaction: - Fewer role problems - Higher principal support <li style="padding-left: 20px;">Influences on role problems - Less principal support - Assignment- ED teachers perceived greater role problems <li style="padding-left: 20px;">Influences on stress. - less principal support increased stress

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
<p>George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick (1995).</p>	<p>Analyzed the reasons reported by teachers of students with EBD of intentions for leaving the field. A study of intent to leave not actual attrition. The researchers wished to “begin to develop a clearer understanding of the conditions that lead to dissatisfaction, lowered commitment, and ultimately a desire to leave teaching” (p. 228).</p>	<p><i>Sample</i></p> <p>96 special education teachers of students with EBD selected from 53 school districts in 23 states Rural (70%) Urban (30%) Segregated special day school (95) Self-contained (69%) Resource rooms (22%) Elementary level teachers (42%) Middle school teachers (20%) High school level (34%) Itinerant teachers (4%).</p> <p><i>Methodology</i></p> <p>63-item mail survey Semi-structured telephone interviews were also conducted to provide detailed information that corresponded to the surveys.</p>	<p>61% planned to find other work in education. 39% were committed to leaving the field of education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work with students with EBD no longer provided success or accomplishment. - 38% indicated feeling physically and emotionally exhausted. - 25% indicated problems with administrators (lack of understanding and support). <p>53% elementary, 24% secondary, and 16% middle school teachers expressed desire to leave</p>

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
<p>McManus, M. E., & Kauffman, J. M. (1991).</p>	<p>Gathered data on the working conditions of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Specific conditions included, (a) classroom conditions that could affect teaching, (b) teachers' perceptions of support, and (c) teachers' job satisfaction.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> <p>Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) membership database was used as the primary sample. Sample was 402 teachers of students with behavioral disorders teaching during the 1988-1989 school year.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> <p>Authors developed and field tested a questionnaire that was ultimately mailed to the sample. Authors report a return rate of 66%.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings</i></p> <p>Conditions</p> <p>Moderate satisfaction with working conditions. Specific conditions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paperwork issues, inadequate planning time, interruptions that interfered with teaching - Relative isolation of work - Disruptive behavior and attacks. <p>Job satisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feelings of tiredness were prevalent - Most were enthusiastic and had positive attitudes - Less satisfied with parental support - Majority highly satisfied with collegial support

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
<p>Nelson, J. R., Maculan, A., Roberts, M. I., & Ohlund, B. J. (2001).</p>	<p>Identified factors that related to occupational stress</p>	<p><i>Sample</i> Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) membership database was used as the primary sample. Sample was 415 teachers of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. Authors reported an 83% response rate.</p> <p><i>Methodology</i> Participants were mailed three separate inventories that addressed (a) demographics, (b) working conditions, and (c) perceived ability to work with students with EB/D.</p>	<p>Teachers in this study reported generally having strong relationships with administrators, had opportunities to contribute to decisions, and had good working relationships with their colleagues. Among those three factors, the ability to contribute to decisions was the most significant.</p>

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Pullis, M. (1992).	Gathered data related to the stress of working with students with emotional/behavioral disorders. The author was interested in four areas, (a) specific stressors, (b) effects or symptoms of stress, (c) strategies to deal with stress, and (d) teachers' perspectives on might be done in their settings to reduce stress.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> 244 EB/D classroom teachers across nine states. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> Survey designed by author. Data were collected over a five-year period from teachers attending conferences, workshops and, graduate courses.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings:</i></p> Sources of Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School/setting factors - Career issues - Workload issues - Pupil characteristics Effects of Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feel exhausted - Feel frustrated - Feel overwhelmed - School stress carries over to life Coping Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing problems with professional colleagues - Organizing time and setting priorities Perspectives on Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow time for collaboration - Professional development opportunities - More verbal praise/reinforcement/respect for the job

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Roth, W. M., & Tobin, K. (2002)	Identified and corrected specific elements within a university teacher preparation program.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> Four students enrolled in a university based urban teacher preparation program/ <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> Activity theory provided the analytical lens for this study. Qualitative approach using observations, interviews, and student maintained journals. Data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings</i></p> Identified primary source of contradiction within the teacher-preparation program: Student teachers' expectations of practicum placement conflicted with individual expectation at school level. Implemented changes to improve teacher outcomes.

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Singh & Billingsley(1996)	Determined if factors that influence teachers of students with emotional disturbances intent to stay, as well as job satisfaction, professional commitment, differed from those of other special education teachers. Specific factors included, intent to stay in teaching, professional commitment, job satisfaction, employability outside of education, role problems, job stress and principal support.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample.</i></p> VA DOE database provided the sample of 658 special education teachers, of which 159 were teachers of students with ED. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology.</i></p> Mail survey. Seven page questionnaire was developed using a variety of existing scales.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings.</i></p> Intent to Stay affected by. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workplace conditions - Professional commitment (ED teachers) - Job satisfaction - Role related problems (ED and SPED) - Administrative support had indirect influence - Longevity in teaching (ED and SPED) - Stress (↑ ED). Job Satisfaction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct effect on ED and SPED & intent to stay - Provision of principal support had more effect with SPED than ED .

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Stempien, L. R., & Loeb, R. C. (2002).	Compared the job satisfaction of special educators (EB/D) teachers and general education teachers.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> all teachers (n=116) - General educators (n=60) - Special educators (n=36)-public school teachers (n=10) special schools (n=26) - Teachers of general and special education students (n=20) <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> Survey distributed to schools.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General education teachers have more job satisfaction than special education teachers but not less satisfaction with life. - Special educators have more job frustration due to isolation, paperwork responsibilities. - Special education teachers enjoy working with their students and interacting with colleagues more than their general education peers. - Special educators would like to change isolation, paperwork, and interacting with other.

Author	Purpose of the Study	Sample/Methodology	Results
Weiss, M. P., & Lloyd, J. W. (2001).	Examined and described the roles and instructional actions of secondary special education teachers in co-taught and special education classrooms.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sample</i></p> 3 middle school special education teachers 3 high school special education teachers involved in co-teaching practices in grades 6 through 12. Teachers were observed teaching either an English or math class in the special education classroom and in the co-taught classroom. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodology</i></p> Qualitative approach using observations, interviews, and a review of relevant documents. Data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Major Findings</i></p> Roles in co-taught classrooms (general education) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing support - teaching same content in separate classroom - teaching different part of content - team teaching Roles in special education classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sole instructor responsible for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - instruction - assessment - feedback

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTER TO DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Date

Address

Director of Special Education:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Administration and Supervision of Special Education program in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. This letter is to inform you of the purpose of my study and to request your participation.

The shortage of special education teachers is of concern to a large number of school districts in Virginia. Of particular concern to many districts are the difficulties associated with recruiting and retaining qualified teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EB/D). This shortage has severe implications for directors of special education, as many of you are directly responsible for recruitment and retention efforts.

The purpose of this study is to illustrate the work lives of 4 experienced special education teachers of students with EB/D in middle school settings. I have included copies of the abstract and criteria for inclusion in the study that provide further information.

I would like to have the opportunity to discuss the details of this study with you and to seek your support. I will be contacting you in the near future after you have had the chance to consider my request.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (540)-547-2583 or email me at sumyers@vt.edu.

Sincerely,

Susan T. Myers

Enclosures (2)

Abstract

The work of teaching all students with disabilities is constantly changing in response to education reform initiatives, policies, and shifting societal mores. These changes have contributed to an increase in stressful working conditions for many special educators. Stressful working conditions and issues related to job designs can influence decisions to leave the work of teaching students with disabilities, in particular teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders (George, George, Gersten, & Grosenick, 1995). These decisions to leave the classroom result in a shortage of adequately prepared and experienced special educators willing to teach this vulnerable population. In response to the shortage, school districts may resort to hiring improperly prepared individuals. In turn, this practice impedes the provision of an appropriate education to students with disabilities (Kaufman, 2001; Turnbull & Turnbull; 1998). Conditions related to the work of teaching students with emotional problems are noted as significantly influencing teachers' decisions to leave that work (George, George, George, & Grosenick, 1995). However, little is known about how and why these teachers engage in this specialized work. The purpose of this cross-case study is to illustrate the work lives of teachers of students with emotional or behavioral disorders at middle school levels. The goal is to provide rich illustrations of the work lives of 4 experienced special educators employed in middle school settings in Virginia. These descriptions should provide readers with an understanding of how and why teachers of students with EB/D go about their work. This study is intended to contribute to the currently limited research base on personnel issues related to special educators who work with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. An additional purpose of this study is to evaluate the appropriateness of activity theory as a means to frame the work of special educators.

Criteria of Inclusion in the Study

I am interested in interviewing and observing two experienced middle school teachers of students with EB/D per district. For the purposes of this study, in order for a teacher to be considered as being ‘experienced’ they must fit the following criteria. Selected teachers must (a) be certified to teach students with EB/D, (b) have between 3 and 5 years of experience as a teacher of students with EB/D, and (c) be recognized as being an effective special educator by the district level director of special education and the building level administrator.

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

Project Title: An Illustration of the Work Lives of Special Education Teachers of Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders:

Principal Investigator: Susan T. Myers, doctoral candidate, Special Education Administration and Supervision

1. I hereby agree to participate in interviews and observations in connection with the project known as *An Illustration of the Work Lives of Experienced Teachers of Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders*. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I will be asked to discuss my perceptions of the work of special education teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disorders.
2. I understand that I will be asked to participate in at least 1 interview, which should take no longer than 60 minutes. Follow up interviews may be scheduled as needed. Observations may also be conducted and may last between 45 and 90 minutes.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the project and the interview and observations at any time without penalty of any kind. In the event that I withdraw from the interview or project, any tape and transcripts made of the interview will be either given to me or destroyed.
4. I understand that I will receive no compensation for my participation in this project, though I will be given a copy of the transcript for my own records.
5. I understand that the interview will be audio taped. In the interview, I will be identified by a pseudonym as that I may remain anonymous in any transcript, tape, and reference to any information contained in the interview.
6. This project has been approved, as is required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.
7. If I feel that I have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that my rights as a participant in the research have been violated during the course of this project, I know I can contact Dr. David Moore, Chair, IRB, Research Division, Virginia Tech, or Dr. Jean Crockett, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, Virginia Tech, at the phone number listed below.
8. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and agree to be interviewed and observed according to the terms outlined above. I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

Signature

Date

Should I have any questions about the research project or procedures, I may contact:

Susan T. Myers
Principal Investigator
540-547-2583
sumyers@vt.edu

Dr. Jean B. Crockett
Professor
540-231-4546
crocketj@vt.edu

Dr. David Moore
Chair, IRB
540-231-4991
moored@vt.edu

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- ADMINISTRATORS

Interviewee _____

Date _____

Location _____

The purpose of this interview is to gain an understanding of how the administrators 'see' the mission, beliefs, and organizational elements of experienced teachers of students with EB/D in their districts.

1. How are the responsibilities or job descriptions of teachers of students with EB/D determined in your district/school?
2. Are there written polices that you could provide to me?
3. What you think makes a special education teacher 'experienced'?
4. Would you describe the roles and responsibilities of the teachers of students with EB/D in your district/school?
5. How would you describe the mission of the teachers of students with EB/D?
6. Are there particular issues that appear to concern teachers of students with EB/D to a greater degree than do other special education teachers?

APPENDIX E

FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- TEACHERS

Introduction

The purpose of this interview is to gain an understanding of your background, knowledge and beliefs concerning your work and how you perceive the organizational elements of your work environment.

A. The Teachers Background:

1. What was your college major?
2. Describe your teaching training program.
3. What is the highest level of formal education you have obtained?
4. How did you decide to become a teacher of students with emotional problems?
5. How long have you been teaching? In this school_____ and total years of experience _____.
6. Tell me about your previous teaching settings if any. Have you taught in other classes, schools, etc.?
7. What do you see as the mission of your work? How did you determine that as your mission?
8. Tell me about what you value most as a teacher of students with EB/D.
9. Tell me about your teaching. For example, what do you perceive as your personal strengths as a teacher? Weaknesses?
10. What do you think makes a special education teacher well qualified?

B. Organization

1. Describe your classroom.
2. Tell me about the school. For example, describe how you see your program within the context of the school.
3. Tell me about the students whom you teach.
4. What are your responsibilities? How did you determine what your responsibilities were?
5. What is the most frustrating aspect of your work?
6. What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?

APPENDIX F

PRE- AND POST OBSERVATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Pre-Observation Protocol

1. Please tell me about the lesson you are planning to teach when I observe your class.
 - a. What is the purpose of this lesson?
 - b. What do you want students to learn or to be able to do because of this lesson?
 - c. Is there any aspect of this lesson or of your class to which I should pay particular attention? Why?
 - d. Will the lesson you propose be difficult for any of your students? Why or why not?

Note: Adapted from *The Leadership Study*, by J. P. Spillane, J. B. Diamond, L. Jita, P. Burch, & G. Johnson, 2000. Retrieved April 13, 2003, from <http://www.letus.org/dls/instruments/html>.

Post Observation Interview Protocol

Teacher's Evaluation of Observed Action

1. How do you feel the (X) went? Why do you say that?
2. Why was this (X) important?
3. Was this a typical session? In what ways was it typical, or atypical?
4. Was this (X) difficult for any of your students?
 - a. If yes, why and how was it difficult for these particular students?
 - b. How do you know?
5. Is there anything you would do differently based on your assessment of today's happenings?
 - c. Who or what would you turn to for guidance on that? Why?

Overview of Influences on Action

6. Did you consult with anyone regarding any aspect of this lesson? If so, what did you consult with (X) about? What sort of advice did you receive?
7. Why did you consult with (X)?
8. Did you refer to any other sources for this activity?
 - a. Is so, what was it?
 - b. Why?
9. I noticed that you (insert action). Why do you do this? Could you do it differently? Why or why not?
 - c. Have you always done it this way? If not, why did you change? Did anyone contribute to that change? Who? How did they contribute? Why that person? Did anyone make it difficult to change?

Note: Adapted from *The Leadership Study*, by J. P. Spillane, J. B. Diamond, L. Jita, P. Burch, & G. Johnson, 2000. Retrieved April 13, 2003, from <http://www.letus.org/dls/instruments/html>.

APPENDIX G
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

School: _____ Date: _____
Teacher's Name: _____ Time beginning to end: _____
Grade: _____
Subject of lesson: _____
Layout of the classroom/room:

Total Number of Students: _____
Materials used throughout the lesson/activity: _____

Note: Adapted from *The Leadership Study*, by J. P. Spillane, J. B. Diamond, L. Jita, P. Burch, & G. Johnson, 2000. Retrieved April 13, 2003, from <http://www.letus.org/dls/instruments/html>.

APPENDIX H

JOB DESCRIPTIONS OF PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS

COUNTY OF WARRIOR POSITION DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:

Teacher

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR:

Principal

GENERAL DEFINITION OF WORK:

To Be Determined

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

The minimum performance expectations include, but are not limited to, the following actions:

- Meets and instructs the students(s) in the locations and at the time designated;
- Develops and maintains the physical environment of the classroom that is conducive to effective learning within the limits of resources provided by the system;
- Prepares for classes assigned and shows evidence of preparation upon request of the immediate supervisor;
- Encourages students to set and maintain high standards of classroom behavior; Provides an effective program of instruction to include:
 - Instructional skills;
 - Knowledge of child growth and development;
 - Knowledge and use of materials and resources in accordance with the adopted curriculum and consistent with the physical limitations of the location provided;
 - Demonstrates mastery of content area;
 - Takes all necessary and reasonable precautions to protect students, equipment, materials, and facilities;
 - Maintains and upholds school and county policies and procedures;

- Maintains records as required by law, system policy, and administrative regulations;
- Assists in upholding and enforcing school rules and administrative regulations.
- Makes provision for being available to students and parents for education-related purposes within contractual commitments;
- Attends and participates in faculty and department meetings;
- Cooperates with other members of the staff in planning instructional goals, objectives, and methods;
- Assists in the selection of books, equipment, and other instructional materials;
- Works to establish and maintain open lines of communication with students, parents, and colleagues concerning both the academic and behavioral progress of all students;
- Establishes and maintains cooperative professional relations with others;
- Performs related duties as assigned by the administration in accordance with the school/system policies and practices.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

To Be Determined.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

Candidates must hold or be eligible for a Virginia teaching certificate with endorsement in applicable subject area.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND NATURE OF WORK CONTACTS:

Duties performed typically in school settings to include: classroom; gym, cafeteria; auditorium; and recreational areas. Frequent walking, standing, light lifting, up to 40 pounds, and other limited physical activities are required. Occasional travel with students on field trips may be necessary. Occasional movement of students by wheelchairs and other mechanical devices may be required. Regular Instruction to special needs children may be necessary. Occasional lifting of equipment such as audio-visuals weighing up to 50 pounds may be required. Daily personal and close contact with children to provide classroom management and learning environment support is required. Regular contact with other staff members, and parents is required. Occasional contact with medical professionals may be required. Frequent contact with parents by phone and in person is necessary.

EVALUATION:

Performance will be evaluated on the ability and effectiveness in carrying out the above responsibilities.

Date Approved:

9/3/1992

EAGLE COUNTY
TEACHER JOB DESCRIPTION

GENERAL DEFINITION AND CONDITIONS OF WORK

Performs complex professional work, providing teaching and/or training services in general instruction or in a specialized subject or assigned group of subjects; motivates students to develop skills in assigned subject matters; performs related work as required. Works with general supervision. Limited supervision may be exercised over assigned paraprofessionals.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS/TYPICAL TASKS

The minimum performance expectations include, but are not limited to, the following functions/tasks:

- Maintains and respects confidentiality of student and school personnel information;
- Meets and instructs the student(s) in assigned locations and at the designated times;
- Designs coherent instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter; current instructional practices, students, the community, and curriculum goals;
- Plans instruction to achieve desired objectives that reflect the Virginia Standards of Learning and division curriculum guidelines;
- Prepares for classes assigned and shows evidence of lesson preparation upon request of the building administrator(s);
- Diagnoses individual, group, and program needs and plans for the appropriate use of time, materials, and resources to match the ability and needs of all students;
- Evaluates students' progress; provides students with specific evaluative feedback; maintains appropriate records and prepares progress reports;
- Uses a variety of assessment strategies and instruments to make both short-term and long-range instructional decisions to improve student learning;
- Administers standardized tests in accordance with established procedures;
- Identifies and communicates specific student performance expectations; documents student learning gains using appropriate assessment instruments;

- Demonstrates an understanding of curriculum, subject, and current instructional practices;
- Creates learning experiences that make the subject matter meaningful for all students;
- Understands that students differ in their learning styles and differentiates instruction to meet diverse student needs;
- Uses appropriate materials, technology, and resources in a manner that promotes the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills;
- Selects, evaluates, and refines a variety of teaching methods and instructional strategies for the active engagement of students and improvement of student learning;
- Implements a classroom management policy that fosters a safe and positive environment for all students and staff;
- Ensures the adequate and safe supervision of students;
- Manages classroom procedures to maximize academic learning time;
- Establishes and maintains positive rapport with students;
- Motivates students to achieve maximum potential;
- Creates a supportive learning environment for all students that encourages social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation;
- Takes all necessary and reasonable precautions to protect students, equipment, materials, and facilities;
- Reports any pertinent information to the building administrators in case of child endangerment, neglect, or abuse;
- Uses effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster positive interactions in the classroom;
- Works collaboratively with staff, families, and community resources to support the success of diverse student population;
- Models professional, moral, and ethical standards as well as personal integrity in all interactions;
- Takes responsibility for and participates in a meaningful and continuous process of professional development;
- Maintains licensure at the state and/or national level; assumes responsibility for professional growth and keeps materials, supplies, and skills up-to-date;

- Works in a collegial and collaborative manner with peers, school personnel, and community to promote and support student learning;
- Provides service to the profession, the division, and the community;
- Complies with and supports school and division regulations and policies;
- Communicates with students, student counselors and parents through conferences and other means;
- Participates in curriculum development, faculty committees, and student activity sponsorship, as requested;
- Assumes responsibilities outside the classroom as they relate to school;
- Models non-discriminatory practices in all activities;
- Performs related duties as assigned by the building administrator(s) in accordance with the school/division policies and practices.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Thorough knowledge of subject(s) taught; thorough knowledge of elementary, secondary or special education principles, practices and procedures; thorough knowledge of the principles and methodology of effective teaching; thorough knowledge of school division rules, regulations and procedures; ability to establish and maintain standards of behavior; ability to deliver articulate oral presentations and written reports; ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with staff, students, administrations, and parents.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Candidate must be a graduate of an accredited college or university and possess or be eligible to acquire appropriate license(s) and/or endorsement(s) for position as required by the Commonwealth of Virginia and School Board.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Candidates must possess demonstrated leadership qualities and personal characteristics necessary for working effectively with students, staff, administrators, and parents. Candidate must possess good moral character.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS/REQUIREMENTS

Duties performed typically in school settings to include: classrooms, gymnasium, cafeteria; auditorium; and recreational areas. Frequent walking, standing, stooping, lifting, up to approximately 30 pounds, and occasional lifting of equipment and/or materials weighing up to approximately 40 pounds may be required. Other limited physical activities may be required. Occasional travel with students on field trips may be necessary. Vocal communications is required for expressing or exchanging ideas by means of the spoken word; hearing is required to perceive information at normal spoken word levels; visual acuity is required for preparing and analyzing written or computer data, determining the accuracy and thoroughness of work, and observing general surroundings and activities; the worker is subject to inside and outside environmental conditions, noise and hazards. Occasional movement of students by wheelchairs and other mechanical devices may be required. Regular instruction to special needs children may be necessary. Daily personal and close contact with children to provide classroom management and learning environment support is required. Regular contact with staff members, administration, and parents is required. Frequent contact with parents by phone and in person is necessary. Occasional contact with medical professionals may be required.

EVALUATION

Performance will be evaluated on the ability and effectiveness in carrying out the above responsibilities by building administrator(s).

Vita

Susan T. Myers, Ph. D.

Personal

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(540) 727-8068

sumyers@vt.edu

Educational Background

- Ph. D. (Special Education Leadership & Administration) Virginia Tech (2004), major concentration on special education, public policy studies and analysis, special education teacher retention
- M. Ed. (Educational Administration) Virginia Tech (1998)
- B. S. (Elementary Education and Learning Disabilities) East Tennessee State University (1982)

Employment

- 2001-2002
 - Graduate Assistant – VA Tech Blacksburg Campus Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
 - Perform duties as assigned by Dr. M. David Alexander Program Chair. Duties included compiling and updating legal data, co-teaching class in school law, and compiling peer review journal data for tenure track professors. Primary focus- special education research and policy studies and analysis
 - Summer I- Internship at Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Arlington, VA.
- 2000-2001
 - Graduate Assistant -Virginia Tech Blacksburg Campus Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
 - Perform duties as assigned by program director (Dr. Jean Crockett) and professors in Department of Special Education Leadership and Administration. Primary focus: special education and policy studies.
 - Summer I: Administrative Internship- Loudon County Public Schools, Department of Special Education.

- Summer II: Teaching assistant Dr. Jean Crockett- EDSE 6204 Administration and Supervision of Special Education Programs
- 1998-2000-
 - Special Education Coordinator -Culpeper County Public Schools, Virginia responsible for mentoring special education teachers at five elementary schools, acted as Director of Special Education at Director's request, preschool special education coordinator, coordinated transition of infant and toddlers to preschool programs and preschoolers to kindergarten, coordinated and conducted workshops for special education teachers.
- 1997-1998
 - Administrative Intern K-12- Culpeper County Public Schools, Virginia. Assigned as assistant principal to five K-12 schools, one middle school, and one high school, performed as assigned by principals at respective schools focusing mainly on special education issues.
- 1989-1997
 - Classroom teacher- general and special education- preschool through grade two- Culpeper County Public Schools, Virginia. General teaching duties with preschoolers with disabilities, general classroom teachers for grade two, and resource teacher for students with learning disabilities, created program that eliminated need for pullouts for kindergartners with disabilities or at risk for failure.
- 1985-1989
 - Classroom teacher- general and special education- grades five through twelve- Lee County Public Schools, Virginia. General teaching duties grades five and six, special education learning disabilities grades eight through twelve.
- 1982-1985
 - Employment Service Worker- Lee County Department of Social Services, Lee County, VA. Created employment opportunities for individuals receiving AFDC, coordinated employment opportunities or educational opportunities.

Professional Associations

- Council for Exceptional Children- CEC (1995-present)
- Council for Administration of Special Education- CASE (2000-present)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development- ASCD (2001-present)

- AERA (2001- present)

Recent Presentations:

Schalock, M., & Myers, S. T. (April 2003). *No teacher ever left to do something more important.*

Paper presented at the Annual Council for Exceptional Children Conference, Seattle, WA.

Myers, S. T., & Crockett, J. B. (November, 2002). *Defining the dimensions of administrative support for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders.* Colloquium at the annual conference of Teacher Educators for Children with Behavior Disorders, Tempe, AZ.

Critical Skills

- Administration of special education programs grades preK-12, administration of general education programs grades K-6, special education preschool issues, and special education teacher retention.