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Multiple Perspectives on Georgia's Early Intervention Program: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON GEORGIA'S EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY by CHRISTY THORNE JAFFE, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

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ABSTRACT

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON GEORGIA'S EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY
by
Christy Thorne Jaffe

This qualitative study used naturalistic methods to compare a local implementation of a state funded early intervention program (EIP) with its stated goals. A large suburban elementary school began serving academically at-risk students through small, self-contained classrooms after funding for more inclusive practices was cut from the state budget. This study took place within two fifth grade classes, situated within a non-Title I elementary school. Participants included EIP teachers, system administrators and mother/child dyads. Each participant was interviewed twice. Information from a pilot study, classroom observations, program guidelines and archival records were used to provide additional depth to interview data using recursive strategies. Data analysis procedures included constant comparison among interview data, formal and informal observations, ongoing dialogue with participants, and archival data. This research study was informed by constructivist learning theory, literature on classroom environment, parent involvement, and educational policy.

Findings suggested students were placed in self-contained classrooms based on informal data, either from teachers or past educational performance, rather than formal criteria from the state department of education. Results highlighted the impact of classroom context, student-teacher relationships, and the impact of state policy at the local level. Participant satisfaction with the program was influenced by the student-teacher relationship. Two groups of students, *thrivers* and *survivors* emerged. The former

were students who developed strong teacher relationships, which seemed to benefit academic performances as well as peer status. Parents and teachers of these students felt the small group EIP was beneficial. In contrast, the second group, the survivors, had less positive relationships with teachers. These students demonstrated less engagement in the classroom dialogue and expressed little understanding of their learning strengths or weaknesses. Parents of survivors described placement in the EIP self-contained as having a negative impact on their child's achievement and self-esteem.

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON GEORGIA'S EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
CogAT	Cognitive Abilities Test
CRCT	Criterion Referenced Competency Tests
EIP	Early Intervention Program
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GADOE	Georgia Department of Education
IOWA	Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
OSA	Office of Student Accountability
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
SST	Student Support Team
TSA	Teacher on Special Assignment
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is a qualitative examination of a state funded early intervention program implemented in a fifth grade. The purpose of this study was to obtain stakeholder perspectives regarding their experiences with the EIP in relation to the stated program goals from the GADOE. The EIP is funded through the state legislature in order to provide supplementary instructional assistance to students at academic risk in grades kindergarten through five.

Observations of changes in how students were served through the EIP at a local elementary school, Cobblestone (a pseudonym), provided the impetus for this study. Students were previously served through less restrictive models than what was observed in the 2004-05 school year. The new model raised several questions including: How were students selected to participate in EIP? Were the results of the program worth isolating groups of students from their peers for most of the day? Finally, was the new model perpetuating historical mistakes in public education such as inequity in resources, tracking and marginalization of minority students?

Educational policy is typically enacted by politicians at all levels of government. At each of these levels, federal, state and local-individuals and groups seek to develop policies to benefit students, especially in the area of academic achievement. These policies are sent through a series of committees and subcommittees where they are

interpreted, reinterpreted and translated into laws or guidelines; which are often accompanied by some level of funding. During these iterations the initial policy is filtered through multiple contexts, agendas, and perspectives. This has certainly been true since the enactment of NCLB legislation which holds states accountable for making significant academic gains in student achievement or face losing federal funds for a variety of programs (Faircloth, 2004).

States are feeling the trickle-down effect of decreased federal funding which has occurred along with these increased expectations. Georgia is no exception to these constraints. The current State School Superintendent, Kathy Cox set a lofty vision for Georgia, "To lead the nation in improving student achievement" (GADOE, 2004). A variety of programs have been implemented in Georgia to facilitate this goal. One example is the Early Intervention Program (EIP), which was created in 2001 to serve elementary school students "at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level" through providing "additional instructional resources" (2004).

The GADOE deemed the EIP an essential component of meeting the state superintendent's vision. In fact, state guidelines refer to EIP as, "Georgia's First Line of Defense" for increasing student achievement. However, in 2004, the state legislature cut over seven million dollars in supplemental EIP funding. Despite these budget constraints, it is important that EIP participants have access to a variety of supports that include both instructional resources and options for service delivery. Without these, the EIP becomes a means of tracking lower performing students. This study seeks to give voice to recipients of EIP at the level of the local school.

In 2004, the GADOE conducted a survey within school districts that accepted state funds for EIP. The GADOE survey was completed by administrators across the state using data collected from all participating in the EIP within each district. The survey questions covered EIP service delivery methods used and the rationale for their selection, participant demographics, length of stay in the program, and criteria for placement. Results of the GADOE survey contrasted significantly with the program's stated goals. Survey results suggested that in many districts EIP was perpetuating the cycle of failure among certain groups of students. A majority of EIP participants in Georgia are African American or Hispanic. EIP students had a higher percentage of participation in free and reduced lunch programs, and many participated in the program for at least one third of their elementary years (Johnson, 2004). The GADOE survey also found that many districts across the state switched to more restrictive service delivery models after funding for the program was reduced by the legislature.

Research Questions

Survey data were used to define the program's core constituents, purposes, and other relevant program data. Next, these factors were situated within Cobblestone's school district. Finally, I compared state and local district information with data collected from Cobblestone. The following research questions were developed from these comparisons:

1. Who are the participants in the EIP at Cobblestone?
2. What do these participants understand about EIP?
3. What is the impact of participating in EIP from the perspective of teachers, students, and parents?

4. How is EIP situated within the larger school context?
5. What informs EIP teacher's instructional practices?
6. How are parents involved in the EIP?
7. How do EIP classrooms reflect the goals of the program?
8. What factors related to EIP do participants find to be most beneficial?

This study provided essential information about local policy interpretation, program implementation and local perceptions about EIP using a constructivist paradigm. Participants and the researcher engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the perceived impact of the program within and across participants in this setting. The product of these interactions will be a locally constructed reality, which is the focus of inquiry in the proposed study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Justification for the Study

Although this study was local in nature the findings contribute to the larger national debate on access to appropriate educational services (Loveless, 1999; Oakes & Lipton, 2004; Oberman & Walsh-Symonds, 2005). Schools across the country are challenged to increase all students' achievement in order to meet accountability standards at the state and federal levels. This study provided information about strategies that students found helpful in the classroom (Allington, 2001; Lincoln, 1995; Lumpkins, Parker, & Hall, 1991). At the state level, this study found changes need to be undertaken to fully execute the EIP's goal of helping at-risk students attain grade level achievement at accelerated rates. Finally, this study contributed the voices of individuals at the local level to the larger discussion about the EIP. Perceptions of students, parents and local

school were not solicited in an earlier program evaluation conducted by the GADOE (Lincoln, 1995; O'Connor, 2001).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 will begin with a description of Georgia's Early Intervention Program which will cover the program's history, goals, service delivery models, funding mechanisms and participants. Chapter 2 will also describe basic tenets of constructivist theory, leading to a description of constructivist educational practices. Finally, the current study will be situated within the larger body of research on tracking and educational policy. Chapter 3 begins with a description of the research approach used in this study. Included in that description is the rationale for the qualitative research methods applied in this study. This chapter will discuss a preliminary or pilot study that was completed in 2004-05 that provided initial data which was incorporated into this study. Findings from the pilot study will be situated within the context of this study. Next the data collection procedures used in this study will be delineated; including data sources, the sampling plan and participants. Finally, data analysis procedures and techniques implemented to address trustworthiness of the data collected will be described. The findings of the current study will be described and situated within the broader body of research literature in Chapter 4. In the final Chapter, conclusions of the current study along with recommendations for future research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current study uses principles of constructivism in multiple ways. The goals of this study are constructivist. The researcher in conjunction with participants sought to develop a local theory of EIP, which is a cornerstone of constructivist research. Constructivist teaching methods are also cited in the EIP guidelines as effective in meeting student needs. Additionally, a constructivist interpretation educational policy is also described since the EIP at Cobblestone is an example of how policies are implemented at multiple levels. First, I will provide a review of student grouping practices within public schools in the United States. Next, I will describe the EIP program in order for the reader to situate this program within the larger context of student grouping practices. I will provide an overview of constructivist educational theory. Constructivist practices in the classroom, in order to anchor them within the larger theory, will be delineated. Constructivist pedagogy including teacher-student relationships, classroom environment, teaching practices and student groupings will be discussed in detail. Finally, the EIP will be described within the larger framework of educational policy.

Student Grouping Practices

The term tracking refers to the educational practice of separating students according to various criteria during at least part of the school day (Oakes, 1986). Usually, some combination of IQ scores, achievement and teacher judgment have been used to

determine which track provides the best fit for a student's needs. These data are used to separate students into general, special education, remedial or advanced tracks (Slavin, 1993). Grouping students through any of these means presupposes students as superior or inferior to an arbitrary set of group norms (Frattura & Topinka, 2006).

At the elementary level teachers often use "within-class" groupings. For example, there might be two or three reading groups of varying levels created by the teacher. Often these groups are formed on largely subjective or status related processes such as characteristics of appearance (dress/ethnicity/attractiveness), socioeconomic status, living arrangements and manners (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Kutnick, Blatchford, & Baynes, 2002). Other methods of tracking students in elementary schools include multi-age classes and flexible groupings, where students are grouped in particular subjects, especially reading and math (Meijnen & Guldemond, 2002; Ross, Smith, Lohr, & McNelis; Slavin, 1993). For example, in the pull-out model teachers separate EIP students from their classmates during reading and math instruction. The push-in model would be considered a within class group because students are served within the general education setting, but are grouped by reading and/or math abilities.

When struggling students fail to meet the criteria for special education programs; invariably a new program is created; such as a remedial education classes comprised of students that did not meet standards on grade level assessments that effectively separated these students from general education (Frattura & Topinka, 2006). The self-contained EIP service delivery model at Cobblestone fits this description. Students are separated from their general education classrooms for some or all of the school day based on achievement data or teacher provided checklist information (GADOE, 2004; p.2). In self-

contained EIP classrooms, students are grouped homogeneously throughout the day. Researchers have debated the effectiveness of ability grouping practices for decades, with few studies finding significant benefits for high achievers and most finding deleterious outcomes for struggling learners (Loveless, T., 1999; Lumpkins, Parker & Hall, 1991; Oakes, 1986; Oakes & Stuart-Wells, 1998; Meijnen & Guldemond, 2002; Tieso, 2003; Willis, 1997).

The main arguments posited by proponents of ability grouping concern providing opportunity or enhancements for higher ability students. They argue high achievers should have access to similar peers to stimulate learning exchanges, and to provide students with more challenging activities. In other words, tracking advocates argue lower students hold higher performing peers back. Proponents of tracking also argue that struggling or lower performing students need access to teacher support and a slower instructional pace, which provide a closer fit between the learner and classroom expectations (Ansalone, 2003; Oakes, 1986; Slavin, 1993;Tieso, 2003).

Anti-tracking advocates frequently argue this practice goes against the democratic and egalitarian principles upon which public education was founded. They argue that tracking reproduces and perpetuates inequity (Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Riele, 2006). This occurs not only through curriculum, but through the social status of students in lower tracks. Students realize the differences among skills taught and the pace of instruction (Hallam, Ireson & Davies, 2004). When lower tracks are comprised of minority or lower SES students, schools legitimize differences and reproduce the social pecking order than exists in the larger society (Hallam, Ireson & Davies, 2004; William & Bartholomew, 2004). Van Houtte (2004) conducted an extensive multilevel analysis of

how tracking impacted student achievement in Belgium found that faculty expectations of student ability had the highest correlation to student achievement. This is consistent with Berger, Rosenholtz and Zelditch's (1980) description of expectation-state perspective which suggested stable inequalities are instantaneously created by external status differences that were created apriori to interactions by beliefs about characteristics possessed by another group that have different external status characteristics (race, appearance, ethnicity). These beliefs create and perpetuate interactions that serve to reinforce inequalities over time.

Since historically, much of the published literature has found lower track classrooms have significantly higher numbers of racial and ethnic minority students, as well as students of lower socio-economic status, racial stereotypes may play a role in teacher expectations (Oakes, 1986). These factors contribute to outcomes that perpetuate gaps among achievement scores between high and low tracked students (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Goodlad & Oakes, 1988; Lumpkins, Parker & Hall, 1991). Ansalone (2003) found students in higher track classes completed 50% more elements of the curriculum guides than did students in lower tracked classrooms. Providing all students with basic educational equity, such as high quality teachers and adequate instructional materials, can be difficult in schools where students are grouped based upon standardized performance assessments (Oakes & Lipton, 2004).

The demographics of the EIP in Georgia revealed disproportionate enrollment of minority and poor students. Therefore it is important to not only determine who participates in the EIP, but also to determine if this program represents an inequitable educational opportunity. Information from the GADOE survey on the EIP indicated a

significant risk that minority students may become tracked in the program as early as kindergarten (Johnson, 2004). Determining which students participate in EIP at the local school level can increase awareness of potential disparities in how students are being served. In the next section detailed information about the EIP will be provided to in order to facilitate understanding of the EIP within the broader context of educational grouping practices as well as to set the stage for understanding the kinds of instructional practices the GADOE recommended as essential for improving student achievement.

Georgia's Early Intervention Program

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) was enacted in 2001 by the Georgia legislature. The purpose of this legislative initiative was to "serve students who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level" (GADOE, 2004; p. 6). The legislation specifically addressed concerns related to length of time students participate in the EIP in the following statement, "It is not the intent of the General Assembly that students be assigned in this program on a continuing or permanent basis." The State Department of Education (DOE) views the EIP as essential to the state meeting requirements of federal No Child Left Behind Legislation (2004; p. 7). A significant change in the way EIP services were delivered occurred in 2004 when over $7 million dollars in secondary funding were cut. These cuts came from monies specified for *make whole*, which had previously been supported through the legislature, but was not part of the legislation funding the core program.

Program Funding

According to the State EIP survey most districts participating in the EIP indicated the method of service delivery is impacted primarily by funding (Johnson, 2004). Prior to

2004, the state provided supplemental funding for additional teacher positions to assist with program implementation. These funds allowed schools to maintain general education teacher positions when the number of general education students in each subject area dipped below the minimum class size; termed make whole because they were used to preserve classrooms or make them whole. Make whole funding typically generated when schools employ pull-out or augmented models. For example, in a fifth grade classroom of 28 students, the minimum class size is 23. If there were less than 23 students on roll in that classroom for any segment of the day, the school lost funding for that general education teacher's salary during that period. In this example, up to five students could be served through pull-out or augmented EIP services without generating make-whole funds. If more six students were served the supplemental funding adjust for the extra student. In 2004, approximately 14 million dollars in these supplemental funds were cut from Georgia's education budget. This budget shortfall led many districts to dramatically alter how EIP services were delivered to participating students. As such it is important to understand who participates in EIP across the state.

Program Population

Approximately 180,000 students were served through EIP in 2004. African American students comprise 48% of the EIP participants, but only 35% of the elementary population statewide. Hispanic students are also over-represented in the EIP (14%) relative to their total proportion of the elementary population (approximately 8%). In contrast, Caucasian students comprise 50% of the elementary student enrollment, but only 33% of the EIP. In the ten school districts with the highest number of EIP students, more than 75% of pupils are enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program.

Approximately 50% of the students participating in EIP remain in the program between one and two years.

Program Eligibility Criteria

The Office of Education Accountability developed criteria for school systems to use in determining eligibility for the program. In the first or *standardized method*, eligibility determination is based upon a student's failure to meet minimum competency scores on Georgia performance assessments including the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program-Revised (GKAP-R) and the Georgia Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT), which is administered from first through fifth grades. Scores below 300 on the reading and/or mathematics sections of the CRCT are considered below minimum competency.

A second, *alternative method* provides schools with another option to allow students that meet minimum competency criteria on the CRCT to participate in the program. The alternative method uses checklists developed by the GADOE's Office of Student Accountability that correspond to curricular objectives at each grade level. Other means of documenting student performance for alternative placement in EIP include local assessments, student portfolios, or locally developed checklists. A maximum 3% of students in a given grade level can be placed in EIP using the alternative criteria. Once a student is determined to be eligible for the EIP, he or she is usually provided with services through one or more of the five models endorsed by the state DOE.

Service Delivery Models

Though individual districts are responsible for implementing the program, there are five service delivery models endorsed by the Georgia DOE (2004; p.2). Within the

state guidelines school districts have flexibility regarding how EIP services are provided to students. Participating districts can submit alternative models to the GADOE for approval. Any service delivery model implemented must meet the following criteria: 1) appropriate and effective program for accelerating student learning, 2) provide services through a state-certified teacher, 3) use EIP funds to provide supplemental instruction that moves beyond the typical Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), and 4) comply with the maximum class size rules. The GADOE has endorsed five service delivery models for systems to use in serving EIP students which are listed below:

Augmented. Within this model EIP teachers provide services to their students within general education classrooms (also called *Push-in*). Usually, an EIP teacher provided support during reading or math. EIP students would be served through small group instruction within their general education classroom by the EIP teacher.

Reduced class-size. This service delivery model employs a ratio of EIP to non-EIP students. The more EIP students served through this model, the fewer general education students in the classroom. For example, a general education classroom's maximum class size of 30 might be reduced to 20, with five EIP students and fifteen non-EIP students being served through reduced student: teacher ratios.

Self-contained. This service delivery model is the most restrictive and is a classroom consisting of only EIP students. The maximum class size for this model is 14 students.

Pull-out. In this model, EIP students receive support services outside their general education classroom in groups of no more than 14 for reading and/or math. This model is

sometimes referred to as *double dipping* because students are supposed to receive this instruction in addition to their in-class reading or math instruction.

Reading recovery. Students are removed for at least 30 minutes of individual instruction from a trained Reading Recovery teacher. Students must be served through Reading Recovery for a minimum of 45 school days.

Most school districts incorporate several service delivery models within and across schools. According to the GADOE augmented and Pull-out models are the most frequently used models across participating districts. These models incorporate small group instruction for reading or math, but students remain within the general education setting for most of the school day. According to information from the GADOE survey, students in self-contained classrooms stay in the program longer than students served through augmented models. Additionally, students served through the less restrictive models required less time to achieve grade level performance and have lower rates of recidivism (Johnson, 2004).

Program Goals

According to the GADOE guidelines EIP is to provide students with the "Necessary differentiated and/or accelerated instruction in order to ensure their mastery of grade level content material" (Johnson, 2004). Each district must devise a process for identifying students in need of EIP services throughout the school year. The intent of this goal is to identify students in a timely manner to prevent further academic difficulties from developing. Additionally, participating districts and schools are required to engage in ongoing progress monitoring, because once grade level skills are obtained, students are to be moved out of the program. The Georgia Legislature specifically stated that the EIP

was not to be solely focused on remediation of skills deficits, but should also provide accelerated learning opportunities. EIP guidelines define accelerated learning as, "Challenging instructional activities that are intensely focused on student academic deficiencies in content areas, in order to assist students in reaching grade level standards in the shortest possible time" (Johnson, 2004).

The GADOE program guidelines mandate EIP students to be taught using effective instructional practices that are focused on increasing student achievement. Two strategies specifically endorsed differentiated and accelerated instruction are often mentioned in the literature on constructivist education. In the next section, a brief primer on constructivist theory as it relates to education will be described, followed by a description of constructivist pedagogy including differentiation and acceleration.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivism as a theory is frequently referred to in several fields, especially psychology, sociology and education. Constructivist educational theory is grounded in Piaget's theory of child development, Locke's experience based education, and Vygotsky's principles of learning (Palinscar, 1998). Constructivism, at its core conceptualizes learning as occurring as part of ongoing experiences. Necessarily, these constructions are mediated by personal traits, the environment, as well as previous experiences (Henson, 2003). Constructivists believe that the acquisition of knowledge is mediated by personal experiences, preferences, and individual ways of thinking and learning. Further, constructivists acknowledge that individuals actively learn within a social context; that is learning is mediated through interactions with others (Edwards, 2005). As such, constructivism would not support traditional teacher-student roles

wherein the instructor imparts knowledge and assumes the student, given certain conditions, will learn the information. As stated by Sewell:

> Constructivist learning is not the result of teaching, rather it is the result of what students do with the new information they are presented with. In other words, students are active learners who construct their own knowledge; they are not passive recipients of new information (2002).

Constructivist educational practices involve consideration of differences in student experiences, styles of learning, rates of acquisition, developmental stages, and individual abilities or special talents. Because these differences are understood, constructivist education understands that learning occurs through the individual's connection of new information to previous experiences, similar to Piagetian concepts of assimilation and accommodation (Palinscar, 1998). Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an important concept in the field of education. The ZPD refers to the distance between a skill that one can complete with assistance, but cannot do alone. The size of this zone varies both within and across learners and skills. Assisting students across this ZPD is in essence, the key component of effective instruction (Martin, 2004; Palinscar, 1998; Watt, 2002). Educational researchers often discuss pedagogical practices developed using theoretical constructs, which will be described in the next section.

Constructivism in the Classroom

A classroom can be a microcosm of constructivism in practice because it is a social context created through language and social practice (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Constructivist philosophy as translated by educational theorists involves creating a learner-centered environment that maximizes each student's potential (Henson, 2003). Components of effective instruction from a constructivist perspective include building upon student's prior knowledge, teaching for deep understanding, transfer of knowledge

to new learning and the creation of a supportive learning environment (Allington & Johnson, 2002). Effective instruction is collaborative. It invites students to become responsible for and responsive to their unique learning profiles. Effective instruction is grounded in a caring, supportive teacher who provides a classroom rich in discussion where concepts are linked across the curriculum (2002; Daniels & Perry, 2003). In this context, students are engaged in collaborative learning to construct shared knowledge, which is the essence of constructivist learning theory.

Some instructional strategies provide a better fit with the theoretical underpinnings of constructivist philosophy, and are frequently referred to in the literature on constructivism. Two examples are differentiated and accelerated instruction, which were specifically endorsed by the GADOE as effective teaching strategies for EIP participants. These instructional strategies will be described in the following sections.

Differentiated Instruction

Tomlinson (1999) described differentiated instruction as focused on key elements of the curriculum, attentive to student differences, informed by ongoing assessment, and collaborative in nature. Teachers using differentiated instruction acknowledge developmental and personal learning differences when designing lessons and assessments. Tomlinson named multiple methods in which differentiation could occur such as group investigations, independent study, and portfolio assessment. Another method of differentiation is compacting, which involves pre-assessment in a subject to allow for student differences in content knowledge. Pre-assessment results are used to provide tiered instruction for all students. Compacting often allows students with strong foundational knowledge opportunities for further investigation.

For example, in a study of elementary science classrooms in the United Kingdom, Watt (2002) described how teacher interactions were paced for various students through the use of modeling, working alongside, and encouraging the use of scientific concepts versus spontaneous ones in a primary science classroom. Through these interactions students were learning at their rate without the teacher imposing ideas.

Accelerated Instruction

Similarly, the concept of accelerated learning also encompasses the needs of individual learners. Acceleration is often referred to in the research on gifted instruction as a component of providing appropriately challenging learning experiences (Hargrove, 2005). In this sense, high ability students are able to move ahead if they demonstrate skill mastery in a given area. This provides opportunities for students to engage in advanced learning projects (Kettler & Curlis, 2003; Pierce & Adams, 2004). Georgia's EIP guidelines referred to accelerated instruction as challenging instructional activities that are intensely focused on student academic deficiencies in content areas (GADOE, 2004).

Regardless of setting, accelerated instruction attempts to provide students with learning tasks that facilitate rapid expansion of knowledge. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is an example of how acceleration of learning can be accomplished (Palinscar 1998; Watt, 2002). This concept of providing appropriately challenging tasks, when combined with techniques that match the learner, is essential to increasing the rate of learning. Oberman and Walsh-Symonds (2005) studied two urban elementary schools where lower performing students increased their standardized test scores at a more rapid rate than higher performing peers. In other words, student learning was accelerated. Teachers in these successful schools practiced ongoing assessment of student learning,

demonstrated differentiated instructional practices, and received staff development on linking assessment results to instruction. This type of dynamic instruction is consistent with the concept of using the response of the child to prospectively gauge skills that are emerging, which in turn can inform instruction (Palinscar, 1998). These strategies can be used to accomplish accelerated learning, which is an essential element in closing the gap between high and low achieving students. This study underscored the effectiveness of providing staff development activities that are linked to classroom practice (Oberman & Walsh-Symonds, 2005; VanHoutte, 2004).

Constructivist classrooms involve collaboration among teachers and students as an essential feature of their classroom context. The classroom is comprised of the physical space as well as the shared understandings that develop over time. Students and teachers engage in activities that allow local meanings to be constructed, which then become a part of the classroom context (Allington & Johnston, 2002; Aulls, 2002; Rex, 2003; Tomlinson, 2000). These local meanings are often created through shared dialogue. This deep communication is an important element of constructivist classrooms. When students engage in conversations about topics of instruction, they begin to make meaningful connections with prior experiences (Allington, 2001; Kinchin, 2004). The next section will describe elements of the classroom context related to instruction and interpersonal exchanges that are essential to maximizing student learning.

Classroom Context

Classroom context is a necessarily broad term that refers to the cumulative or historical routines and patterns of interactions and practices that develop between and among teachers and students. These patterns help explain *how things are done* for a

particular group. The context is a construction created by participants in a given environment. According to Turner and Meyer (2000) research has often focused on individual pieces of classroom context, such as beliefs, goals, values that contribute to the classroom context rather than the gestalt of the instructional, social and relational contexts in the classroom. These various contexts continuously interact and over time exert tremendous power over students' social positions in the classroom and their identity as learners (Black, 2004; Ireson & Hallam, 2005).

Constructivist pedagogy can be a powerful force for addressing student position in the classroom. When classrooms are organized around teacher control, students' intrinsic motivation decreased; however when mastery of content was paramount intrinsic motivation increased (Hudley, 1977). Stanulis and Manning (2002) found teacher models of positive self-talk about task performance can assist students in developing academic self-efficacy. Teachers are responsible for the verbal and nonverbal environment in the classroom, when they model positive verbal strategies for the class it becomes an acceptable part of the classroom context (Goldring, 2002; Stanulis & Manning, 2002). Discourse is a central component of the classroom context and refers to the relationship between content, meaning, and context of language (Black, 2004). The ability of a student to access the teacher for discourse is an important component of academic success and social position in the classroom that can be affected by a number of factors (Aulls, 2002; Kutnick, Blatchford & Baines, 2002; Rex, 2003).

Classroom Discourse

Typically classroom discourse involves language exchanges between a more knowledgeable other (usually the teacher) and a learner for the purpose of understanding

one another (Black, 2004; Watt, 2002). These kinds of exchanges build a sense of care and understanding between students and teachers through creating a shared relationship (Daniels & Perry, 2003; Watt, 2002). Teachers facilitate these conversations by modeling and instructing students in such strategies as reflecting on ways previous learning connects to new instruction, summarizing information, using visual imagery, and generating questions about a topic. In this way, teachers help students to bridge new information with previous learning. Watt (2002) applied Vygotsky's learning theory to study the development of primary students in a mixed ability science class. Results described the types of interactions viewed as necessary for learning to occur:

> For conceptual development to occur, it is necessary for interaction to take place between the learner and a more knowledgeable other within the zone of proximal development of the learner. The size of this zone varies both within and between learners. The zone of proximal development indicates what a learner can currently do with assistance but is unable to do alone: Learning therefore, involves being assisted across this zone…The task of the more knowledgeable other is to find a way of interacting appropriately with each learner so they are able to take advantage of the learning opportunity (2002).

Teachers often use whole group instruction to engage in these discussions as well as to informally assess student understanding. They recognize or request participation from students based on a number of factors, time, lesson pace, and expectations. The ability of students to comply with the stated and unstated rules of engagement increased the number of opportunities students had to interact with their teachers because teacher access is most often granted to students who understand and adhere to the spoken and unspoken rules of the classroom (Black, 2004; Lane, Wehby &Cooley, 2006). This can present tremendous challenges for students from different language or cultural backgrounds. It is important to provide teachers and students with information that helps

bridge these differences early in the school year in order to provide students with equal access to dialogue.

Rules of Engagement

Classroom dialogue is a critical element of the learning environment that is created between students and teachers. Teachers communicate how students participate in classroom language through how they speak to individuals (Rex, 2003). Students fall into social and academic roles based upon their facility with the classroom language (Black, 2004; Kutnick, Blatchford & Baines, 2002). Students deemed "at risk" for academic difficulties have to learn two languages, social and academic, before they can learn (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). This often results in the most academically needy students having less access to high quality dialogue with teachers. In contrast, who are appropriately engaged in the classroom participate actively by answering questions, explaining concepts and demonstrating proficiency in the skills taught (Lumpkins, Parker & Hall, 1991; Riele, 2006; Slavin, 1993).

Black (2004) described the moderating effects of academic participation skills in a description of a primary mathematics classroom in Great Britain. During whole group instructions the teachers usually initiated interactions with students. Teachers indicated they engaged in these discussions for two primary reasons first, to introduce new curriculum topics, vocabulary or tasks; and second to evaluate student understanding. Black found a number of behaviors moderated student access to dialogue with the teacher. Students who demonstrated competency in a skill and were able to verbalize that competency had the most access to dialogue with teachers. Students viewed as having

high ability by the teacher also gained social status within the classroom (Black, 2004; William & Bartholomew, 2004).

High ability students were allowed to break classroom procedures (call out versus raising their hand) because their knowledge saved instructional time (Black, 2004). For the less able student, knowledge of and adherence to expected classroom behaviors becomes both necessary and essential to developing a positive relationship with teachers (Becker & Luthar, 2002). Rex (2003) found that as teachers are faced with increased pressure to cover curriculum content, they spend less time engaging students who provided incorrect responses in dialogue about their response. It is these dialogues and not the procedures themselves that are essential for students to develop a sense of self as a learner (Martin, 2004).

Relationship as Access

The ability of students to comply with teacher expectations of appropriate conduct is essential to developing a positive relationship, especially for less academically able students. A study of over 700 teachers found elementary and middle school teachers rated skills in cooperation and self-control as critical to school success (Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006). Essential skills identified in this study included the ability to control one's temper in conflict situations, comply with teacher directions, attend to teacher instructions, and transition independently between activities. Students failing to meet these expectations were at higher risk for academic and social difficulties including referrals to pre-referral intervention teams, alternative educational placements, and special education (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Buhs, Ladd & Herald, 2006; Lane, Wehby & Cooley, 2006; Rex, 2003).

Developing classroom participation skill is also essential to the development of a student's peer group status. Teacher-student talk exchanges can affect learning as well as social position within the classroom. This elevation or devaluation of status among peers is especially important given that a majority of teacher-student interactions occur during whole class instruction (Black, 2004; Aulls, 2002; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Children from higher SES backgrounds often enter school having a rudimentary knowledge of these social rules. Further, having parents who are involved in and that have a positive relationship with the teacher can help compensate for a student's weaknesses in the classroom, underscoring the importance of parent involvement, especially for students who might display behaviors that place them at risk (Lareau, 2000).

Parents in Schools

A core assumption of the EIP is stated in the purpose of the program, "Children start school at a designated chronological age, but differ greatly in their development and experience base" (GADOE, 2004). Often these early differences become barriers at the intersection of home and school environments. A close the fit between home and school values eases student transitions into the school culture. Schools sometimes doubt the ability of parents, especially low income parents, to affect their child's education (Edmonds, 2001; House, 2006; Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2004). This disconnection between home and school cultures can be detrimental to student's developing a sense of belongingness to their school (Becker & Luthar, 2002). In a study of parent and teacher perceptions in a low income elementary school, O'Connor described teacher attitudes toward parents:

> Most teachers and staff to whom I spoke did not regard the low-income parents in their school community as equal actors in their children's education and expressed serious doubts about parents' interest. A lack of regard for parents' academic abilities or aspirations was evident when one staff member said, "most of them don't think about what's important in their [children's] education." Another dismissed the ability of parents to direct their children's intellectual development when she said that the parents at [the low income school] "were not people who would take their children to libraries anyway." (2001)

Teachers often express a desire to *partner* or *work with* parents, but at the same time they seek to control the amount and type of interactions that occur (Lareau, 2000). In Lareau's (2000) study of two California schools with different socio-economic levels, family-school relationships at a working class school were characterized by separation, similar to O'Connor's (2001) study. In contrast, Lareau (2000) found much more connection among parents and teachers at the higher SES school. Mothers were often present throughout the higher SES school. They developed networks with other parents, friends of their children, and staff. These parent networks developed alternative lines of communication that were sometimes critical of teachers and school policies, especially if these policies negatively impacted their child.

Often there is a great divide between parents and schools that is entrenched in power, social position and parental experiences of school (Oakes, 1986; O'Connor, 2001). Teachers use differences in family characteristics such as SES, language, response to school requests, to generate theories that can affect student placement (Ansalone, 2003). Often the result is less, rather than more communication between schools and families, which perpetuates misunderstandings and cultural stereotypes. Edmonds (2001) found the school's response or perception of family background to be more predictive of student achievement than actual SES. This is especially important since schools often

view parent involvement through the lens of white middle-class parents. In schools where parents and teachers did not regularly have face to face contact, teachers described lower income and single parents using stereotypical phrases (Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2004; Pena, 2000).

School leaders have to be willing to explore barriers as well as opportunities for involvement with parents, staff and students (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) proposed a model of parent involvement that addressed why parents choose to become involved in their child's education as well as *how* parents select activities to become involved. First, parents choose to be involved with education of their child based on their construction of the role of parent, their personal self-efficacy for helping children succeed and based upon opportunities or demands from the school, referred to by these authors as invitations (1995). Finding out what barriers and opportunities exist goes a long way towards determining what needs to be done in a given setting/situation. Parents can often identify the factors that impede their involvement in schools. Work schedules, childcare for younger siblings, parent education level, and scheduling difficulties negatively impact parent involvement at school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; O'Connor, 2001; Pena, 2000). Parents in schools have an essential role to play in improving student achievement (Musti-Rao, 2006; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Parents influence their child's education through modeling the importance of school. Modeling includes asking about a child's day, contacting their child's teacher, reviewing homework and through attending basketball games or other events. Parents reinforce their child's education through praising their child's learning skills and rewarding behaviors that lead to school success.

Finally, parents directly instruct their children through asking and involving their child in open-ended dialogue aimed at problem solving and explaining how they learned something. Schools must acknowledge this contribution and make the necessary adjustments to invite parents into the school both generally, through creating a welcoming atmosphere and specifically by inviting participation in specific events or activities. This is especially true for students at-risk of academic failure. Research suggests parent involvement for these children is exponentially more beneficial than it is for middle class peers (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Lareau, 2000; O'Connor, 2001).

Educational Policy

Educational policy is most often enacted to provoke change. Often these changes are aimed at increasing student achievement through providing different types of interventions. Unfortunately, these changes often come from a top-down position in which schools are directed to take action. These types of policies are often viewed by staff with skepticism (Erlichson, 2004; Hamaan & Lane, 2004; Haynes, 1998). Because policy makers often fail to consider factors related to policy implementation at the local level, outcomes are often less than expected. Fullan's model of policy implementation, especially factors related to success at various stages, will be used to describe the changes in the EIP at Cobblestone.

Fullan's Model

Fullan (2001) proposed a model of educational change congruent with constructivist theory that model describes three phases of program implementation or major curricular reforms. The three main phases included initiation, implementation, and

continuation. Particular events or factors present or absent at each phase interact in a recursive fashion throughout the change process, which Fullan described as having a reciprocal, rather than circular or linear structure.

Initiation. The processes that lead to the change are involved in this stage. Fullan (2001) cited several variables or factors that influence whether a program moves beyond this first stage. Three of those factors were applicable to this study; advocacy from central administration, community pressure either through support or apathy, and funding. As policies are implemented at multiple levels individuals and groups negotiate or construct interpretations of the original policy (Hamann & Lane, 2004; Walker, 2004). These authors found that individuals examined policies through personal lenses of perceived effort and personal or policy consequences either consciously or unconsciously. This suggests individual and group culture and settings will necessarily factor into policy interpretation and implementation. At the initiation stage, Leaders are key to building knowledge about the need for programs or initiatives (Fullan, 2002). Leaders at multiple levels, local, district and state are responsible for creating an atmosphere in which knowledge is shared. This allows individuals or groups to move beyond their personal agendas to see the bigger picture.

For example, in a qualitative investigation of how three schools implemented comprehensive school reform models, Datnow (2004) found minimal ongoing contact between state and local agencies in policy implementation. These loose supports led to minimal interaction between state and local schools during the reform implementation which led to conflicts between state accountability standards and reform models at the local school level. Additionally, participating districts viewed the comprehensive school

reform programs as a vehicle to comply with state accountability mandates or as a source of extra funding.

At the local level, district interpretations of program implementation often clashed with local teacher and administrator understandings producing a lack of clear vision for change (Datnow, 2004). Fullan (2001) supported clarity of vision on the part of leadership as essential to initiation phase. Participants must know the essential elements of the program they are implementing. A final factor relevant to this study is the working relationships among teachers implementing the program. Datnow's study revealed that teachers had limited understandings of program goals and strategies which impeded implementation. For example, one teacher remarked, "To be honest, there are a lot of teachers who are confused about why we have adopted this model [comprehensive school reform model]. We don't understand what is so different about this school than the others." One of the most effective means to building understanding among teachers is providing opportunities for staff development, which often does not occur in practice. Thus teachers are left to understand, interpret and implement policies in isolation (Fullan, 2001; Oberman & Walsh-Symonds, 2005; Palinscar, 1998; VanHoutte, 2004).

Implementation. Fullan (2001) stated in order for an implementation to be successful, there are key components that must be present. Participants must perceive there is a need for change, and that the proposed program makes a difference in that need (2001; p. 76). Clarity of purpose, described in the previous section, across stakeholders is essential for success. The final component to program implementation often involves the role of external factors. In schools these external factors include local and state education agencies, legislators, the federal government and foundations (2001; pp. 86-8).

Federally mandated programs, such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation contain specific guidelines and mandates that must be adhered to in order to secure and maintain federal funding (Faircloth, 2004). Individual states interpret these federally legislated programs and create state policies and laws for school systems to implement. As these policies are implemented at multiple levels, individuals and groups negotiate or construct interpretations of the original policy (Hamann & Lane, 2004; Walker, 2004).

Continuation. This process involves the internalization of a project, process or program. Fullan indicated necessary elements for continuation are directly related to the initiation phase. Funding changes, personnel changes, leadership changes, and a lack of long range planning are among the most common reasons for discontinuation (Fullan 2001, p. 87-94). Program continuation is impossible when factors related to initiation and implementation are not addressed across multiple levels. Other researchers noted the importance of addressing factors mentioned in the initiation and implementation phases as essential to program continuation (Datnow & Springfield, Haynes, 1998; Walker, 2004). Hamann and Lane (2004) studied state implementation of federal policies in Maine and Puerto Rico. They found that state level education agencies not only interpret, but also adapt policies to a substantive degree. These external policies were observed to be adapted to fit with existing policies or guidelines. This facilitated the transition from policy to practice. Unfortunately, these local constructions can be negatively impacted by status variables, which can perpetuate existing inequities if policymakers fail to address their personal beliefs or bias (Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelditch, 1980).

Walker (2004) suggested there may be a general, inherent bias when members of the educational elite interpret policies aimed at the poorest school districts, which creates resentment at the local level. In a study of court mandated school reforms in New Jersey, she found that state agencies often take a hands-off approach to policy implementation by creating additional layers of bureaucracy, which serve to decrease their accountability (2004). These co-constructed models of change were in fact, sequentially developed, with the actions of those higher up in the chain (state department of education) generating the conditions that influenced the actions of local participants (Walker, 2004).

Rather than constructing policy across groups, interpretations are made at the state level, then policies are distributed to local education agencies (school districts) and a new series of interpretation begins. This often leads to failure because, according to Fullan, "Educational change is a process of coming to grips with the multiple realities of people, who are the main participants in implementing change. The leader who presupposes what the change should be and acts in ways that preclude others realities is bound to fail." According to this model, the current study is an example of discontinuation. Some of the factors contributing to Cobblestone's decision to change how services were provided to EIP students included state policy funding changes, lack of advocacy from central administration and lack of opposition from the local community.

Summary

The EIP was developed to provide students at risk for academic failure with additional instructional assistance in reading and math. However, the framework of the program allows considerable room for interpretation at the local level. The intent of the Georgia Legislature was to provide high quality instruction that would accelerate student

learning, so individuals would not remain in the program for extended periods. The literature reviewed provided the reader with a detailed description of Georgia's Early Intervention Program. This detailed account is essential to the development of local theory as it situates the original intent of the program within the realities of educational policy. The EIP is an example of the multiple iterations that occur during policy interpretation and implementation.

Guidelines for the EIP explicitly indicated the need for differentiation and acceleration of student learning. The literature reviewed indicated necessary and essential practices to increase student achievement. These included ongoing assessment of student learning, developing classroom discourse that involves all students, and providing heterogeneous groupings to facilitate multiple perspectives. Research delineating the practice of tracking students across their educational career often leads to reproducing social inequities that public education was created to diminish. EIP service delivery models suggested by the state were situated within this broader literature context.

Finally, a model of policy intervention was briefly described to situate the EIP within the stages of the model. The focus for these stages in the current study was the multiple iterations of policy as they intersect with local culture. Of particular interest to the current study are the factors related to initiation and discontinuation. These are relevant as the current service delivery model in this study was an outcome of these factors. Chapter 3 will described the research methods selected to obtain information for this study.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Qualitative techniques were selected for this study based upon the kinds of information sought by the researcher as well as the types of data collection to be undertaken. Multiple sources of data, (interviews, observations and archival data) were used to develop a picture of how EIP was implemented in a fifth grade. This study used a constructivist paradigm within the framework of qualitative research methods (Creswell, 1998; LeCompte &Schensul, 1999). The setting of this study was naturalistic; primarily two fifth grade classrooms within an elementary school. This also supported the use of qualitative methods, especially those described by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic paradigm, which is consistent with constructivist theory. An inductive approach was used to develop questions, some of which emerged in the pilot study. My dual role as researcher and staff member at the school was incorporated into the research design. This allowed my tacit knowledge of the system to be incorporated as an asset rather than a liability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Pitman & Maxwell, 1992).

Several core assumptions or axioms described as part of a qualitative research framework are congruent with the purposes of this study, such as the belief that multiple realities are constructed by individuals using historical and current experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research questions in this study focused on how perspectives

join to develop a local theory of EIP. Developing a grounded theory involved ongoing analysis of data within the context of the research setting. A well constructed grounded theory should make sense to the participants and others in similar settings. Therefore, it relies almost exclusively on the experiences of participants. In this way grounded theory fits neatly within the constructivist perspective. Tentative themes were developed from the pilot study that were expanded, changed or refined during this research. As themes emerged I discussed them with participants through member checks and follow-up questions; looked to the broader literature based on constructivism, tracking and educational policy; and consulted with a peer researcher to address areas of potential bias.

The researcher participated in the daily routines and experiences of the fifth grade EIP classrooms over a prolonged period of time (one school year). Consistent with qualitative techniques, the researcher is viewed as the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1998; Schensul, Schensul, LeCompte, 1999). In this study the researcher's knowledge of the local setting, historical experiences with participants, and background in educational interventions were used to guide the data collection. Further, by embedding myself in the classrooms I was able to observe events that seemed to re-occur within the setting. This type of long-term observation and reflection, or prolonged engagement, allowed a rich portrait of the setting to emerge (Creswell, 1998).

This chapter will first describe the setting or context of the research. Since the pilot study also took place at Cobblestone the contexts were essentially the same. Therefore, the findings from that pilot study will be reviewed after the local setting is described. Once the focus of this study is detailed, the data collection plan will be reviewed. Data sources will be described. Since the participants are the primary sources

sampling procedures and descriptions of participants will be described at length. Finally, the data analysis procedures used are defined and measures taken to enhance the study's validity are delineated.

Context of the School District

The pilot and current study took place within a large suburban school district in Georgia. District-wide, approximately 31% of students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. District level demographic information listed the following racial/ethnic breakdowns for the school system: White, not of Hispanic origin (52%); Black, not of Hispanic origin (28%); Hispanic (12%); Asian, Pacific Islander (4%); Multiracial (3%); and American Indian (less than 1%). Fifty one percent of the students in the district are male.

Aggregate data from the 2004-05 school year indicated approximately 46,000 students were enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade in this district. Thirty-three percent of the elementary population (15,000 students) participated in the EIP. EIP data for this district for the 2004-05 school year revealed the following racial and ethnic patterns Black-not of Hispanic origin (35%); White-not of Hispanic origin (33%); Hispanic (25%); Multi-racial (4%); Asian (3%); and Native American (less than 1%).

District EIP Policy

Cobblestone's district does not mandate use of a particular service delivery model. The district's Title 1 coordinator, Dr. Whiten (a pseudonym) meets with elementary administrators in the spring to discuss the district's EIP each year. During this meeting system data about EIP models used in the county, funding ratios for reduced class-size models, and information from elementary schools around the county are

reviewed with elementary school administrators. System data for 2005 indicated most schools needed to implement more than one model in order to maintain class sizes consistent with state guidelines. For example, system data indicated schools with a high transience rate had difficulty maintaining necessary ratios for the reduced class size model, because of the ratios required for EIP to non-EIP students. Dr. Whiten reinforced the need for all schools to avoid generating make-whole funds, which had to be paid for by local rather than state funds. The excision of the make-whole funding from the legislative budget in 2004 coincided with the change in delivery models from pull-out and augmented to self-contained and reduced class size at Cobblestone.

Context of the Local School

Cobblestone elementary school participated in pilot and current studies. The school is predominantly white and upper middle class with approximately 1,000 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. Cobblestone experienced a 24% transient rate during the 2004-05 school year, during the nine month academic calendar approximately 240 students withdrew from Cobblestone. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch was approximately 25% of the total school population for 2004-05. Because this is less than 50% of the total school population, the school is not eligible for Title I program funds for disadvantaged students. The racial and ethnic composition of students at the end of the 2004-05 school year was Caucasian (58%); African American (28%); Hispanic (9%); Asian, Pacific Islander (2%); Multiracial (3%); and Native American (less than 1%).

I have served as Cobblestone's school psychologist for the past five years. During this time I have observed socio-economic status as the primary means used by staff to

differentiate students. Most Cobblestone students live in single-family homes within upscale subdivisions whose names are quickly recognized by most members of the staff. A smaller number of students live in single-family homes using rent subsidies from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. These families also appear to be identified through living arrangements. Teachers refer to these students as our *section eight* families. Some students live in one of two low-income apartment communities that were redistricted to be part of Cobblestone's feeder pattern a few years after the school opened. These students are often poor, from single parent or multi-generational homes and frequently participants in the EIP. Families are often referred to by the name of the apartment complex. Many of the staff members are angry that these students were redistricted into Cobblestone beginning in the 2000-01 school year. This redistricting is often cited as the reason Cobblestone's performance on standardized tests has declined since the school opened in 1997.

Cobblestone measures student reading progress using the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) in all grades, which is mandated by the district. The DRA is administered to students three times per year. EIP student progress is monitored in the same way. Cobblestone does not require additional assessments of EIP student progress. Math is assessed through unit pre/post tests as well as the grade level math inventory, administered in the fall and again in the spring.

Cobblestone's Instructional Lead Teacher (ILT) compared gains in student reading levels on the DRA for the last year of the pull-out model (2003-04) and the first year of the self-contained model (2004-05) for primary and intermediate EIP students. Most EIP students made less than one year growth on their reading level in either model.

This information was used to suggest that the type service delivery model employed, did not impact student outcomes. Therefore, Cobblestone elected to serve students through self-contained models to decrease the risk of generating make-whole segments.

Context of the Fifth Grade

There were 180 fifth graders enrolled at Cobblestone in August 2005. These students were distributed across eight classrooms consisting of two self-contained EIP classrooms (with a maximum of 14 students per class), one reduced size EIP classroom (maximum of 20 students), and six non-EIP fifth grade classrooms. The non-EIP fifth grade classrooms were comprised of general education, special education, ESOL, and gifted students. Administrators and teachers indicated EIP classrooms were comprised of students who scored at or below 300 on the CRCT. Framing these performances in context of the larger cohort was essential to gaining an understanding of differences between EIP and non-EIP students. The average CRCT scores for non-EIP fifth grade students were 360 in Reading and 333 in Math. The average CRCT scores for students placed in the EIP classrooms were Reading 315 and Math 298; approximately 30 points lower in each area.

Standardized test performance. As part of the district's fifth grade standardized testing program, all fifth graders took the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) a group administered ability index in September 2005. Table 1 lists average CogAT test scores by classroom type. Students in the EIP classrooms on average scored lower on the Composite Index than the other general education classes. Initially, the researcher had not anticipated needing to report ability scores; however, these data were included because staff frequently referred to EIP students as slow learners in order to account for their

lower academic skills. According to the National Association of School Psychologists, "slow learner" is a term used to describe people who score between 70 and 85 on measures of intelligence; using these numbers most EIP students at Cobblestone would be classified as having average or low average cognitive abilities (Shaw, 2005).

Table 1

Average Fifth Grade CogAT Scores by Classroom Type

Class Type	Total Students per class	Verbal SAS*	Quantitative SAS	Nonverbal SAS	Composite SAS
General	24	108	107	108	108
General	27	112	111	110	112
Gifted/Special Ed	21	113	109	111	112
General	24	110	110	113	112
Reduced EIP	20	99	99	100	99
General/Special Ed	20	113	111	117	115
Small Group EIP	12	91	91	98	92
Small Group EIP **	8	94	94	103	96
5th Grade Total**	-	105	104	108	106

*Standard Age Score: *M*=100, SD=15

**Does not include ESL or Special Education students with non-standard test modifications.

Attendance. Enrollment in the EIP classrooms was more transient than most of the fifth grade as seen in Table 2. In August 2005, there were 22 students in the EIP classrooms, by December there were 28 students in the two EIP self-contained classrooms. Additionally, some students were transferred out of one teacher's classroom and into another during the year. These changes are indicated by transferred from/to

columns. Student attendance was well above 90% in all eight classrooms. Individual student attendance ranged from a low of 88% to 100% days on roll.

Table 2

Changes in Student Enrollment by Classroom Type.

Class Type	New Students Who Enrolled After Day 1 of School	Students who Withdrew	Transfers out of class	Transfers to class
General	2	4	1	1
General	1	3	0	1
Gifted/Special Ed	0	0	0	0
General	2	1	0	0
Reduced EIP	0	0	0	0
Small group EIP	4	2	1	0
General/Special Ed	0	0	0	0
Small group EIP	2	2	1	2
Total	11	12	3	4

Measures of socio-economic status. Enrollment the free and reduced lunch program is used as a measure of poverty by the state and federal government. Funding for programs aimed at children in poverty is determined by the number of students enrolled in this program. In March 2006 the following percentiles describe the fifth grade anticipation in the free and reduced lunch program: Non-EIP classrooms 13% participation; EIP classrooms 57% participation; total fifth grade 20% participation.

Classroom composition. Finally, although the racial/ethnic composition of the fifth grade followed the same trend as the total school population, EIP classrooms were disproportionately comprised of African American and Hispanic students (see Table 3).

Table 3

Racial and Ethnic Composition of EIP and Non-EIP Classrooms

Class	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Multi-Racial
Non-EIP 5th	60%	27%	6%	4%
Hanover	21%	57%	14%	7%
Klein	23%	38%	38%	-

Cobblestone's EIP

Cobblestone opened in 1997. Between the school years of 1997-98 and 2003-04 EIP students were served through a combination of push-in, where the EIP teacher provided services within the general education setting and pull-out, in which the EIP works with students outside the general education classroom for reading and/or math. In 2001, the school's attendance zone was changed to include a number of low-income apartment/rental communities. This increased the number of EIP students. This redistricting was a watershed moment for the school and represented a significant change in the student population. Beginning in 2004-05 state budget constraints cut supplemental funds which had been used to provide funding for less restrictive EIP service delivery models. Because of these cuts, Cobblestone began serving EIP students through self-contained EIP classrooms for the entire school day. Since this study was informed by a

pilot study completed during the 2004-05 school year, a description of that pilot study and its findings are provided in the next section.

The Pilot Study

During 2004-05, the first year self-contained EIP classrooms were implemented the primary researcher conducted an investigational pilot study. One general education fifth grade teacher, three fifth grade EIP teachers, and the EIP teacher from the previous model were interviewed about the program. Additionally, two fifth grade EIP students were interviewed and the primary researcher informally observed instruction in the EIP classrooms. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher and a peer reviewed each of the transcripts, noting areas that needed clarification to enhance understanding. The first step in data analysis was coding topics and statements that emerged over the course of multiple interviews with the same teacher. Next, concepts and statements that occurred across teachers were coded, or labeled in order to create consistent definition for similar types of information obtained across several participants. Student interview findings were coded separately using the same strategy. Open-ended questions were used to discover participants' knowledge of program goals/objectives, impact of service delivery changes on individuals and in classrooms, and lessons learned.

Pilot Study Themes

Results from pilot study interviews revealed most teachers constructed their knowledge about EIP based upon local information. Teacher perceptions were largely informed by personal experience, observation, or information from peers or administrators. Four main themes emerged from the pilot study data analysis. These were

categorized as; access, isolation, information and instruction. Perceptions of service delivery models were addressed from student and teacher perspectives.

Access. EIP students and teachers indicated the self-contained classes provided additional access to participate in activities such as academic competitions (spelling and geography bees) and student leadership roles (safety patrol and student council). Eddie, one of the two boys interviewed, described the benefits of a smaller classroom, "When we went to PE we had more time to play because there wasn't more kids and when we played kickball outside the line would go by faster." Bobby, the other student interviewed agreed, "Being in a smaller class when we were doing something fun we got to do the most of it out of all the classes because we had the smallest class, like we got the most turns kicking." Bobby was the alternate for student council, which he attributed to being in the smaller classroom, "Well, I was the assistant, my friend Michael he was the main one. We voted on it. I always really try hard to get on student council, but this time I actually got on it." Ms. Klein reiterated this theme, "The children in my class now have had opportunities they never had before. They went to the spelling bee, geography bee, they are chosen for safety patrol and student council. They wouldn't have gotten that in a class of 28; definitely not the spelling or geography bee, maybe not the others either." She explained her comments, "Imagine being in a class of 28, they wouldn't have been selected student council representative, because there's always some gifted kid in there who wins."

Mr. Wall, the reduced class size teacher, indicated the model he taught (16 general education; 4 EIP) allowed the "regular kids to have an opportunity to shine as opposed to being overshadowed by the gifted kids." All of the teachers interviewed had

worked at Cobblestone for several years. I was fortunate to be able to interview Ms. Smith, the third grade EIP self-contained teacher, because she had delivered EIP services through the augmented model since Cobblestone opened. Ms. Smith compared the two models she experienced:

> My maximum this year is fourteen. I really like feeling connected to the children. Last year I worked from 8:00 to 12:00 every day and saw 56 students per day. I had guided reading groups for 22 minutes, and I just felt like I never was really connected to the students. I never really knew them outside that reading group. I never got the big picture of the child. I traveled all day in and out of classrooms. I needed a grocery cart with lots of things hanging off of it, because I had so much stuff for all the grades! Professionally, it was difficult to plan lessons for 56 children who were in five different grade levels. I think it could have been done efficiently if I could have just had second graders, but there are never enough kids to have, the way we spread out children in the push-in model. When we do augmented we try to have four or five kids, so we have to travel, but it's hard to be on time because you can't control if the kids are actually learning. You want to continue the lesson, so you can't say oh, my goodness, we are on minute 19-I have to go when a student is learning. The regular teachers also felt rushed to finish their reading groups while I was in there, because I usually had the children who were energetic and struggling-her biggest handfuls.

All of the teachers that were interviewed expressed the same concerns about the previous EIP model. Ms. Klein described her experience with Cobblestone's EIP under the previous service delivery model:

> She [the EIP teacher] came and sat in the back of the room and worked with them. It's like where they got double-dipped; they got extra reading. It didn't always work out the right way. They were supposed to come during science or social studies, but sometimes she came during my reading, which is not double dipping, like it was supposed to be.

Teachers felt students were not receiving enough support through the augmented or push-in model. The fifth grade teachers said the self-contained model provided adequate time

to address student needs, especially when they covered science and social studies curricular topics during reading and math instruction.

Isolation. Teachers and students described a sense of isolation from peers. Teachers described feelings of isolation from their grade level teams, Ms. Smith stated, "I feel like a square peg in a round hole during team planning" referring to the gaps in what her grade level peers were planning with their students and what she felt able to accomplish with her students. Additionally, EIP teachers found that not having higher achieving peers in class was detrimental to their students and placed an additional burden on teachers. Mr. Wall, the reduced class size EIP teacher spoke about the downside of the homogeneous grouping:

> For example, we were doing a team building where we put marbles through pipes into a container. The kids had to figure out different ways to get the marble through the half-pipes. They all had the same thought about what to do, no one broke out of the mold to say, 'hey maybe we should do this instead.' You keep getting that linear thinking. There's no branching out, which is also one of the harder things. In previous years if the average kid got stuck, they would look at what the gifted kids were doing, which would help them take off. Lots of prompting, I have to do a lot of prompting, "I wonder if" and thinking aloud.

EIP students were described as *getting stuck* when presented with novel tasks and as having difficulties with problem solving and basic organization skills. However, no strategies or programs were implemented to address these areas.

Students described feeling isolated from other fifth grade classrooms. Mr. Wall and Ms. Klein both stated that no child can leave their classroom for any other services, besides speech and language, "EIP students were to stay within an EIP classroom throughout the instructional day." Meanwhile, non-EIP students shifted among the remaining fifth grade classrooms during language arts and math. When asked to compare

his class with other fifth grade classrooms, Bobby stated, "Well, it's not really as much fun, because you feel excluded from all the other classes. Because sometimes like all the classes plan something together, but the smaller classes they can't do it because they don't have enough kids or something." Ms. Donner, one of the general education teachers, stated that parents and students in the other classrooms were curious about the smaller classes:

> At the first of the year there were a lot of comments because, well they really wanted to know why those classes were so small. We told them these are the kids that needed the most help and we thought that putting them in a class with fewer students would benefit them. That's how we explained it to the parents and kids and that seemed to appease everyone. The kids in my class didn't have a problem with it or anything, they were just curious.

In general, parents and staff at Cobblestone are highly focused on enrollment in programs for gifted students. This was evidenced in the comments and comparisons made by participants in the pilot study. Once assured the smaller classes were for children that needed "more help," rather than for high achievers, their curiosity abated.

Information. There was a lack of clarity about the program and its goals was among the adults in the building. Teachers described EIP as a remedial program. EIP self-contained classrooms were described as targeting students who would benefit from additional teacher attention and instruction to improve their test scores. Helping students *catch-up* was discussed in every EIP teacher interview. However, in reviewing EIP student records, a third of the students had met minimum competency on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) in reading and math. When I asked teachers about this, I was told by the three fifth grade EIP teachers that students were placed in EIP self-contained classrooms by administrators. These were the kids they

thought could benefit the most from the smaller classroom based upon information from the fourth grade teacher. Additionally, there were other students not selected for the self-contained classrooms, who had failed to meet minimum competence criteria. These students were placed in general education and did not receive EIP support. They were deemed slow learners who would not benefit from strategies. According to Mr. Wall:

> Well, when the CRCT results came back they decided. They used, well if the pass rate was 300; they looked at children who were say twenty points below, so 289-299 were put in these classes. They did not want to put in children they felt would not grow as much, so to me it's kind of fixed to show that it's working. It's not the lowest of the low, it's the highest of the low, it's the kids just under the cut-off, but I think a lot of these kids could function in a regular room.

The general education teacher, Ms. Donner indicated similar information when talking about one of her students who had not passed the CRCT:

> [A female student] was not put in that class, because as I understood it, if they didn't think the student would make enough gains, then they weren't placed in the EIP class. I guess they viewed her as someone who wouldn't be able to make enough gains throughout the year.

Instruction. EIP self-contained teachers described their students as having difficulties with focus, attention, and displaying poor study habits. Ms. Klein stated, "Half my class have been diagnosed Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but their parents refuse to put them on medication, what am I supposed to do?" Teachers stated these traits had a negative impact upon how much content they were able to cover in the classroom. By December 2004, the fifth grade EIP self-contained teachers had increased their emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematic skills during the instructional day, which resulted in minimizing science and social studies.

EIP students indicated their classes, “moved a little bit slower,” and did not cover as much of the curriculum as general education classes. Bobby stated, “They [the other classes] were always doing something new. And like we were reading a book, we did this one project where you had to bring in stuff that was important to you. I had my stuff in my book bag and the other kids said, ‘Oh, wow, you guys are just starting that. We finished that book a long time ago.’ The terms differentiated and accelerated instruction, were not mentioned in self-contained EIP teacher interviews. In contrast, the general education fifth grade teacher referred to differentiation and acceleration as key components of her classroom. When asked about these concepts, teachers told me what the words meant, but did not define the terms were not defined through examples of classroom practices.

Implications of Pilot Study Findings

The pilot study provided preliminary information about teacher and student perceptions of the EIP. Findings revealed that teachers obtained their knowledge of EIP at the local level using information transmitted from peers, personal observation, experiences, and building level “talk”. However, local knowledge was not always congruent with program guidelines as defined at the state level. For example, remedial instruction appeared to be the primary focus within EIP classrooms. Neither the EIP teachers, nor the two EIP students that were interviewed described practices consistent with differentiated or accelerated instruction. Students described classrooms that progressed at a slower pace, but did not provide additional support for student weaknesses.

Students in the pilot study described limited advantages of the EIP. Students were acutely aware of their placement. Both indicated they would have preferred having more students in their classrooms for two reasons; first it would have made the classes less conspicuous, and second, it would have provided a broader range of peers to make friends with. Additionally, over the year the EIP classrooms had less and less interaction with the other classrooms, which only served to segregate students even more socially and academically.

Focus of the Study

After reviewing pilot study findings along with data from the GADOE, the current study sought to expand information regarding perceptions of EIP participants at Cobblestone. Results of the pilot study revealed limited knowledge about the program as well as confusion about the purpose of having the EIP self-contained classrooms. Student and teacher interviews indicated the primary advantage of the program was increased access to teachers during instruction and the ability to develop closer relationships within the EIP cohort. However, the EIP students and teachers noted increased isolation from other general education classrooms. The primary focus of instruction in the EIP was skill remediation, rather than accelerated student achievement. The pilot study findings were the impetus to including parents and administrators in the current study. The previous administrator at the school did not discuss the rationale for changing models with teachers; it was important to determine how the current administrator defined the self-contained classrooms. Parents were also not included in pilot study interviews, but were frequently mentioned by teachers as unsupportive.

Data Collection

I anticipated gathering data for this study from August 2005 through December 2005. In actuality I did not begin collecting formal classroom information until October and continued with data collection through March. Approval for this study was obtained from both the Georgia State University and local district Internal Review Boards. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study. All were informed that information collected would become a part of the primary researcher's dissertation. Participation in this study was voluntary and this was made clear to each participant. Parents, teachers and administrators gave consent prior to participation. Parents also gave consent for their child to participate, and students signed assent forms prior to participating in interviews.

Data Sources

Since this study focused on participant perceptions the primary data source was individual interviews. Information from observations, archival data sources, and teacher meetings were used to anchor interview data within the larger context as well as to assist with trustworthiness of the findings. Each of these data sources will be described in the following subsections.

Interviews

The primary source of data for this study was individual interviews with key participants. Initial interviews with teachers, students and parents were audio-taped and transcribed to facilitate accurate reporting. The researcher reviewed each transcript, noting any areas that needed clarification for content or transcription errors. A peer researcher also reviewed transcripts and made notes of additional questions or areas that

needed clarification. The initial interview protocols for EIP coordinators, administrators, teachers, students, and parents are listed in Appendixes A, B and C.

I met with administrators at their office or other mutually agreed upon location. I met with district EIP coordinator once, TSA twice and had two local administrator interviews. The focus of these interviews was enhanced understanding of service delivery models, EIP funding, and ways state guidelines impact local program implementation. I met with teachers four times individually either in the teacher's classroom or in the researcher's office. These interviews were scheduled based upon teacher availability. Each child and his/her mother were interviewed twice in the primary researcher's office. Interviews with students took place in the researcher's office during non-instructional time (during lunch, before or after school, or upon teacher recommendation). Parent interviews were focused on their knowledge of the program's goals and objectives, perceptions of the impact of the EIP on their child's academic progress, as well as parent involvement within the EIP classrooms and within the larger school context.

Teacher Meetings

The fifth grade EIP teachers met with the primary researcher on a monthly basis to discuss themes that emerged from individual interviews, concerns regarding particular students, and instructional strategies. The purpose of these meetings was two-fold, in that teachers were provided with an opportunity to reflect on instructional practices. The researcher was available to consult with teachers about individual student needs. These will be addressed within the context of the program's resources and constructivist teaching practices referred to earlier. At the first meeting, we reviewed findings from the pilot study and compared/contrasted the previous group with their current classes.

Subsequent meetings focused on the exploration of emergent themes, served as member checks, and were a format for teachers to discuss student concerns or instructional strategies. These meetings were audio-taped and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Tapes were transcribed and the primary researcher and research partner reviewed each transcript. Teachers were offered the opportunity to review transcripts, though neither did.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were used to document instructional strategies, curricular topics as well as the classroom milieu. The primary researcher completed eight observations and a peer researcher also observed one lesson. During these observations I entered the classroom and began writing down what the teacher was instructing. I wrote down methods used (overhead, whiteboard) what the children were doing, what the teacher was doing, examples of activities, made drawings, copied worksheets and tried to keep a running record of the dialogue. Since I usually sat in a student desk I also assisted students with assignments if needed. Most of the students were used to my presence this seemed to be the most natural response. If students were working independently I would walk around the room and observe their work. As such, I was more of a participant observer during these periods. Students seemed to enjoy showing me their assignments and appeared comfortable requesting assistance when needed.

The need for more formal observations became evident during the pilot study when teachers had difficulty describing the types of instructional practices they used in EIP classrooms. Two math and two reading lessons were observed in each classroom, with each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Additional informal observations were

documented through researcher notes. Classroom observations focused on constructivist principles; such as building frameworks to support integrating new and previous learning, teacher/student dialogue, encouragement or instruction in problem solving skills, incorporation of student focused, or authentic (real world) activities.

Archival Data

The primary researcher collected demographic data for the fifth grade. Educational history, informal and formal educational assessment results, and EIP folders were also reviewed for the four participating students. Data reviewed included number of schools each student attended, number of years they had participated in the EIP; and CRCT test scores. Student progress on the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), which Cobblestone uses to measure reading progress at three points in the school year, was also reviewed. The researcher also incorporated student work samples from classroom observations, teacher lesson plans, and curriculum guides. Non-local secondary data sources, such as published documents from the Georgia Department of Education were also included in the data set.

Participants

Participants were purposively selected based upon their affiliation with the EIP. The two fifth grade self-contained EIP teachers participated through individual interviews, teacher-researcher meetings and by allowing formal and informal classroom observations by the primary researcher. Students were selected based upon length of time in the EIP, length of time attending Cobblestone, as well as gender, ethnicity and CRCT scores. During 2004-05 school year no fourth grade students were served through EIP. The principal indicated this was because they met minimum competency standards on the

CRCT Reading and Mathematics sections in third grade. Students in this cohort would have EIP services in first, second or third grade if they attended Cobblestone. This information narrowed the pool of potential participants to students who had attended Cobblestone since first grade. These criteria ensured student participants would be able to compare the current EIP service delivery model to previous models at Cobblestone.

Given these criteria, a representative sample of 13 potential students from both classes was identified. The researcher solicited teacher feedback about potential candidates. I had to rule out parents that did not speak English, as I did not have flexible access to a translator. This brought the list of potential candidates from thirteen to nine. From those nine, the original sample was selected and invited to participate based upon parent ability to participate in the study as well. During this initial parent meeting the researcher obtained consent from parents for their child to participate. Once their permission was obtained, students were invited to participate. One of the criteria for participation in the EIP was CRCT performance. There were two fourth grade students who failed to meet minimum competency standards on the CRCT in reading and math; I was able to recruit one for this study. My potential participant list included one African American female, one multiracial female, two Caucasian males, and one African American male. Unfortunately, the parent of the African American female was unable to participate in the study because of health problems. However, the remaining four students and their mothers all agreed to participate in the study.

Administrative perceptions of the EIP program and guidelines, while not a primary focus of this study, were addressed through individual interviews with Cobblestone's principal, Ms. March; Cobblestone's Instructional Lead Teacher (ILT)

Karen Long the district's Title 1 supervisor; Dr. Whitten, and the Teacher on Special Assignment (TSA) for the EIP, Anna Flagler. All names are pseudonyms.

Teachers

The two fifth grade self contained teachers, Ms. Hanover and Ms. Klein participated in both the pilot study and current studies. The reduced class size EIP teacher was not included for two reasons. First, this was her first year teaching fifth grade, and second, only two EIP students were in her classroom. Both EIP teachers were certified by the state in early childhood education at the bachelor's level. Ms. Hanover also had additional teaching endorsements in gifted education as well as a master's degree in educational leadership. The teachers participated in monthly individual meetings with the researcher. These meetings were typically taped and transcribed. Additional informal conversations were ongoing. These were not taped, but the researcher attempted to make a brief summary of the content whenever possible. The two teachers and the researcher met for consultation issues once per month if teachers had specific consultation requests. If not, then the researcher attended the fifth grade level team meeting.

Student-Mother Dyads

There were several students who had attended Cobblestone since first grade. I tried to select students that represented the composite EIP population in the fifth grade. Three boys and one girl participated in this study. Caucasian boys were over-represented relative to their participation in EIP. I was unable to recruit any Hispanic boys for the study since none had attended Cobblestone for more than two years. I obtained and used archival information from student's permanent school records and EIP folders to enhance these descriptions.

Jamal and Karyn. The youngest of three boys, Jamal has attended Cobblestone since kindergarten. A quiet, soft-spoken child, Jamal is of African American descent. Jamal's mother, Karyn, works as a registered nurse, his father is a self-employed building contractor. Karyn indicated significant concerns about Jamal's educational progress during our interviews. She met with me on two occasions to discuss the possibility of obtaining additional support through evaluation for special education prior to Jamal moving to middle school. Karyn indicated she has considered private religious school for Jamal because the classes would be smaller. Jamal is a very sweet young man. He often engages in thoughtful gestures with peers. For example, he assisted another child with tying his bowtie before a choral performance. Jamal appeared to prefer interacting with peers to adults. His teacher described him as one of the "lowest" performing students and related she felt he was, "ADHD." When formally interviewed, Jamal was quick to answer "I don't know;" especially when the tape recorder was used. He was more open during informal times, such as reading to me and during classroom observations.

Jamal was recommended for retention in kindergarten, but parents decided he should not be retained. He was also evaluated for a learning disability in second grade through the SST, but was not referred for special education services. Jamal has participated in EIP from first through the end of second grade, when his mother withdrew him for home school. Jamal re-entered Cobblestone in third grade and again participated in the EIP. Jamal failed the CRCT in third grade on the first administration, but attended summer school and passed the second administration. Jamal was the only who student did not meet standards on any area of the CRCT in fourth grade.

Jennifer and Beth. The younger of two children, Jennifer's sixteen year old brother also attended Cobblestone. He participated in the program for gifted learners. Jennifer was identified by school records as multi-racial. Her father is Hispanic and her mother is Caucasian. Jennifer has not repeated a grade, nor was she referred to the SST at Cobblestone. Her mother, Beth wanted Jennifer to be evaluated for dyslexia in third grade, but the teacher did not share her concerns about Jennifer's learning, and testing was not pursued. We discussed her mother's ongoing concern that Jennifer reverses letters when writing and often seems "a step behind" peers. Beth indicated that she experienced similar problems in school and received support in reading during elementary school. Jennifer's EIP history indicated she qualified for support in reading and math during second and third grades. Jennifer's scores on the CRCT in fourth grade indicated she met standards in reading and language arts, but scored two points below the cut-off score of 300 on the mathematics section.

Jennifer is soft-spoken, but was able to articulate very clearly her experiences in the EIP. She was elected class president this year, which allowed her to participate on the student council. Jennifer took Spanish language classes after school and was a member of the safety patrol. In the classroom, she usually kept to herself, even when invited to participate in free-time activities by other girls.

Mike and Lisa. Mike has attended Cobblestone since kindergarten. He has not repeated a grade. He participated in EIP services from first through third grade for reading, though in the first interview Lisa was unaware that he participated in EIP prior to fifth grade. She stated he had only participated in after school tutoring in the third grade. Like peers, Mike was not served through EIP in fourth grade since he met basic

competencies on the CRCT. Mike was evaluated for special education this year, as part of his mother's request to have him removed from EIP. He was not found eligible for special education services and after winter holiday Mike was transferred to another general education classroom. During out initial meeting Lisa was very vocal about her lack of support for the EIP, as well as other problems she experienced with teachers at Cobblestone. Mike's older brother also attended Cobblestone and participated in the gifted program. His younger brother was placed in an EIP self-contained classroom this year, but was transferred out prior to school starting at parent request. Mike plays football through a local recreation league, at which he reportedly excels. He also plays the recorder for the chorus and was elected student council representative/room president for Ms. Klein's classroom in August, which he gave up upon transferring.

Greg and Nancy. Greg has attended Cobblestone since the end of kindergarten. He began receiving EIP services for reading in the first grade. In second grade, he qualified for services in language arts and math, but not reading. A previous teacher wrote on his second grade EIP checklist, "I think Greg has a processing problem-watch him closely… EIP may not help with that. He is a good reader." In January 2004, Greg was exited from EIP in reading because he was performing on grade level according to the DRA. Greg has received special education services through the speech and language program since entering Cobblestone. He was also evaluated by the previous school psychologist for a learning disability. Greg's mother indicated he had been receiving early intervention services in preschool. Greg participated in the geography bee and chorus during fifth grade.

Administrators

Cobblestone has one principal; one assistant principal; one administrative assistant; and an instructional lead teacher, who has some administrative responsibilities. I met with the principal, Ms. March, who suggested I also meet with the school's Instructional Lead Teacher (ILT) Karen Long. Ms. Long compiled a significant amount of the data on student progress for Cobblestone. Ms. Long also provided the researcher with copies of standardized testing reports as well as Cobblestone's School Improvement Plan (SIP). In addition to the local school administrators I also met with the district's Supervisor for Title 1, Dr. Whitten in July 2005. He referred me to the Teacher on Special Assignment (TSA) for EIP, Ms. Flagler, who is responsible for coordinating EIP initiatives and activities across the district. I met with Ms. Flagler on two occasions, November 2005 as part of a staff development course and individually in January 2006.

Role of the Researcher

Many aspects of providing psychological services in schools are relevant to the process of qualitative research. These include the fluid nature of data-based decision making, stakeholder involvement in data collection, and constant search for both confirming and disconfirming evidence. I found it impossible to completely separate my role as primary researcher and psychologist at Cobblestone. Teachers and staff know me in that capacity; and it helped sell the staff on allowing me to complete this research at Cobblestone. I tried to remain alert to potential conflicts between my role in the school and my role as researcher. I used peer debriefers/researchers to assist in resolving these conflicts. These roles sometimes overlapped and incidents of this will be described. For

example, some EIP students were discussed as part of the Student Support Team and I evaluated one of the students.

In this district, school psychologists are classified as itinerant staff members. This means that although I provide psychological services to the school, I am not considered a member of their staff. As such, I am not expected to attend staff meetings, nor am I involved in making policy decisions. However, I have established collegial relationships with the participating teachers and am familiar with the school's previous EIP service delivery models, which enhances the trustworthiness of data collected. My office is located near the fifth grade classrooms, which allowed for frequent opportunities to observe and interact with teachers and students. These persistent opportunities for observation were important for prolonged engagement.

Data Analysis

Individual interviews, teacher-researcher meetings, researcher notes, and archival data were used as primary source materials for the data analysis. Data analysis was informed by the pilot study and previous research literature. However, care was taken to allow local theory to emerge independent of these. Strauss and Corbin's (1991) grounded theory techniques, which involve multiple levels of data stratification, were used. Data are examined and broken into *codes* or units of analysis. In the initial stage, *open coding*, conceptual labels are placed on individual events from the data. These individual events stand alone as meaningful units or main themes (Hatch, 2002). In the initial phase of open coding I used pilot study codes to analyze interview data. Some of the pilot study codes continued to be evident, but as more information was gathered, they were not sufficient (Strauss & Corbin, 1991). Additional data sources were used to revise, retain or

exclude codes. Participants were asked to confirm or disconfirm codes through member checks which were incorporated into follow-up interviews. This provided opportunities to clarify information from multiple data sources, thus increasing the trustworthiness of the findings.

As the data collection process started I began developing categories that corresponded to the eight research questions. During this initial coding, similar codes were grouped under a larger classification, or primary category through incidents and examples (Strauss & Corbin, 1991; pp. 61-74). When items were coded for a particular category, they were compared to all other events within the category. This "constant comparison" allowed multiple events that demonstrated a given construct to emerge (1991; pp. 62-64). At that point, the data were re-analyzed using the codes that were developed to determine if data fit the categories and whether categories should be merged, extracted, or redefined. In the second stage of data analysis (axial coding) the preliminary categories were grouped into domains, or subcategories based upon their relationships to the initial research questions (Hatch, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Qualitative Validity

Validity in qualitative research is often described as the level of trustworthiness one can place on the conclusions obtained from the data (LeCompte, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

Internal Validity

Techniques used to establish internal validity for this study included prolonged engagement or time in the field. The researcher was present in the fifth grade EIP classrooms for at least three hours per week over an eight month span. This allowed

repeated observations and a deeper understanding of the kinds of relationships that developed in the classes. These understandings allowed theories to emerge, which were confirmed or disconfirmed by participants. This process of confirming/disconfirming is often referred to as "member checking" in qualitative literature. Member checks are important because they provide the researcher with additional data to use in developing theory.

Additional measures taken to address potential threats to internal validity included the pilot study, establishing relationships with participants prior to initial interviews and creating an atmosphere of trust through disclosure and honesty about the reasons for the research. Dependability and confirmability of data are additional criteria for establishing internal validity in qualitative studies. These concepts refer to the process of describing data collection procedures in very explicit and detailed methods, which permit others to gain understanding in enough depth than the intervention can be replicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

External Validity

External validity refers to the extent findings in one study are applicable to similar settings and populations. Can the definitions, theoretical frames and techniques used be applied to other settings (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999)? Do the findings translate from one setting, in this case one school to another, so others can compare the research findings to similar groups? External validity is sometimes referred to as transferability. Extensive descriptions of the setting, participants, and context of the study were used to establish external validity in this study (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

Providing detailed descriptions allows others to determine if these findings might be applicable their particular setting.

Researcher Bias

Additional steps were taken to address potential threats to this study's validity based on the potential for researcher bias. LeCompte (2000) emphasized the importance of rigorous attention to bias in data collection. Bias can negatively impact the credibility of findings. Therefore, as a researcher I took steps to limit the impact of tacit, or uninformed theory, that could potentially bias the data that were collected, analyzed and used in creating this local theory. I made a conscious effort to remain open to alternative information through my researcher journal, discussions with participants and use of peer debriefers. In addition, frequently reviewing the larger body of research literature assisted with grounding the data in relation to other settings. I met with peer debriefers at least twice per month and used these meetings to gain alternative, sometimes less passionate perspectives, which helped to reframe situations that arose during data collection. During these meetings we reviewed transcripts and preliminary codes. We resolved differences that arose through discussion, obtaining further data and by reviewing areas of disagreement until we developed shared consensus. The use of multiple data points in developing codes sometimes referred to as triangulation, also helped to mitigate personal bias in data collection.

Finally, this study also benefited from negative case analysis. I was able to compare the two groups of students that emerged to check weaknesses in the local theory. This served as a means of enhancing the credibility of findings. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and school records helped develop a thick description of

participants and their perceptions of EIP. Through this iterative process, a comprehensive picture of the local setting emerged using an ongoing process of data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1991).

Summary

This study used qualitative methods, particularly grounded theory and participant observation to develop an in depth portrait of Cobblestone's fifth grade EIP. Research questions were answered through analysis of participant interviews, teacher meetings, classroom observations and archival data. Issues of trustworthiness of findings were addressed through prolonged engagement at the site, ongoing member checks, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and triangulation of data points. Findings will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gain information about participant perceptions of one fifth grade's implementation of Georgia's Early Intervention Program (EIP) using a self-contained delivery model. This study evolved from the researcher's observations of changes in EIP service delivery models at Cobblestone elementary. As the psychologist at the school, I felt it was important to ascertain information about these changes prior to making any judgment about their effectiveness, despite some professional misgivings based upon research about the impact of tracking on student achievement. Some initial questions that guided this research were explored through the pilot study discussed in the previous chapter.

This study sought to extend these findings on participant perceptions about the EIP, explore how students are selected and determine how placement in self-contained classrooms affected student achievement. In order to obtain information regarding these larger constructs, research questions were developed. These questions were informed by both the pilot study as well as the broader body of literature on student grouping practices, constructivist theory, the role of parents in schools and educational policy. Participant data, along with observations, teacher meetings and archival data were used to develop a picture of the EIP's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore this chapter will begin with a description of the EIP classroom context. Next, research questions will be used to

structure the findings. Themes that emerged over the course of this study are presented as subheadings.

Classroom Context

The context of any classroom is larger than the sum of its component parts. The context of a classroom consists of the instructional environment, including the types of instruction, strategies, work groups, tasks as well as the type of language used in class. The spoken and unspoken rules of conduct that are negotiated among members provide another component of context. How do participants interact and relate among one another. The context of the classroom is strongly influenced by the teacher's behaviors in general and specifically through his/her interactions with students. There were two teachers in the current study. A brief description of each follows.

Ms. Hanover is an African American teacher who has been at Cobblestone for seven of her ten years of teaching. Ms. Hanover holds her students responsible for their learning. She provided students with clear expectations for their behavior and often held conferences with students and/or their parents regarding classroom conduct. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, has an additional endorsement in gifted education and recently finished a master's degree in educational leadership. During our individual and group meetings, Ms. Hanover never expressed doubt about her instructional strategies. Ms. Hanover tended to be very straightforward and structured with regard to instructional deadlines and students were held responsible for their progress, or lack thereof.

Ms. Klein, was also a veteran teacher of more than 10 years. Ms. Klein is Caucasian. Prior to teaching at Cobblestone she taught at one of the highest performing elementary schools in Cobblestone's district for three years. She taught in a public school system in the Northeastern United States for eight years. Ms. Klein vocalized her frustration with the pace of her classroom. She sought assistance from the building staff development coordinator and requested additional assistance or at least validation from the primary researcher. She stated:

> In past years I spent more time researching teaching techniques. This year I feel like I'm in a rut. I wish we had more assistance in developing strategies for working with these kids. I feel at a loss sometimes and it's frustrating.

Ms. Klein tended to share more of her personal life with her students and often used her own school experiences to relate with the children. As such, she often provided what she called *hints* or *tips* during whole group instruction. When the class was completing a unit on reducing fractions she asked, "What was that tip I told you about reducing?" No one responded. The students were frequently asked to tell what strategy they used to answer questions. Ms. Klein continued, "Remember if you take a zero off the numerator and the denominator, they are still the same, so what does that give us?" Students (several in unison), "Seven-tenths." Later Ms. Klein asked another question about the steps to solve word problems, again, no response and Ms. Klein led students through call and response again.

Ms. Klein also demonstrated a faster rate of speech and lesson presentation as compared to Ms. Hanover. She often responded to her own

questions, and acknowledged that sometimes she was too quick to provide students with answers.

Consistent with Black's (2004) findings, Ms. Klein felt the impact of time in terms of the schedule and low probability students would respond quickly and accurately. Thus, she attributed student performances to difficulty with math skills. Instead students may have either lacked of knowledge about how to participate, or have mistakenly thought they were not supposed to answer the question. Ms. Klein openly reached out to develop interpersonal relationships with students, which she incorporated into disciplinary strategies, "I make sure I have some kind of bond with the kids, they know I care about them."

Cobblestone's fifth grade EIP classes were adjacent to one another and shared an interior door. Over time this interior door became the primary transition point between EIP classrooms. As such, students rarely ventured into the main fifth grade hallway between classes as did the other fifth graders. Typically the fifth grade classrooms displayed writing or other examples of student work on walls outside the classroom. The EI P students' work was displayed less frequently than peers. Additionally, the displays reflected subject matter the other classrooms had already covered, which may have reinforced the school's expectation that EIP students were less capable than other students. The context of the classrooms is essential to understanding the research questions as it underlies all interactions, roles and relationships in the EIP. As such, multiple data points are needed to adequately explain the themes and other phenomena that occurred in the classes. In the next sections individual research questions will be

addressed using multiple sources of data including formal/informal observations, interviews and meetings.

Who participates in the EIP at Cobblestone?

According to Cobblestone staff, the fifth grade self-contained classrooms were comprised of students who scored below 300 on the Reading and/or Mathematic sections of the CRCT in the spring of 2005. As mentioned in the description of the EIP, state guidelines do not specify whether students have to fail both the reading and the math areas of the CRCT to be placed in the self-contained model, so a student could be placed in EIP by failing either the reading section, math section, or both. Archival data from educational records including report cards, standardized test results, SST records, and EIP folders were reviewed and compared with data from interviews and observations. Data from archival records was not always commensurate with placement guidelines.

Additionally, placement in the EIP sent a message about the child's capability relative to peers. Over half of the EIP students who had attended Cobblestone for over two years had been evaluated for special education, but did not qualify. Most EIP had been discussed, but subsequently dismissed from the SST at Cobblestone, either because they did not qualify for special programs or because staff felt they were performing up to their potential. This may have produced lower expectations of many of these students. In discussing student composition in the EIP classrooms Ms. Hanover stated:

> This year there are more black and Hispanic kids than last year. I think it's just who needs help, but the population here is changing. They want to blame it all on those apartments, I've heard them talk about rezoning again. But think about Jamal he lives in a nice subdivision, so it's not about the apartment kids. But that goes to the fact that a lot of teachers here have low expectations of EIP kids.

As such, EIP students seem to be viewed as having less potential than other groups. Compared to other specialized programs, EIP served fewer students (12%) than the Gifted and Talented (20%) and special education (15%) programs, both of which require parents to participate in developing eligibilities and both of which provide students with due process legal protections that were not provided to EIP students. Throughout the year staff often described EIP students as, *those kids* and the EIP rooms, *that class.* These local classifications will be described in the next section.

That class. In August 2005, there were 23 EIP students in the self-contained classrooms with CRCT scores reported from the previous school year. The breakdown of CRCT scores for the two EIP classes follow: 2 students scored below 300 on the reading and math sections; 10 students scored below 300 on the math section; 1 student scored below 300 on the reading section; 10 students scored at or above 300 on both the reading and math sections. These numbers indicated 45% of the students were placed in EIP using the alternative method, significantly more than the 3% per grade level allowed by the state guidelines. However, when student EIP folders were reviewed they indicated all students were placed using CRCT scores. When asked, administrators insisted all students in the EIP self-contained classrooms met criteria for placement. This suggested there may have been local criteria that differed significantly from the state guidelines that were used for placement decisions.

Based upon school demographics described in Chapter 3, the EIP classrooms *looked* different than the majority of fifth grade classrooms for at least two main reasons. First, EIP classrooms were disproportionately comprised of African American and Hispanic students. Second, the EIP classrooms were comparable in size to the other

classrooms, but with half as many students, this served to reinforce the notion of difference.

Those kids. As a specialist within the school I heard direct and indirect comments made by teachers and other staff about EIP students. For example, a general education fifth grade teacher commented, "I don't know how you do it. Those kids would drive me crazy" to an EIP teacher during a team meeting. Information from demographic data revealed striking differences between *those kids* and the general population of fifth graders along several demographic lines. Approximately 60% of the Non-EIP fifth grade students were identified as Caucasian while 27% were African American according to school records. Ms. Hanover, the only African American fifth grade teacher, had exactly the opposite ratio. In Ms. Klein's classroom 38% of the students were Hispanic, whereas only 6% of students in the non-EIP classrooms were identified as Hispanic. Approximately 20% of the fifth graders at Cobblestone participated in the free and reduced lunch program (36 students). Of those 36, approximately 42% were in one of the two EIP self-contained classrooms.

Student performance on standardized ability measures was also obtained by class average, since the two EIP teachers often referred to their students as, "slow learners." However, information from Table 1 showed this was not the case. The EIP students as a group were not slow learners; yet they were viewed as less capable of completing grade level assignments. For example, in September 2005, the fifth grade team met to review scoring criteria for the fifth grade state writing assessment. Each teacher had been asked to bring a writing sample, a book review, each class completed. The purpose of having writing samples was to practice scoring assignments using a writing rubric that was part

of the SIP. Neither EIP teacher complied with this request. Both teachers had commented they were not bringing samples to the meeting. The next day I asked the two EIP teachers about the meeting. Ms. Hanover stated:

> Her class [general education teacher] was doing things my kids cannot do because of the language. They write such simple sentences and even then, sometimes I can't figure out what they are trying to say. Some of these kids don't even know that what they write doesn't make any sense. How can I ask them to write a book report when they can't even write a decent sentence?

During individual interviews, teachers often referred to their students as having difficulties with academic tasks. Since most of the students had met proficiency standards, it was important to determine what additional factors led to students being appropriately placed in EIP. When told very few students actually scored below 300 on the CRCT, teachers suggested something other than skill was involved; Ms. Hanover, "Some of them were lucky I think, or either they just know how to test." Similarly, Ms. Klein stated, " I don't know what's impacting these scores, but they don't seem to be reflective of how the kids are in class, because I think all of these kids are placed correctly. I don't know how they got some of those scores. Maybe it's test taking skills." The topic of deficits in vocabulary development was frequently cited by EIP teachers, so the speech/language pathologist at Cobblestone was consulted about her fifth grade caseload. She indicated 30% of her fifth grade language disorder students were in EIP classrooms.

Other factors that teachers mentioned as possible causes for lower student performance included lower ability or IQ scores, lack of expectation in previous years,

poor student work habits, high dependency on teacher direction and the possibility of learning or attention problems. In our February meeting, Ms. Klein stated:

> I don't know, I could be wrong, but sometimes I think they were never expected to do anything before. Now all of a sudden they have expectations placed on them. I believe [Hispanic girl] was allowed to do nothing and now all of a sudden she's accountable. She has such poor work habits, doesn't turn in her work, she's late to school everyday. We have had many conversations about the importance of doing your work. I truly believe that having that contract [weekly list of spelling, social studies, and Scholastic News assignments to be completed] has made a huge difference with my children, because it's the same thing every week. They know what they are supposed to do.

Additionally, both EIP teachers viewed their students as only minimally engaged with learning. For example, Ms. Hanover stated, "These children don't extend their learning beyond what we do in class. For example, [male student] will give me what I want, but he doesn't extend his learning to the world at large, you know, take it to the next step. None of them do that." Classroom observations revealed EIP students often demonstrated difficulties engaging in the kinds of language exchanges that facilitated dialogue. This often resulted in teachers viewing students as less competent, which may have impacted the type of instructional assignments provided. EIP teachers often directed students in rote activities instead of engaging them in discussions to facilitate shared understandings.

Thrivers and survivors. Two very dichotomous experiences of the EIP emerged. Student participants fell around two categories, *thrivers* and *survivors*. The former emerged as top students in the EIP classrooms and experienced positive relationships and interactions with their teachers. Thrivers were students teachers referred to as, "shining stars" or "coming out of their shell." Jennifer and Greg are two examples of this type of student. These students experienced many of the benefits described as *access* in the pilot study. Other examples of thrivers were provided by teachers. Ms. Hanover related a story

about another Hispanic girl, “At the beginning of the year she wouldn’t even talk, now she stands up for herself, she’s making A’s and B’s.” The thrivers emerged within the first four months of school. There were no distinct demographic trends that emerged between thrivers and survivors.

The four students who participated in the study were asked to talk about how they fit within their classrooms. Their responses were compared to teacher perceptions as well as classroom observations. In the first interview I asked each student to rate him or her self compared the classmates with regard to academic skills and grades. In the fall, Greg indicated, “I’m medium, mostly A’s and B’s;” however by the follow-up interview his rating of himself had changed, “I think now more middle to high. I think a lot of kids need more help than me, like with mixed numbers, I was one of the top kids with that.” In the fall Jennifer indicated that compared to her classmates she was, “Almost at the top,” which was different than previous years. She stated, “I can keep up and it’s much better for me.” By the follow-up interview Jennifer had begun to separate herself from peers even further by her work habits, “I think I’m more focused on getting my work done, I like to be around people I can trust; some people you can’t trust because they want you to do their work for them.”

In contrast, Mike and Jamal, the *survivors* that participated in this study had difficulty describing their academic identity. When I asked Jamal to tell me how his teacher would describe him. He responded, “Uhm…I don’t know. Good student. Because he does good in math. I do okay in reading.” In the follow up interview, I asked Jamal how his teacher helped him. He replied, “She watches me and shows me how to do things.” When I asked Mike to compare himself to peers; he compared himself to friends

in non-EIP classrooms, “In my reading I got a ‘C,’because we don’t...Ms. Klein thinks that spelling is more important than reading. We don’t do reading tests every week like every other class does. We just do them like, once a month.” Mike’s responses reflected his decision not to affiliate with his EIP classmates, since he viewed his classroom as inferior to others. He was also embarrassed that the level of his work was lower than his friends, “My friends make fun of me cause in math I bring home double digits and they are all doing all this crazy stuff like dividing thousands and everything.”

Mike and Jamal were *survivors*. These students typically entered the classroom with little understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses and did not seem to gain insight over the course of the year. Survivors in this study were often described by their teachers as, ADHD. For example, during our October team meeting Ms. Klein stated:

> Literally, I mean in their own way they all have some kind of focusing issues beyond just a normal fifth grader. I’m talking they lose focus for two or three minutes during large group instruction. They really struggle to be responsible and work independently. They can’t seem to figure out what to do without me telling them. I mean, okay, we write everything on the board they are supposed to do so their parents will know what they are doing for homework, it’s October and I’m still having to tell them exactly what to write down!

Survivors’ interactions with teachers were observed to be more directive and behavioral in nature. For example, during the first math observation in Ms. Klein’s classroom the class was completing an activity on fractions. They were to fold their paper into fourths. Four students call out, *Hamburgers or hotdogs*? This was apparently a reference to which direction they were to fold the paper. Ms. Klein responded, “We don’t call it hamburgers or hot dogs in fifth grade. I want you to fold your paper into fourths” (she demonstrates) and watches students. The children were sitting in desks grouped like a square. One

group of boys were having difficulty getting along. A boy who seemed confused kept looking at other's work for direction. Another boy calls out, "Can you tell him to stop!" Ms. Klein responded to the other child, "He's asked you nicely before, now your teacher has to tell you." She begins reviewing the assignment but stops and returned to the same table of boys and speaks to the group, "This behavior is not thrilling me." These interactions were typical of how *survivors* interacted with teachers.

Often survivors were the first to seek out my assistance or attention by showing me their work. Often these students did not understand instructional language, though they understood the task. For example, during a quiz on ordering fractions from least to greatest one section of the quiz had the following direction: *simplify if you need to.* One young man was confused and thought that meant he was to simplify all the fractions, which was impossible. He spent ten minutes staring at his paper before finally asking me for help. When I explained what the phrase meant, he quickly and correctly completed the task. This suggested it was not the lack of academic skill but a disconnection between language and behavioral expectations provided access to curriculum.

Over time, these differences in student interactions led to differences in student access to both teachers and activities. Survivors received less positive attention from teachers. They were not allowed access to honor activities such as student council, spelling/geography bees, book buddy or safety patrol because teachers felt they were not responsible enough in their daily assignments. Although more boys than girls would have been described as survivors, they were also a higher proportion of the classroom composition. Aside from gender, there were no other trends of survivors versus thrivers.

I asked each of the students who participated in this study to describe for me what his/her teacher would describe as a "good student." Their answers were consistent with their roles in each of the classrooms:

Jennifer:	Responsible, dependable, listens well, works good with others, doesn't waste time.
Greg:	Someone that's a good worker, turns in their homework, thinks about others, gets involved in other activities and tries their best and doesn't give up.
Jamal:	They like, pay attention, read directions and….that's it.
Mike:	Someone that listens, pays attention and always tries their best.

Greg and Jennifer, the thrivers, experienced the kind of discourse with their teachers that allowed them to change their social positioning within the classroom to enhance their identities as learners (Black, 2004). In contrast, Jamal and Mike, the survivors, gave vague responses that sounded similar to comments teachers had made to them in the classroom, which were primarily related to behavioral expectations. Student responses clearly indicated the kinds of behavioral skills that impacted teacher-student relationships and teacher's expectations of individual students.

What do participants understand about the EIP?

Participants in this study largely viewed the EIP as an opportunity for children to be taught skills that were not mastered in previous grades. As in the pilot study, teachers, students and parents viewed the EIP as a means of providing remediation for students who were seen as below level academically. As the classes changed in composition EIP teachers became increasingly frustrated by the number and type of students that were added to their classes. When asked about a student who was placed in EIP after the first month, Ms. Klein indicated she was unsure of why the student was moved to the EIP class but speculated, "Because we didn't have enough children? Her teacher complained?

That's how [male student] got here. Don't get me wrong, I think these are two kids who can benefit, but they would have also benefited from being with regular peers." Ms. Hanover revealed similar frustrations about changes to her classroom composition in March:

> This classroom has become a dumping ground over the year. The inclusion classroom is full. The other rooms are at their maximum, so we are getting most of the new students, even those who are already in special education. Several of these kids (names them) need special education services. They need to be more selective about who they put in these classrooms-kids and teachers.

Ms. Klein and Ms. Hanover viewed teaching EIP as a way to help students remediate skill deficits. Ms. Hanover explained to parents that her definition of acceleration was, "to meet children where they are and move them forward." Both teachers felt differentiation had occurred when students were placed in EIP.

Identified. Parents learned about their child's placement in EIP when they arrived for sneak-a-peek, which is an official term, synonymous with open house. Sneak-a-peek is an annual opportunity for parents to meet and greet their child's new teacher prior to the first day of school. Sneak-a-peek usually occurs one afternoon the week before school starts. Three of the four parents who participated in this study learned of their child's placement in the self-contained classroom at sneak-a-peek. All three immediately recognized something was different. Nancy (Greg's mother) stated:

> I kept thinking, okay he's been identified as something, but I wasn't sure what. I was a little upset at first, so I spoke to Ms. Klein right when I met her. I asked if this was an identified class and she said yes, and explained it to me.

Once Ms. Klein explained the program, Nancy felt confident it was a good placement for Greg, who had participated in EIP as well as special education services in earlier grades.

Jennifer's mother, Beth, also learned about the placement at sneak-a-peek. She related feeling, "like being punched in the stomach" at first:

> We saw her name on the list. We came in for sneak-a-peek and found that was the class she was in, which I was fine. She knew right away when she saw her name, "I'm in the dumb class," but we told her it was okay and she is where she needs to be. I knew she needed the extra help.

Jennifer's mother also obtained her knowledge about the EIP classroom from the classroom teacher:

> Ms. Hanover talked about the students needing extra time to work on various skill levels with reading and math. She said the kids needed time to work on skills. They were going to concentrate on where the students were at and move them forward, not speed them through stuff. That way they won't be sitting in class trying to catch up.

Jennifer's mother and classroom teacher indicated lower expectations of her prior to the school year commencing. Jennifer's mother stated she had felt her child was struggling for several years, with the previous school-year being very difficult for Jennifer to complete all the work expected of her. In contrast, Mike's mother indicated that having her child in EIP was a negative. Both of Lisa's sons were placed in EIP classrooms for 2005-06:

> I came in for first grade sneak-a-peek and low and behold he's in an EIP classroom with a bunch of kids who don't even speak English. I thought, yeah, how much attention is he going to get in this class, so I had him moved…Now with Mike, well he has struggled in the past. I wondered am I hurting him by letting him stay in a smaller classroom where he doesn't feel any competition? Where his confidence is at the bottom of the bucket? I know he's behind, but he's depressed just being in there.

Students also realized they had been *identified*. In order to obtain basic program knowledge I asked students, "Had they ever heard of the Early Intervention Program or the EIP?" Mike had heard the initials, but did not know what they meant. None of the

other children had heard of the program, nor had their teachers discussed the very obvious differences in class sizes. Students were asked if they remembered working with an extra teacher, besides their homeroom teacher, in first, second or third grade. All four students remembered having another teacher work with them on reading or math in second or third grade. I asked each to tell me what they remembered about working with that teacher. Jennifer's response, "Yes, I…uhm...went to a reading place. I don't remember her name, though. I could read some, and she helped me a little bit more like sounding out stuff and looking at pictures to see if you could figure it out." Jamal also recalled working with extra teachers in reading and math, "I did my addition, times, and we did subtraction and reading. For reading they helped me a lot because they told me words, that like I got wrong. I had to go back and write it a lot. I had to write it over, the words I messed up." Greg and Mike recalled working with Ms. Smith on their reading in third grade, but could not recall specific strategies they were taught. None of the students equated that earlier assistance as the same program as their current placement.

I asked students to talk about their initial reaction to being in a smaller classroom. Jennifer recalled feeling "disappointed" because none of her friends were in the EIP classroom. Beth recalled Jennifer commenting, "I'm in the dumb class." Greg described his initial reaction as, "I was surprised actually. I felt better when I saw someone I knew in there. [Mike] was my friend last year and I always felt comfortable when he was there. Small class, I thought it would be easier and I knew I could see my friends outside of school." Mike also noted how much smaller his classroom was, "I was just wondering why my class was so small, my mom told me we were in a class that got low grades." When the researcher remarked that he seemed embarrassed, Mike replied, "Sometimes

yes, sometimes no. It bothers me that my friends make fun of me. They said I'm in the slow class."

Jamal demonstrated more difficulty expressing his thoughts about the program. Interestingly, although he had friends in other fifth grade classrooms none had asked about the size of his classroom. When I asked him if he like his class, he stated, "Kind of." I asked if he would rather be in another class, "No. That class is good," when I asked him to tell me some more he stated, "I don't know." When asked about her perception of Ms. Hanover's class after three months, Jennifer stated, "This class is a lot better for me, because last year I had Ms. Clarke and she would go really quickly. Some of the kids would just be out of their minds with work and stuff, so Ms. Hanover is a good pace for me.

Parallel channels. Much of the participant knowledge about the EIP at Cobblestone was constructed and transmitted through informal channels between school and home that never touched one another. Teachers obtained information informally from other staff members. There were no formal meetings about the EIP program for teachers or parents either through the school or district. The GADOE website contained information about the EIP, but neither teacher had accessed it. Neither teacher was given a copy of the program guidelines. Parent knowledge of the program was also constructed locally from a variety of sources including previous experiences with EIP, information from staff and talking with other parents. Mothers in this study indicated learning of their child's placement in the EIP at *sneak-a-peek*. In contrast, placement in other specialized programs, such as special education, gifted education and ESOL required advanced

notice to parents as well as an opportunity for them to participate in the eligibility process.

Parent support for EIP was influenced by the family's history at the school. For example, Lisa historically had a low level of trust with staff at Cobblestone, based upon experiences with her three children. Finding out that Mike was placed in the small EIP classroom at sneak-a-peek only served to reinforce her distrust. Lisa acknowledged that parent talk outside of the school was a source of her knowledge about the program:

> You want to know what the parents think outside of the school. The parents think it's about funding. The school is picking whatever kids they can to stick in these classes so they can get their funding. The parents outside the school are not so much thinking that it is in the best interest of the children. They are thinking the school is concerned with the school's best interest. My thought is why didn't the school tell me before now? I mean I show up at sneak-a-peek and find out my kid's in an EIP classroom. Wouldn't it have been more advantageous for me and my child to find out he needed help at the end of the year, then I could have put him in summer tutoring and brought him up to speed. I mean Mike had A's and B's last year, when I see that, I don't think there's a problem.

Lisa's acknowledgement of parent communication about school policy acknowledged one way information about the EIP is disseminated at the local level. Jennifer's mother, Beth described another example of parent to parent communication:

> For some parents it's a stigma. I have a neighbor whose daughter is in Ms. Klein's class, but she wasn't at the beginning of the year. She came and talked to me. She wanted to know-why do they want to put my daughter in that class? Well, Jennifer likes it fine. She's doing great. But I have gotten that concept that some parents can't believe their kid is in that class."

Beth expressed disappointment with how the school communicated Jennifer's placement, but for other reasons, "I would have liked to have known earlier, I mean I didn't know it was available and I could have requested it for my daughter because she needs help."

Beth felt her child could have missed out on needed services because the school did not communicate with parents about what kinds of academic assistance were available.

How does the EIP fit within the larger school context?

The EIP serves approximately 12% of Cobblestone's students in kindergarten through fifth grade. In comparison, 21% of the student population is enrolled in the gifted and talented program, 15% of the students are in special education, and 5% of Cobblestone's students qualify for ESOL services. Some programs overlap. ESOL students frequently participate in EIP and to a lesser extent special education. However, in general EIP students are not in special education, except for the speech language program. However, 10 of the initial 23 students enrolled in EIP had psychoeducational evaluations on file, but were not receiving special education services.

EIP is viewed by teachers and administrators as an opportunity to assist some, but not all students who are struggling academically. Staff members described the program as ideal for those students "just below the cut-off" because they "could benefit" from more teacher attention. For example, in the pilot study a fifth grade general education teacher stated, "My understanding of the EIP this year [2004-05] is that if they didn't think they were going to make enough gains they wouldn't have put them in the EIP class." Implicit in this statement is the notion that the very lowest performing students would not benefit from these resources.

Additionally, EIP students at Cobblestone are thought to have more behavioral problems than other students Mr. Wall stated, "We had behavior problems with the pull-out EIP kids. They were so bad that I don't think the kids really got what they needed."

Staff viewed EIP as a support mechanism for what has been perceived to be a growing number of students who are "at-risk" at Cobblestone. According to the School Improvement Plan (SIP):

> The student population at [Cobblestone] has changed significantly since our opening in 1997. The numbers of students identified as economically disadvantaged, students from culturally diverse backgrounds and students in special education have increased. We need to continue to address the needs of this group through reading programs, extended day tutoring, EIP and ESOL (2005).

There did not seem to be concerns about demographic/ethnic differences in the EIP classes for two reasons. First, because the deciding factor for placement in EIP is a test score, which is viewed as "impartial" or "fair." Second, parents have not demonstrated anger or opposition to the classrooms in large numbers, so the staff views it as a beneficial service. Finally, in light of the decrease in state funding described in Chapter 2, the self-contained model is perceived as providing the most financially sound option. The reader will recall that less restrictive models depend upon sliding scale calculations, which are at risk with more transient student populations. The self-contained models provide additional funds for staff, while other models might have lead to decreased allotments for EIP teachers. Therefore, administration and staff view it as the logical model choice.

What informs EIP teachers' instructional practices?

The two EIP teachers indicated that they primarily followed fifth grade Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) to obtain the content for their lesson plans. Additionally, they planned as a team and shared resources, which they found beneficial because they were able to group students into instructional groups (high/low) for math and reading. Students were given weekly contracts that consisted of worksheets, 15 minutes of silent

reading, and usually a geography or newspaper assignment. These were to be completed independently before Friday morning. Each student received the same contract for the week.

In order to provide a complete portrait of the types of instructional practices that took place, the context of each classroom's physical environment will be described by teacher. Ms. Hanover's classroom was rectangular in shape with the exterior door in the upper left corner (if looking down from the ceiling) and the interior, shared door with Ms. Klein in the bottom right corner. Both rooms had sinks and a wall of cabinets for storing materials along the exterior wall. Both classrooms had two large whiteboards where group instruction took place. Overhead projectors were stationed near one of the boards.

Ms. Hanover typically had student desks arranged in rows facing the white board or in blocks of four. The teacher's desk faced out to students and was situated near the shared interior door. Both classrooms seemed larger because there were fewer children compared to the other classes. Both classrooms had a large kidney shaped table where small group lessons were held. These tables were stationed away from the other desks to minimize disruptions. In addition to the kidney tables, rectangular tables were often used by students for group work. The daily schedule was written on the white board and usually the television monitor was running school announcements and/or general information throughout the day. Students had several folders they kept work in per subject. These were often turned in at the end of the lesson for the day into one of several bins near the teacher desk.

Ms. Hanover's math lessons usually took place around 10:15 and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The class began with students working independently on

Daily Oral Math (DOM) worksheets, which were provided for the week on Monday morning. After approximately 10 minutes, Ms. Hanover reviewed answers to the questions. Students generally raised their hands to respond to individual problems. Rarely were students called on directly during this time. If a response was inaccurate, usually Ms. Hanover called on another student or reviewed how to complete the problem correctly with the group. Once the class reviewed these worksheets, Ms. Hanover asked the group how they did (thumbs up or down). Then the class was instructed in a skill using the overhead projector; this time usually consisted of a review of the previous days work, individual problems and a brief lesson. During one observation students were studying equivalent fractions. After demonstrating equivalent fractions using transparency slides, students broke into small groups to play a dice game using equivalent fractions. These games were often completed independently with minimal teacher supervision.

Both EIP teachers stated they typically gauged student performance during the group instruction rather than individual activities. Ms. Hanover stated, "If the whole class is not getting it then I'll re-teach and we will stay on the topic until they all get it." However, if only one or two students were struggling, Ms. Hanover indicated she provided those students with additional practice with the skill:

> I stay in one spot longer than Ms. Klein, I'm willing to wait them out. That might be because I'm a procrastinator and she's not, but she gives them too much, she tells them how to do it more than me. I want it to come from them. I want them to be more open-ended. I want them to make decisions, take the directions and work independently. I am fine with students being uncomfortable-because that means they are stretching and growing. They will figure it out and we will stay with it until they do. For example,(female student), this class has been a boost for her-nobody can help her at home, you can't impose these high expectations. They don't need pity, you have to have high expectations, but maybe not where the other kids are. Last year's class had more potential coming into fifth grade. This year's class did not receive any

> EIP in fourth grade. Last year's fifth graders did have pull-out EIP in fourth grade. Maybe that's why they weren't quite so low at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Hanover was the fifth grade representative for staff development activities. In that capacity she attended trainings in the SOAR to Success reading program in January. Usually 5-6 students were pulled to work with her at a kidney shaped table for 30 to 40 minutes at a time. She positioned herself so that she faced the remaining students who were supposed to be working independently on items in their contracts. The SOAR program was highly scripted and consisted of the teacher leading students through a sequence of strategy steps (clarify, predict, question, summarize). Each student was called on around the circle to answer each step. Students then read aloud in turn through a chapter in the book. Again, this instruction was teacher directed and students were trained in the types of responses they were to provide. The SOAR program was used from January through the end of the school year. Jennifer stated she felt the SOAR program was, "Okay, but the books are really easy and I sort of wish I could skip some of the steps 'cause I don't need them." Nevertheless, all of the students were required to read the same books during these sessions. Jennifer commented the weekly contract was, "Nothing too hard, but sometimes it takes so long to finish, it's easy, but boring. Usually I do it right, so I don't have to make corrections." EIP students were not provided with additional progress monitoring beyond the thrice-yearly oral reading tests, there was little differentiation among the assignments.

Ms. Klein did not participate in the SOAR training instead she stated that she used guided reading with small groups (usually 3 or 4 students). During these sessions, students read passages from fourth grade science and social studies booklets. During observations of these lessons, students first skimmed through passages to find highlighted

key words for discussion and definition. After reviewing these, students were asked to predict what the story was about using pictures and key words, next they read chorally with the teacher. Finally, students took turns reading aloud then answered comprehension questions independently. During one observation Ms. Klein noted, “This text is a little easy for this group, but some of the other groups really struggled with it.” While one group had guided reading the remaining students continued working independently on weekly contracts or read independently. After the guided reading lesson was finished, Ms. Klein read aloud to the class from a novel. Students were asked to recall what happened in the previous chapter, what they thought would happen in the current chapter, and finally they were to make a connection between the novel and their world. Ms. Klein usually asked questions during the read aloud and students raised their hands to respond. Ms. Klein also met with the ILT to assist her with activities or concerns regarding reaching the students. From these meetings Ms. Klein had students take over writing the weekly class newsletter. Ms. Klein expressed concerns that she was not reaching students several times during the year, but Ms. Hanover did not; eventually this seemed to be a source of frustration in their relationship. Both teachers felt strongly students would benefit from the smaller instructional groupings. During the year there were no staff development activities directed towards teachers in the EIP, which was also frustrating for Ms. Klein. She was not provided with any staff development opportunities to learn additional strategies. In comparing the types of work samples that were displayed across the fifth grade the differences in expectations were noticeable. While the EIP classrooms displayed single page projects, several other classrooms displayed poster presentations

and multiple page essays. These differences seemed to provide further distance between the EIP and non-EIP classrooms.

How are parents involved in the EIP?

Parents are not officially required to be "involved" with the EIP, though state guidelines note the importance of parent involvement. Cobblestone encourages parents to be involved at the school through joining the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and by volunteering in their child's classroom at the beginning of the year. Schools do not have to obtain parent permission for a child to be placed in EIP. Although parents find out about the EIP informally, a letter about their child's placement is sent home after the school has officially started, usually in September. Parents can decline EIP services. However, that information is not readily shared with parents unless they complain or demand their child be removed. For example, the fifth grade administrator told Lisa to send a letter to the principal specifically declining EIP services and asking that her child be removed from the program. Lisa provided the administrator with a letter, though prior to removing Mike, she also agreed to have him evaluated for special education at the administrator's request.

The three parents I interviewed all indicated their child's teacher had invited them to visit or volunteer in the classroom during sneak-a-peek. At the initial interview, two parents, Beth and Karyn indicated they would be interested in helping out during the holiday party and on school store days. Nancy, Greg's mother, volunteered weekly in Ms. Klein's classroom. She typically worked with a group of students from 7:45 to 8:30 on Mondays on writing activities. Nancy also volunteered to attend the end of the year fifth grade overnight trip to provide additional assistance for the classroom. EIP teachers

perceived very little parent support. The following exchange from October 2005 was representative of our discussions about parent involvement:

> Researcher: Let's talk a little about parent involvement this year.
> Hanover/Klein (in unison): What parent involvement?
> Klein: Do you hear what we are saying? We don't have any right now.
> Researcher: (Laughing) Do you want any?
> Klein: Yes! I want parents to come in and work with the kids. I want parents to come in period. Last year I had parents come in during centers, guided reading, uhm.
> Hanover: I didn't have any last year either. Well, I had one come in for holiday crafts that was it.
> Klein: Okay, for example, the fall festival the kids were supposed to make a poster. We had to borrow a parent from another classroom to help us! I had three parents send in items for the class basket. I had one parent who went on the field trip. I have a feeling she'll be the only parent all year that comes (Nancy).
> Hanover: Nancy is used to coming and being active. I don't have any parents that come on field trips.
> Klein: You have to remember, I have three parents that don't speak any English. I really don't expect anything from them and the rest are full-time workers. I think a have at least one who is very uninvolved to begin with from what I've seen and heard. I've spoken with her twice on the phone when he's misbehaved. I think he gets a…[refers to spanking]… and then he comes back and is pretty good for a week or two.
> Hanover: Remember last year, we had two parents come in and they did so much, they were fabulous. We got them to do things with our classes, it took some nudging because it wasn't their kids' classroom. But eventually they realized it was *our* class.
> Researcher: Have you asked any of your parents to come in?
> Klein: We send home notes about the events in the newsletter. They usually ask for volunteers. But, no I haven't called anyone specifically.
> Hanover: Why don't you invite (female student)'s dad on the [fifth grade overnight] trip?
> Researcher: That's a great idea. He's a dad and an EMT, who better to have around for the ropes course!

Teachers complained about parents who were not involved in traditional ways, such as "room mothers," a parent that assists with parties, field trips, and the like. However, almost all of the parents signed their child's reading log each evening. Ms. March, the principal indicated one of Ms. Klein's parents was her "go to mom" when registering

new Hispanic students because of her translation skills. Greg's mother was a reliable parent volunteer throughout the year. Teachers seemed unsure about how they wanted parents to volunteer, and despite their complaints, neither teacher actively solicited parents to come into the classroom. Two of the parent participants indicated they would volunteer, if asked, but did not want to intrude into the teacher's classroom.

The school principal indicated Cobblestone had initiated a Saturday test prep session specifically for EIP parents and students. This session took place before students left for spring break and demonstrated how families could access CRCT practice tests online, either at home or via a public library. No other parent involvement activities were planned specifically for EIP parents during the school year, nor were there any outreach activities planned. The TSA, Ms. Flagler indicated the district was interested in parent involvement activities, but admitted there were none in place, nor were there any activities being planned.

The EIP program excluded parents in key ways. First, parents were formally excluded through lack of involvement in the decision to place their child in the EIP. Second, parents were not notified in advance of that decision, nor were they personally contacted prior to the first day of class. Finally, parents were not actively sought out to participate in their child's education. By not reaching out to parents for support, the EIP lost opportunities to engage parents in meaningful ways to impact student achievement.

How do EIP classrooms reflect the goals of the program?

According to the Georgia Department of Education, "The purpose of the Early Intervention Program is to provide additional instructional resources to help students who are performing below grade level obtain the necessary academic skills to reach grade

level performance in the shortest possible time. (2004) These state guidelines described two methods for EIP eligibility in fifth grade: 1) Students score below 300 on the reading or math sections of the CRCT; or 2) Up to 3% of students in given grade level that score at or above 300 can be served through alternative documentation such as teacher checklists. Clearly, a majority of EIP students at Cobblestone obtained CRCT scores above 300, yet all were determined eligible based on the first eligibility method. With regard to length of time in the program, all four students who participated in this study had received EIP services for at least two of six years in elementary school. None of the students in the EIP classes at Cobblestone received the types of accelerated or differentiated instruction that characterized schools who increased standardized assessment scores more quickly than expected.

The EIP guidelines described access to additional instructional resources as an important component of the program, again no specific examples of what these might be were found in the GADOE guidelines. However, EIP teachers stated they received approximately $800 to use towards purchasing books or other classroom materials. For example, Ms. Hanover purchased the SOAR to success package with her funds. Both teachers ordered class sets of novels for the children. Students in Ms. Hanover's class participated in the SOAR program to remediate reading skills. However, this program was not implemented until January and students did not have the daily sessions the program suggested. Ms. Klein used guided reading groups to assist her students with reading comprehension.

What is the impact of participating in the EIP?

The main impact of participating in the program based upon stated goals is to obtain grade level proficiency through meeting standards on the CRCT. Using this objective as a yardstick, there was a positive impact on students for participating in the EIP. Criteria for meeting proficiency on CRCT performances changes from year to year. This year students had to answer half of the questions accurately to "meet standards," during the 2004-05 school year students had to average 30% for the same level. Students had to attain at least performance level 2 in order to avoid possible retention and mandatory summer school. CRCT results indicated 63% of the fifth graders at Cobblestone obtained level 2 in Reading; 47% obtained level 2 status in math. Percentages for EIP classrooms differed from the general population. Forty-three percent of Ms. Hanover's class met level 2 status; 71% met level 2 status in math. In Ms. Klein's classroom 71% of students met level two status in reading; 86% met level two status in math.

The math performance criteria did not change. Therefore we can compare the performance changes of the 19 students that took the CRCT at Cobblestone during the previous year in math. Only one student's performance decreased, 95% of students that attended Cobblestone in fourth grade improved their scaled score in math. Although the criteria for reading changed, 10 of the 19 returning students (52%) improved their performances in the reading area as well. Jennifer's reading score decreased, but Jamal Mike and Greg improved their scores. The three students in EIP at the end of the year demonstrated gains in math, as did Mike who was transferred to another classroom mid-year.

What do participants perceive as benefits of EIP?

The primary benefit for students, as described by parents and teachers was smaller class size and ostensibly, this provided more time to address individual instructional needs. For students, perceptions of the benefits varied. Mike did not verbalize any benefits, while Greg and Jennifer indicated the smaller class allowed for positive relationships with teachers as well as increased opportunities to participate in class. Jamal indicated teachers went over more problems and the contract helped him remember what to turn in on Friday.

Thrivers. EIP is a classroom based program and as such its impact is felt most significantly at the classroom level. Without question some students benefited from the opportunity to emerge as leaders in the classroom. For example, prior to the administration of the CRCT eight of twelve students in Ms. Klein's room received letters notifying them of summer school registration. Greg felt proud he was not one of them:

> We don't talk about the CRCT in class. I passed my IOWA's in the fall. I didn't get a summer school slip, some people in class got it. They said they got a letter in the mail saying they would have to go to summer school My mom said that means people in the office have confidence in me passing.

Further, by having the opportunity to develop a positive teacher relationship and experience classroom success Greg was able to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy. Greg and I had the following exchange about his advice for the EIP next year:

> Researcher: What advice would you give us about making classes for next year?
> Greg: I guess I think they should change classes and be like the other fifth grades. Sometimes they have math, then recess. We have recess, then math. It would be better for all kids to have the same schedule.
> Researcher: Even if it meant there would be more kids in your class?

> Greg: Well that would be okay.
> Researcher: This year you have really been at the very top of your class, what if you were in a larger classroom and maybe weren't right at the top?
> Greg: Well, I just try my best; sometimes you are at the top, sometimes not. But the important thing is that you don't want to fall behind. As long as I do my best, that is what his year has taught me. I might not always be at the top, but if I try my very very best, then that's all I can do.
> Researcher: Wow, Greg that's a really mature way to look at things.
> Greg: this year has taught me that, because I've tried harder this year and I've done very well.

For Greg, the EIP classroom was an opportunity to reframe his academic identity.

Jennifer was another example of a student who benefited from the smaller class.

However, by the end of the year, she too, was tiring of the smaller classroom

setting. I also asked Jennifer for her advice about classrooms for next year:

> Jennifer: I think we should mix them up more. I don't get to see my friends that much because they do math first, then recess. We do recess, then math. Actually, I wouldn't want to change classes so much, I like the way Ms. Hanover and Ms. Klein teach. We are small, maybe if we could have a few more kids. Like when we do groups there are usually only four people, including Ms. Klein's class.

Even for the two *thrivers* the lack of access to friends and limited number of peers to

interact with became tedious. Jennifer also described boredom at the amount of skill and

drill teaching she received. We talked about the use of SOAR to Success program in Ms.

Hanover's reading class:

> Researcher: Tell me about that SOAR reading you were doing in Ms. Hanover's class. I think you were reading *Owlbert* when I was in there last.
> Jennifer: Yes, we've started a book on Antarctica now. It's okay. The books are really easy.
> Researcher: What were those steps you do?
> Jennifer: Clarify, predict, question, summarize. I don't usually have to clarify though and most of the time I don't have any questions for the book we are reading. I sort of wish I could skip SOAR because I know most of it. (Female classmate) usually asks me to help her with words when she reads.

> Researcher: When we met before, you thought not having homework was a good thing for you. Has that changed?
> Jennifer: Well, I usually do it on the bus, because I'm used to the noise. I have more time to relax; you think, well I went to school and you don't want to bring it home with you.
> Researcher: I can certainly understand that! It really seems this year has been positive for you. You seem to really like your teachers and I know they think you are a really good student as well.
> Jennifer: I like that they give us tips on how to do things faster and better. Sometimes they give us extra. Like sixth grade stuff.
> Researcher: Oh, really, can you think of an example? (she couldn't recall anything)
> Jennifer: They are just right for me.

Greg and Jennifer were examples of thrivers*;* they described increased confidence in their academic abilities, a closer teacher student relationships and increased opportunities to display their knowledge in class as benefits of EIP. Thrivers were able to demonstrate their academic skills through answering questions accurately, assisting peers, and accomplishing academic tasks quickly and accurately. These successes became building blocks that ultimately increased their sense of personal accomplishment.

Survivors. Neither Mike, nor Jamal described examples of ways EIP increased access to teachers or activities; although Mike had been elected to student council in Ms. Klein's room. He did not view this as an honor because of his negative feelings about the class. He willingly gave up his role when he transferred to another classroom. Mike's achievement scores did not increase, but his self-esteem appeared to bounce back and his new fifth grade teacher indicated he was capable of doing the work, but could be disruptive in class. His immaturity was also more obvious in his new class.

I asked Jamal about how his classroom was different from other years. He replied, "It's the same. Only shorter [smaller]." I asked him to think a little more about his answer, he said, "She goes over more problems. She watches me all the time and shows

me how to do things." Jamal indicated that he did not get called on more this year. Although Jamal had participated in After School Tutoring twice weekly throughout the year; he continued to struggle with his reading. His grades were "F's and C's." Jamal described himself as trying his best. He could think of nothing he would change about school. When I asked him for advice about the next year, Jamal thought it would be better to, "Mix everybody up like usual instead of the smaller class."

Isolation. Clearly the EIP students felt isolated from the other fifth grade classes, just as students noted in the pilot study. This was in part because of how the teachers set up the schedule. As well, the EIP classes were much smaller than other classes, so it was obvious something different was happening. Another aspect of this isolation was the slower instructional pace in EIP classes as compared to peers. Mike noticed, "Most of my friends when we are getting on the bus they are doing their homework or reading out of a book. My friends make fun of me because we are doing double digits and they are doing all this crazy stuff like dividing thousands and everything." During follow-up interviews I asked for student advice for next year about class size. All indicated having at least a few more students was preferable because it offered more opportunities to have friends. Additionally, students would have preferred to change teachers during the day like the other classes did.

Beth and Nancy, mothers of thrivers felt the program was beneficial for their child because it provided for academic skill remediation, a slower pace and/or increased teacher attention. Mike's mom did not agree. She felt her child suffered because there were no academically superior peers for Mike to emulate:

> He's not motivated. His self-esteem has hit rock bottom. He feels like he can slack a little bit because other kids have told him it's a special class.

> You're in the slow kid class is what they call it. I think he figures that if he's going to be called that anyway, he might as well slack off and do what he wants. He doesn't feel there's as much expected of him as there would be in a typical class setting. He doesn't have a goal to reach for, no higher kids to chase and he needs that.

Jamal's mom felt the school was trying to help, but noted, "Jamal seems to be falling behind more than last year." Based on the information obtained during this study, EIP affects participants in different ways. These differences seemed to be based upon the student's ability to engage with teachers and respond appropriately within the classroom context.

EIP teachers described benefits in watching the thrivers' progress during the year. Both Ms. Klein and Ms. Hanover stated that seeing students gain confidence and skills was the best part of their year. Ms. Hanover cited Greg and Jennifer as examples of, "Middle tier students who had stepped up to a leadership position." They were seen by classmates as role models. Ms. Hanover continued, "They get the opportunity to participate in those activities like spelling bee, geography bee and well, you know those kinds of things." Ms. Klein also felt the smaller classrooms allowed students' access to the spelling and geography bees, safety patrol and student council.

Additionally, Ms. Klein felt having more specialist support from the researcher and speech language pathologist were beneficial because students received more individual attention than they would in a class twice the size. However, Ms. Klein also described her students as not making the kind of progress she expected for being in this kind of setting. Ms. Hanover agreed the *thrivers* were the most satisfying aspect of teaching this model. She felt their success was facilitated by a "risk free environment." She elaborated:

> They are forced to participate, there are only ten of them. They feel free to participate because if it's wrong, more than likely somebody else was thinking the same thing. There isn't that pressure from the higher kids, like the target kids. They can feel free to participate because I won't look at them like they're crazy, if they are wrong. We'll talk about it.

The primary reason for the self-contained model was implemented at Cobblestone is that it is perceived as the most economically viable option at the school level, because the school benefits from the additional funds the self-contained EIP classes generate. Lisa, Mike's mother mentioned this fact when discussing her frustration with the school's decision making process.

While most parent participants appreciated that their child was receiving extra attention for academic skill deficits, there were clearly costs associated with participating in the EIP self-contained model. EIP students are separated from a majority of their peers based upon unstated criteria that appeared to be associated with socio-economic or racial status, consistent with expectation states theory. The fifth grade classes as a whole lost the opportunity to interact and learn from one another. In effect, the school building becomes a source of social stratification and division along class lines that served to intensify existing disparities. Other parents might have felt like Lisa about EIP, but unless these parents voice their concerns through approved channels, no changes were made. This reinforced the notion that only certain parent voices count.

There were other students, like Mike, who seemed to view their placement in EIP as a punitive or as an embarrassment. However, because their parents did not complain concerns were not addressed. Since students were not told how or why they were placed in the smaller classes by adults; they were left to determine the reasons among themselves. Neither students, nor teachers benefit from having a restricted range of

academic skills and social experiences in the classroom. This type of arrangement resulted in lower expectations, with remediation becoming the primary focus of instruction.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study obtained participant perceptions through interviews, meetings, observations and archival data in an effort to describe the local context of the EIP. Local practices were compared to the stated program goals from the GADOE to understand how the policy was transformed to fit the local context. Findings suggested local policymakers created alternative criteria when placing a majority of students in the program. Knowledge of the EIP was created through independent channels across participants. As such, a cohesive local policy was not created among participants. Information from these local sources was used to create a picture of how the policy was transformed and implemented using these multiple sources of data.

Themes that emerged from this study can be incorporated into the larger discussion of student grouping practices, effective teaching practices, involving parents in schools, and the impact of local context in policy interpretation. In the remainder of this chapter conclusions about key findings will be situated within the broader research literature constructs mentioned in Chapter two. The contribution of this study to that literature base will also be addressed, along with implications for future research.

Conclusions

Student Grouping Practices

Cobblestone, like a majority of schools in the United States uses a variety of student grouping practices as part of the daily routine. Special education students are served through multiple service delivery models primarily within general education classes. Gifted students receive one day per week of specialized support in separate classrooms. These students met legal criteria for participation based on the conclusions of a committee that included teachers, administration and parents. In contrast, Cobblestone's EIP students were determined to be eligible for a program without these due process considerations. In effect EIP students were placed in a significantly more restrictive setting than a majority of students with legal protections under IDEA. Cobblestone developed placement criteria that differed significantly from the state guidelines, yet there were no guidelines provided, several students were placed in the EIP based upon previous history of participation in the program as well as information from local sources, such as previous teachers or other staff.

Cobblestone's EIP classrooms differed in composition from the overall school population, with the majority of fifth grade EIP students being African American, Hispanic, male and/or poor. These demographics are similar to those reported through a GADOE survey of the program in 2004. Research has shown children in lower tracks are often underestimated with regard to academic abilities by staff, which in turn creates a pattern of lower expectations based patterns of behavior that are subsequently created and reinforced (Black, 2004; Goodlad & Oakes, 1988; Oakes & Lipton, 2004). Data from this study suggested that status variables of intelligence, race and socio-economic standards

were used to define EIP students in the eyes of many staff members, though often this occurred unconsciously; these hidden assumptions about *those kids* included poor work habits, lack of drive, and lack of parent support (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Delpit, 1995; Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Kutnick, Blachford & Baynes, 2002). Most of the EIP students at Cobblestone had participated in the program throughout elementary school. This contrasts with the stated goals of the program, but is consistent with research literature in student grouping. The lack of known criteria for placement, combined with the difficulty obtaining information about criteria and the school's lack of open communication about the program suggested a barrier, which diminished opportunities for discourse across participants about the program.

The Classroom Context

Classroom context, as defined in Chapter 2 is a necessarily broad term referencing the cumulative or historical routines and patterns within the classroom over the course of the school year. These patterns help explain *how things are done* for a particular group. The context is a construction created by participants in a given environment. Much of the previous research on classroom context focused on status variables such as gender, race, SES instead of the gestalt of the instructional, social and relational contexts in the classroom. Classroom context emerged as key to understanding Cobblestone's EIP. Information from teachers and observations were consistent with Berger, Rosenholtz and Zelditch's (1980) description of expectation-state perspective, which suggests that individuals carry predetermined biases, relative to persons with different status variables. Without contrary experiences, these beliefs are reinforced through interactions that are constructed using a biased lens.

Since historically, much of the published literature has found lower track classrooms have significantly higher numbers of racial and ethnic minority students, as well as students of lower socio-economic status, racial stereotypes may play a role in teacher expectations (Oakes, 1986). This seemed to occur based upon the composition of EIP students as well as the lack of objective criteria used for placement. Students in this study had limited awareness of their participation in EIP; yet they seemed to live down to the expectations of adults. Teachers often complained about a lack of participation or ability demonstrated by EIP students. However, observations suggested it was barriers to communication including language and the nuances of the classroom that were lacking in many students. When asked why students were not told about their placement, teachers expressed concern they would harm students' self-esteem by informing them of their academic deficits. However, in lieu of having adult explanation, students created their own meanings for the smaller class, "the dumb class" or "the slow class." This is consistent with Vygotsky's view that a community (classroom) will develop a set of beliefs about the way the world works. Because teachers and students did not dialogue about EIP in a way that would construct a local positive meaning, students and parents created their own (Edwards, 2005). The lack of dialogue between teachers and students EIP demonstrated a lack of understanding from adults about the ways students operate in schools.

Effective instruction involves helping students understand their own learning strengths and weaknesses as well as providing instruction that bridges skills from instructional to independent levels (Palinscar, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999). Because student progress was not monitored in a systematic way, instruction often failed to bring students

from assisted to independent functioning. This frustrated teachers and reinforced status variables that led to many students initial placement in the program (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980). Teachers provided students with scaffolding questions, consistent with constructivist pedagogy such as Ms. Klein's tips and thinking aloud as well as Ms. Hanover's review and connection across lessons.

In other subjects, especially reading, student skills seemed to be underestimated, yet students were required to complete tasks that were designed for skill-and-drill rather than to demonstrate skill proficiency. Student reading levels were assessed three times per year and tasks used to assign grade equivalent performances differed from classroom expectation. Results of observations, student interviews and teacher meetings suggested ongoing differences between classroom activities and student's zone of proximal development, often underestimating student abilities. Because EIP classrooms did not provide students with individualized instruction, increased progress monitoring or specific feedback on their academic skills, which are essential to accelerating student learning (Martin, 2004; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ & Mekkelsen, 2004).

The EIP teachers perceived a lack of student achievement in their classrooms. Teachers often cited factors such as poor work habits, impulsivity, family limitations and laziness when assigning meaning to student's slower progress. These assumptions about various status variables were reinforced by the local theory about EIP students at Cobblestone. However, these assumptions are contrary to constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning, especially the concepts of assimilation and zone of proximal development. These concepts suggest there was a mismatch between student skills and classroom expectations, which was expressed through behavioral responses such as

apathy about topics or slower progress on individual units of instruction. These types of responses are very predictable when the degree of challenge is out of proportion to a student's skill, either much too difficult *or* too easy. Nevertheless, these behaviors reinforced the staff's theory about EIP students.

Ms. Hanover and Ms. Klein clearly understood increasing student achievement to be the goal of EIP. Initially both teachers had high expectations for meeting this goal. However, by September they expressed a sense of helplessness towards attaining this goal. This was in part because although teachers felt responsible for the goal; students were not included in setting or attaining goals because they were never stated. Further, while well intentioned, neither teacher had received training on differentiation or acceleration, which were expressed as core components of the EIP. Staff development providing supportive links between student performance, instruction and curricular objectives would have been appropriate and useful for all participants (Meijen & Guldemon, 2002; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkleson, 2004).

Parents in Schools

Parents were not involved in any decision making processes related to their child's placement in the EIP. This served to marginalize families of EIP students throughout the school and created a barrier to effective partnerships between Cobblestone and these parents (Frattura & Topinka, 2006). It is important that parents have an opportunity to be part of the decision making team if the school expects to have support from home (O'Connor, 2001; Pena, 2000). The mothers who participated in this study indicated they were given opportunities to participate in their child's classroom through signing reading logs, reading the weekly newsletter and through traditional activities such

as chaperoning field trips, holiday parties and the school store. However, these activities occurred during the school day, which prevented many working parents from attending (Lareau, 2000; Meyers, Dowdy, Paterson, 2000; O'Connor, 2001).

Teachers did not invite or specifically request other parent volunteers in the classroom, yet they complained about a lack of parent involvement. EIP teachers indicated frustration when some parents were unable to assist their children with homework, as well as when students were chronically late or absent. This questioning of parenting ability both academically and as it relates to caring for their child created an unspoken barrier between teachers and parents. Because information was not regularly shared between parents and teachers of students that were struggling, this frustration seemed to grow over the year (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2004).

Christenson and Sheridan (2001) described four essential components to meaningful parent involvement; approach, attitude, atmosphere and action. Inherent to any communication is time; information about a child's placement in EIP must be provided to parents in a timely manner. Mothers who participated in this study unanimously felt angry or disappointed with the school's decision to communicate EIP placement during sneak-a-peek. Parents felt they were denied the opportunity to decline *or* request EIP services because they did not have information about the self-contained classrooms. This served to reinforce the covert nature of program eligibility, since there was no acknowledgement that Cobblestone's placement criteria differed significantly from GADOE guidelines. Each participant group integrated their current experience with past history to make several constructions of the program leading to multiple interpretations that were disjointed and incongruent. This cycle of construction,

reinforcement and continued characterization of others from the position of status variables contributed to the covert nature of the EIP. In fact, a lack of awareness of these expected states prevented communication about the program among participants. In order to have an understanding of the EIP, participants must come together to create a shared vision for the school that is congruent with the overall program goal of providing instruction that promotes academic achievement (Goldring, 2002; Oberman & Walsh-Symonds, 2005; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000).

Policy Implications

Implementation of the EIP at Cobblestone is an example the axiom *all policy is local policy;* Cobblestone adapted the state guidelines to fit the existing structure and population of the school. These adaptations of policy structures worked within the overall school context yet they were inconsistent with the spirit of the program guidelines (Fullan, 2001; Hamaan & Lane, 2004). Participants in the EIP were deemed at risk through local criteria, not necessarily consistent with the larger district or state guidelines. This lack of clarity at the classroom, school, district and state levels have served to erode the capacity of school to effectively continue the program (Fullan, 2001). Aspects of the program that were explicitly mentioned to teachers, such as increased instructional time in reading and math, led to changes in the classroom that teachers described as beneficial. However, teachers were provided will very little information about the program. They were not able to access staff development opportunities to increase their understanding of the program. The interpretation of policy across levels can be mediated through use of state level personnel providing consultation and support, including staff development, at the local level (Erlichson, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Hamann & Lane, 2004).

Cobblestone's EIP demonstrated the negative impacts of diminished funding, community apathy and staff ambivalence on program continuation (Datnow, 2004; Fullan, 2001). Cobblestone's EIP accessed the most restrictive level of service, which held the least amount of risk for loss of funding. The GADOE offers additional training on its website, but does not mandate that districts access any training on the EIP, which leads schools to develop assumptions and rules that may not be consistent with the state policy (Hamaan & Lane, 2004; Erlichson, 2004; Haynes, 1998; Walker, 2004).

Local Implications

Cobblestone must begin to examine the effectiveness of its EIP both within and across grade levels. The current configuration for providing EIP services overwhelmingly impacted poor, male, African American or Hispanic students (Ansalone & Biafora, 2004). Unfortunately this fact was never acknowledged by teacher participants or administration in a direct fashion. Instead, placement in EIP was described by school personnel as an opportunity for access to instruction. Teachers described a genuine desire to increase student achievement and improve students' sense of self-efficacy, the structures to facilitate such a significant change were not in place. Consistent with the larger body of literature, staff perceived grouping students by skills as advantageous primarily for purposes of narrowing the range of instructional planning (Ansalone & Biafora, 2004). The denial of the racial make-up of EIP needs to be addressed through dialogue about how and why students are placed in the program (Apple, 1999; House, 2006; Oakes & Lipton, 2004). Additionally, participants in Cobblestone's EIP need to develop a shared understanding about the purposes, goals and service delivery needs of participants.

Contributions

This study contributes to the existing literature in several topic areas. First, this study focused on a very local interpretation of a state policy. Previous research has typically focused on the relationship between school districts and state policies. This contribution is important because it demonstrates not only how policy is filtered through to the local context, but also how the local lens distorts the policy based upon its norms and contexts. For example, students were selected based on local criteria, rather than state criteria. Few of these children met state guidelines for the program, yet at the local level all of the students were described as meeting criteria.

Second, this study reinforces and extends the research on the impact of classroom context on student achievement. The description and comments of thrivers and survivors provided a first-hand account of the importance of student-teacher relationships on students' perceptions of themselves as learners. These perceptions are highly entrenched in the culture and practices of the school. Student participants in this study clearly based much of their academic identity through the lens of teacher comments or interactions. Schools and individual teachers must provide access to supports for students that fail to grasp the complexities of the classroom environment. As well, they must be willing to examine their reliance on faulty or stereotypical assumptions about others in order to adequately meet the needs of constituents (Berger, Rosenthal & Zelditch, 1980). Finally, this study reveals the continued impact of demographic factors on student's class placement and access to curriculum in public schools (1980; Frattura & Topinka, 2006; Oakes & Lipton, 2004; Riele, 2006; William & Bartholomew, 2004). None of the participants, with the exception of the primary researcher, expressed concerns about the

disproportionate placement of minority or poor students in the EIP at Cobblestone. This lack of willingness to discuss the continued segregation of students through programs and services is a step beyond a description of grouping practices.

Implications for Further Research

Although this study provides a detailed portrayal of a how one local school interprets a state level policy, additional information is needed to determine if these findings are valid for other settings. The nature of this research, especially the use of individual interviews as the primary data source with only one researcher, limited the amount of data collected. A key limitation that should be addressed in future research was the sample. The current study sample was limited to only English speaking parents that were able to meet with the examiner and who met other criteria described in Chapter three. In order to understand how a school culture can be changed when underrepresented groups are marginalized by policies, inclusion of language minority parents is essential. The current study would have benefited from the use of focus groups that included parents, teachers, students and administrators. This may serve to facilitate the development of a cohesive local policy that involved multiple stakeholders.

One of the clearest findings from this study was how important the teacher student-relationship was to student identity as a learner. This is consistent with the literature and deserves further attention in two areas. First, staff must be willing to examine practices that continue to perpetuate historical mistakes in public education that have resulted from continued reliance on status variables, despite overwhelming evidence of their lack of utility in understanding differences (Delpit, 1995; Goodlad & Oakes, 1988; Oakes, 1986; Riele, 2006; VanHoutte, 2004). Especially relevant is the notion that

skills to improve or enhance relationships can be taught to teachers and students. Does the home environment moderate these skills? How does the parent or teacher's history as a learner impact their ability to assist students in developing an identity of self as a learner?

Finally, a cross-disciplinary study assessing the cost-effectiveness of the EIP would help to situate current practices within the larger framework of effective academic interventions. Questions to be addressed might include: Would EIP funds be more effectively used to provide either indirect services to students through staff development or alternative direct services that occur outside the typical school calendar? Does the GADOE need to provide more support for local districts in developing local implementation practices that are consistent with the programs intent? Would providing students and teachers with support in relationship building through consultative or direct support from specialists in the school (psychologists, counselors and social workers) increase academic outcomes? Outcomes could further inform the program as well as policymakers.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Did you choose to teach the EIP self-contained classroom this year? If so, why?
2. What, if any, differences have you observed so far, between your class this year and last?
3. What do you view as the goals of this program?
4. How were students selected for these classes?
5. What do you think about that process?
6. Were students selected accurately?
7. How were parents informed?
8. Where do you obtain information about the EIP?
9. What are your perceptions about the self-contained model compared to previous models used at this school?
10. How has this model impacted the types of instructional techniques used?
11. Looking back over this year, what would you view as the most positive outcome?
12. What would you change?
13. Would you do it again?
14. How has the self-contained model benefited students?
15. Are there ways that students have not benefited from this model?

Appendix B

Parent Interview Questions:

1. How long has your child attended Cobblestone?
2. How long has your child received support through the EIP?
3. Do you remember when your child first began participating in EIP?
4. How were you informed about your child's participation in the EIP?
5. What do you understand the purpose of the program to be?
6. As you know, this year (your child) is in a self-contained EIP classroom. Would you talk a little about any differences you noticed in his/her academic or social behavior that you attribute to this class?
7. What was your understanding (if any) of this class/EIP model before your child started fifth grade?
8. How did you find out about your child's placement in this class?
9. Who if anyone, has been your primary contact from the school about EIP?
10. Have any other parents ever discussed the EIP with you? If so, what kinds of things did you/they discuss?
11. Did your child say, or notice anything different about his/her classroom?
12. Did you talk to your child prior to school starting about his/her class?
13. What could the school do to improve the program?
14. What might the school do to further involve parents of students in the EIP?

Appendix C

Student Interview Questions

1. How long have you attended Cobblestone?
2. Tell me a little about how fifth grade year has been for you…
3. Think about your classroom and the other kids. Where would you place yourself compared to others with respect to grades? Getting along with the teacher?
4. Have you ever heard of the EIP program?
    a. If yes, tell me what you know about the EIP.
    b. Where did student obtain information?
5. Think back and try to remember third grade. Do you remember your teacher?
    a. That year Ms. ____ came into your class to work with you and maybe some other students. Can you remember the kinds of things you did?
6. What do you think about the size of your classroom?
7. Has anyone in your class asked about or said anything about having fewer kids?
8. Has anyone else asked about your class? What did you tell them?
9. Have your mom/dad spoken with you about your classroom? If yes, query.
10. How about your teacher? If yes, what did she say?
11. What are some helpful things that happen in your class this year?
12. What are some things we might change to help next years fifth graders? (If nothing, restate it might be too early to tell, but will ask again later).

Appendix D

Teacher Consent to Participate

"**Multiple Perspectives on Georgia's Early Intervention Program"**
Teacher Participation Consent

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to obtain information from students, parents, and teachers about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Early Intervention Program (EIP). You are being asked to volunteer to be a participant in this project because you teach an EIP classroom. This research will take place between August 2005 and April 2006. A maximum of ten teachers will be asked to volunteer for this research project, which will examine ways to improve communication about EIP goals, examine service delivery models and ways to improve the program.

Procedures

Participants will be individually interviewed about relevant aspects of the Early Intervention Program. This research will consist of interviews between participants and the primary researcher. Each interview will last approximately one hour and will be tape recorded and transcribed. Participants will be asked to review transcripts with the researcher to clarify and expand upon ideas presented. Follow-up interviews may be requested. The total amount of time for each participant will be approximately three hours. Interviews will take place at Cobblestone elementary or other mutually convenient location agreed upon between individual participants and the researcher. Participation in this study will in no way affect employment with the District.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks related to participation in this research study.

Benefits

Benefits include improving instructional programming for students, the opportunity to influence educational policy and increase opportunities for parent involvement in the school.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time. However, any information used to the point when you withdraw consent will remain in the study.

Confidentiality

All reasonable measures will be taken to protect the privacy and identity of participants in this research project. Individual records will be kept in a confidential manner; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised. Information gathered during the course of this research project will become part of a data set that will be shared with relevant school district personnel. Data collected may be used in research reports and presentations. We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Your name and other information that might point to you will not appear in presentations or publications of study results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees the protection of human research participants. Susan Vogtner, in the Office of Research Integrity, can be reached at 404-463-0674.

If you would like more information related to participation in this research project, or your rights as a participant please contact Christy Jaffe, School Psychologist/researcher (770)_ (office), (770) _ (cell); or Joel Meyers, PhD, faculty advisor (404)_.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

_____

Teacher Name (Printed)

_____ _____

Teacher Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher Signature Date

Appendix E

Parent Consent to Participate

Multiple Perspectives on Georgia's Early Intervention Program
Parent Participation Consent

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to obtain information from students, parents, and teachers about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Early Intervention Program (EIP). You are being asked to volunteer to be a participant in this project because your child receives services through the EIP. This research will take place between August 2005 and April 2006. A maximum of ten students and their parents will be asked to volunteer for this research project, which will examine ways to improve communication about EIP goals, examine service delivery models and ways to improve the program.

Procedures

Participants will be individually interviewed about relevant aspects of the Early Intervention Program. This research will consist of interviews between participants and the primary researcher. Each interview will last approximately one hour and will be tape recorded and transcribed. Participants will be asked to review transcripts with the researcher to clarify and expand upon ideas presented. Follow-up interviews may be requested. The total amount of time for each participant will be approximately three hours. Interviews will take place at Cobblestone or other mutually convenient location agreed upon between individual participants and the researcher.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks related to participation in this research study.

Benefits

Benefits include improving instructional programming for students, the opportunity to influence educational policy and increase opportunities for parent involvement in the school.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time. However, any information used to the point when you withdraw consent will remain in the study; your decision will not influence your child's grades or placement

Confidentiality

All reasonable measures will be taken to protect the privacy and identity of participants in this research project. Individual records will be kept in a confidential manner; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised. Information gathered during the course of this research project will become part of a data set that will be shared with relevant school district personnel. Data collected may be used in research reports and presentations. We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Your name and other information that might point to you will not appear in presentations or publications of study results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees the protection of human research participants. Susan Vogtner, in the Office of Research Integrity, can be reached at 404-463-0674.

If you would like more information related to participation in this research project, or your rights as a participant please contact Christy Jaffe, School Psychologist, Cobblestone Elementary/researcher (770) _ (office), (770) _ (cell); or Joel Meyers, PhD, faculty advisor (404) _.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

_____

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher Signature Date

Appendix F

Parent Consent for Child to Participate

.Multiple Perspectives on Georgia's Early Intervention Program.
Parent Consent For Child to Participate

Research Purpose
The purpose of this research project is to obtain information from students, parents, and teachers about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Early Intervention Program (EIP). Your child is being asked to participate in this project because of his/her participation in fifth grade EIP at Cobblestone. This research will take place between March 2005 and April 2006. A maximum of ten students will be asked to volunteer for this research project, which will examine ways to improve communication about EIP goals, examine service delivery models and ways to improve the program.

Procedures
Participants will be individually interviewed about relevant aspects of the Early Intervention Program. This research will consist of interviews between participants and the primary researcher. Each interview should be under one hour and will be tape recorded and transcribed. Follow-up interviews may be requested to expand upon responses from the previous interview. Interviews will take place at Cobblestone or other mutually convenient location agreed upon between individual participants and the researcher. Standardized test scores for all 5th graders including the Georgia Criterion Reference Competency Test (CRCT) and Cognitive Abilities Test will be reviewed. The Developmental Reading Assessment scores will be used to track student growth over the school year. Participant scores will not be separated from other students. Demographic information about participants will be included in the final paper.

Risks
There are no anticipated risks related to participation in this research study.

Benefits
Benefits include improving instructional programming for students, the opportunity to influence educational policy and increase opportunities for parent involvement in the school. Students will benefit from examining their learning strengths/weaknesses and participating in research that will contribute to their school, and having the opportunity to voice their opinions about educational practices

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse for your child to be in this study. If you decide to allow your child to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. Your child must also consent to

participate. He/she may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time. However, any information used to the point when you/your child withdraw consent will remain in the study; your decision will not influence your child's grades or placement.

Confidentiality

All reasonable measures will be taken to protect the privacy and identity of participants in this research project. Individual records will be kept in a confidential manner; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised. Information gathered during the course of this research project will become part of a data set that will be shared with relevant school district personnel. Data collected may be used in research reports and presentations. We will keep your child's records private to the extent allowed by law. Your child's name and other information that might point to your child will not appear in presentations or publications of study results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. Your child will not be identified personally. If you have questions or concerns about your child's rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees the protection of human research participants. Susan Vogtner, in the Office of Research Integrity, can be reached at 404-463-0674.

If you would like more information related to participation in this research project, or your child's rights as a participant please contact Christy Jaffe, School Psychologist/ researcher (770) _ (office), (770) _ (cell); or Joel Meyers, PhD, faculty advisor (404) 651-1803.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study, please sign below. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

_____	_____
Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)	Child's Name (Printed)
_____	_____
Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher Signature	Date

Appendix G

Child Assent to Participate

"**Multiple Perspectives on Georgia's Early Intervention Program"**
Child Assent

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to obtain information from students, parents, and teachers about strengths and weaknesses of the Early Intervention Program (EIP). You are being asked to participate because you are a fifth grader at Cobblestone. This research study will take place between August 2005 and April 2006. A maximum of ten students will be asked to volunteer for this research project, which will look at ways to improve the EIP. Students will be asked about class sizes, learning, teaching style and what other kinds of support the EIP can provide to help students in the future.

Procedures

Students will be individually interviewed by the school psychologist about their participation in the Early Intervention Program. Each interview will last approximately one hour. Interviews will be tape-recorded and typed word for word (transcribed) later. Students will be asked questions about their learning, classroom, and their opinions about different EIP teaching strategies. Students will be asked to read over the transcripts with the researcher to make sure statements are correct and to answer questions that come up after the interview. Students may be asked to have more than one interview with the researcher. The total amount of time for each participant will be about three hours. Student interviews will take place at Cobblestone elementary.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks related to participation in this research study.

Benefits

Benefits include helping other students by giving opinions about teaching and learning at Cobblestone, talking about how individual's (you) learn best and learning about and participating in a research project.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary, that means you can refuse, or say "no" to being in this research study. No one can make you participate. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you can quit at any time.

Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees the protection of human research participants. Susan Vogtner, in the Office of Research Integrity, can be reached at 404-463-0674.

If you would like more information about being in this research project you can talk to Christy Jaffe, School Psychologist, Cobblestone Elementary/researcher (770) _ (office), (770) 5_(cell); or Joel Meyers, PhD, faculty advisor (404) _

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign your name below. You will be given a copy of this form.

_____

Student Name (Printed)

_____ _____

Student Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date