

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

**Inclusion of Students with Learning Difficulties in
a Mainstream Primary School: A Case Study**

By

Aida Ghandour

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education

School of Arts and Sciences

January 2017

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student Name: ALDA GHANDOUR ID #: 201000484

Thesis Title: INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES
IN A MAINSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

Program: MASTER OF ARTS

Department: EDUCATION

School: ARTS AND SCIENCES

The undersigned certify that they have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis and approved it in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

MASTER OF ART in the major of EDUCATION

Thesis Advisor's Name: Dr. MONA NABHANI Signature:  Date: 5 / Jan / 2017

Committee Member's Name: Lina Harak Signature:  Date: 5 / Jan / 2017

Committee Member's Name: Rima Bahar Signature:  Date: 5 / Jan / 2017



THESIS COPYRIGHT RELEASE FORM

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY NON-EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION LICENSE

By signing and submitting this license, you (the author(s) or copyright owner) grants the Lebanese American University (LAU) the non-exclusive right to reproduce, translate (as defined below), and/or distribute your submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic formats and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video. You agree that LAU may, without changing the content, translate the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation. You also agree that LAU may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, backup and preservation. You represent that the submission is your original work, and that you have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. You also represent that your submission does not, to the best of your knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright. If the submission contains material for which you do not hold copyright, you represent that you have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant LAU the rights required by this license, and that such third-party owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission. IF THE SUBMISSION IS BASED UPON WORK THAT HAS BEEN SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED BY AN AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN LAU, YOU REPRESENT THAT YOU HAVE FULFILLED ANY RIGHT OF REVIEW OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED BY SUCH CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT. LAU will clearly identify your name(s) as the author(s) or owner(s) of the submission, and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

Name:

Aida Ghandour

Signature:

Date:



PLAGIARISM POLICY COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

I certify that:

1. I have read and understood LAU's Plagiarism Policy.
2. I understand that failure to comply with this Policy can lead to academic and disciplinary actions against me.
3. This work is substantially my own, and to the extent that any part of this work is not my own I have indicated that by acknowledging its sources.

Name: Aida Ghandour

Signature: 

Date: 10/11/2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Many grateful thanks to my advisor, Dr. Mona Nabhani, for her invaluable help, encouragement and support in reading my numerous revisions and making some sense of the confusion while writing. I could not have completed this thesis without your supervision, assistance and patience. Also thanks to my committee members, Dr. Rima Bahous and Dr. Lina Harati who offered guidance and support.

Finally, thanks to my husband, parents, children, colleagues and all my friends who endured this long process with me, always offering support and love.

Inclusion of Students with Learning Difficulties in a Mainstream

Primary School: A Case Study

Aida Ghandour

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how inclusion is being implemented in one primary school in Beirut (ABSS) and highlight how psychosocial and academic needs of students with Learning Difficulties (LD) are identified and catered for. The study addressed three research questions: How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program, how are students' psychosocial and academic needs being addressed, and how is the curriculum being modified to meet students' needs? In order to address the above questions, data was collected through an interview with the school's special needs coordinator, online questionnaires administered to 11 parents of LD students and to 19 teachers (regular and support), observations, and artifacts. The researcher's reflection journal was the starting point for the study and for formulating items for the instruments. The study followed a qualitative approach and a descriptive single case study design, where data was collected from multiple sources to ensure triangulated results and validity and reliability of findings. The results of the study showed that ABSS meets the criteria for a successful inclusive school, yet it needs to start using intervention books for LD students and recruit a psychomotor therapist so as to become more successful. The significance of this study is its value as a model for sister schools in implementing inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusion, Learning Difficulties, Differentiation, Case Study,
Individualized Educational Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Rationale.....	4
1.3 Purpose and Research Context.....	4
1.4 Conclusion.....	9
Chapter 2	10
Literature Review	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Background and History.....	10
2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusion.....	11
2.4 Characteristics of Successful Inclusion.....	12
2.5 Social Justice and Social Equity.....	13
2.6 Differentiated Instruction & Modifications.....	14
2.7 Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).....	15
2.8 Resource Room	16
2.9 Conclusion.....	17

Chapter 3	18
Methodology	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 Research Design	18
3.3 Sampling.....	19
3.4 Instruments for data collection.....	20
3.4.1 Interviews	20
3.4.2 Surveys	21
3.4.3 Observation.....	22
3.4.4 Document Analysis.....	22
3.5 Data analysis	23
3.6 Validity, reliability, triangulation.....	24
3.7 Ethics in Research	25
3.8 Conclusion.....	26
Chapter 4	27
Results and Discussion of Findings	27
4.1 Introduction	27
4.2 Findings	27
4.2.1 Research Question 1	28
4.2.2 Research Question 2	31
4.2.3 Research Question 3	36
4.3 Conclusion.....	39

Chapter 5	40
Conclusion and Suggestions	40
5.1 Introduction	40
5.2 Summary of the Case Study	40
5.3 Limitations of the Study	42
5.4 Suggestions.....	42
Bibliography	43
Appendix A	48
Appendix B	51
Appendix C	53
Appendix D	55
Appendix E	57
Appendix F	59
Appendix G.....	60
Appendix H.....	63
Appendix I	64
Appendix J.....	66
Appendix K.....	69
Appendix L	70
NIH Certificate of Completion	70

List of Tables

Table 1: Sample Data Collection Questions Addressing Research Question 1, 2 & 3.....	8
---	---

List of Figures

Figure 1: Teachers' Q11	30
Figure 2: Teachers' Q12	30
Figure 3: Parents' Q13.....	31
Figure 4: Parents' Q11.....	33
Figure 5: Parents' Q14.....	33
Figure 6: Parents' Q 18.....	34
Figure 7: Parents' Q12.....	35
Figure 9: Parents' Q9.....	37
Figure 8: Parents' Q16.....	38
Figure 10: Parents' Q10.....	38

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Inclusion of students with learning difficulties (LD) in mainstream schools is an issue of concern for parents and educators and has become a national and an international issue. The term “learning difficulties” is defined in the *Oxford Dictionaries* (2016) as “difficulties in acquiring knowledge and skills to the normal level expected of those of the same age, especially because of mental disability or cognitive disorder”. According to Wang (2009), parents’ concern is about the labeling of their children when being sent to special schools. Parents of students with LD recognize the social and emotional benefits of inclusion to their children according to Leyser and Kirk (2007) but they wanted more information on teachers’ skills and quality of instruction. Whereas for De Bore, Pijl and Minnaert (2010) parents’ attitude toward inclusion is positive but the majority are concerned about the availability of individualized instruction and other services in regular schools that have LD students. Arising from this desire of parents to have their children educated in an inclusive educational setting, there has been a significant increase in recent years in the enrolment of students with LD in mainstream schools. In parallel, recruiting of additional teaching and support staff for schools to assist in the education of these students has increased, as well as training all mainstream teachers to deal with all students (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2008). According to Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) teachers who were exposed to inclusive practices have positive attitudes to it and admit that professional development helped formulate such attitudes towards inclusion. Findings

also show that professional development is important for them in meeting the individualized instruction plan of students with LD. Another influence on teachers' acceptance of inclusion is the severity of the child's case and the school provision of support for teachers in the form of resources and assistance; (Avramidis & Norwich, 2010).

According to Friend and Bursuck (1999) inclusion represents the philosophy or belief that the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms should be done regardless of whether those students can meet the traditional curricular standards or not. Also, according to Lewis and Doorlag (2011) inclusion is when students with learning disabilities participate in mainstream classrooms, each according to their own abilities. According to Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, and Algozzine (2012), the aim of inclusion is for all students to learn and work together in a peer supportive community without ignoring the individual differences of each student. By learning from and respecting those individual differences, inclusion establishes supportive, nurturing and collaborative environments, according to Salend (2001).

Considerable challenges come up for schools in relation to the inclusion of students with LD in mainstream classes. Students meet different teachers during the school day, some of whom are not well trained to cater for students with different learning difficulties, or to collaborate with special education teachers; they should be offered training (Werts, Culatta & Tompkins, 2007). A whole school approach for implementation is needed to make inclusion possible for the management and the teachers to work within a coordinated strategic plan to contribute successfully to the provision of a suitable education to students with learning difficulties. The Department of Education in Western Australia (2009) defines a whole school approach as a

“cohesive, collective and collaborative action in and by a school community that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behavior and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these” (p. 10). There is a role for each staff member in the school and a method by which they can collaborate and coordinate their work with one another, with parents and with outside support personnel for providing useful education for students with learning difficulties. They can learn better when there is a good structure for the teaching and learning environment (Wertset al., 2007). According to McCarty (2006), students with learning difficulties should, in accordance with their abilities and learning difficulties, be provided with opportunities to participate in a meaningful way in the full range of activities in the classroom and in the school. A study conducted by Jeremy Ford (2013) at the University of Iowa suggests that strategies that include clear objectives for teaching and learning and that engage students and motivate them to work with determination towards a learning goal are more likely to bring about a successful learning outcome. According to Werts et al. (2007), successful learning by students with learning difficulties is promoted when the learning tasks are presented at an appropriate level, when adequate time is allowed for finishing the tasks, and when students are allowed to present their work in different ways, and are provided opportunities to apply new information and skills in a variety of situations. Attention by teachers to the social and emotional aspects of learning, as well as interaction with peers without disabilities, helps not only the personal development of students with learning difficulties but also their chance for cognitive learning (Katz and Mirenda 2002). As for the teachers’ attitude towards students with learning difficulties, Wang (2009) suggested that training teachers does not only enhance their abilities in teaching, but also provides them with positive attitudes towards inclusion. In addition, he stressed that to get a positive outcome of inclusion,

the process and application should be done by collaborative decision making and teamwork between parents, teachers, administration, students and the whole society.

1.2 Rationale

Arising from all this and being, for the past twelve years, the School Principal of (ABSS), one of many schools that belong to an educational Association, and where this school was a pilot school for the Association in implementing inclusion, I want to check how inclusive ABSS is in accordance with the characteristics of an inclusive school, and if there are any recommendations for improvement and for transmission of this process to other schools within the Association. Therefore, the significance of this study is its value for the school and in implementing inclusion in other Association's schools.

1.3 Purpose and Research Context

The purpose of my study is to examine how inclusion is being implemented in one primary school in Beirut. For the purpose of this study, the school is (ABSS) which belongs to an educational Association that was founded in 1878 and established in Beirut, Lebanon. This Association has schools throughout Lebanon, one of which is ABSS that was founded in 1923 as an independent, non-profit school located in Beirut. Classes at ABSS are from KG1 till Grade six, with a total number of one hundred and one students, out of whom twenty students are diagnosed with learning difficulties and have educational evaluation reports. There are seventeen mainstream teachers, three specialized support teachers, one coordinator for the Learning Difficulty department, a speech therapist, administrative assistant and the principal. The school received its accreditation for quality assurance from AdvancEd in 2013. A Learning Difficulty (LD) department was established initially for providing education for children with

mild or moderate general learning difficulties. The special classes were established at the beginning within regular classes of the school by personal initiatives from the teachers when they started detecting the difficulties their students are facing. Our LD department has made a significant contribution to the education of students with special educational needs through the years. The school Coordinator for the LD program coordinates among all the teachers. She assesses, reads referrals from teachers, and reads students' Educational Assessment to build on and write Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) for the LD students. She coordinates between regular and LD teachers and this is documented in the minutes of meetings. There is also a speech therapist who has joined the team in 2016 on a one-day per week basis, which became twice per week in 2017. The school plans to recruit a psychomotor therapist in 2018. At ABSS there are different categories of special educational needs: physical disability, hearing disability, visual disability, mild autism, mild general learning disability, moderate general learning disability, and severe general learning disability. The school accepts all the cases that can be catered for within the capacity of the school. When the teachers at school detect any problem with one of the students, they observe and fill a referral paper to the coordinator of the LD department. The coordinator comes into the class and conducts the observation herself and accordingly she meets the parents and advises where to go for an assessment, either medical assessment for sight or hearing, or for educational assessment or psychological assessment. When the assessment report is issued the parents submit it to the school administration where the coordinator with the help of the LD teachers analyse it and start working on a plan for the student. The parents are then asked for a meeting where they are informed of all the details, and they have to sign a consent paper stating that they agree that their child be enrolled in the LD program and that this procedure will

cost them extra fees. The parents will help the teachers and the coordinators in filling the modification paper (Appendix H). Later, when the IEP (Appendix I) for every student is developed by the coordinator and the regular and LD teachers, the parents are asked for another meeting to discuss it. Since the school caters for students with learning difficulties, when we have a new comer to school we follow the same procedure but we start with an interview with the student and the parents to get as much information as we can. Then an entrance exam will be administered to check the academic level, and finally we ask the parents to allow their child to spend one or two days at school to observe him/her in a regular school day setting. This will provide us with a clearer idea of the student's case.

This study examines how the psychosocial and academic needs of students with Learning Difficulties (LD) are identified and catered for.

The study addresses three research questions:

1. How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?
2. How are students' psychosocial and academic needs being addressed?
3. How is the curriculum being modified to meet students' needs?

In order to address the above questions, the study started by the Principal keeping a journal describing all aspects of inclusion and its issues at school. Then an interview with the coordinator of the LD program followed. Data was further collected through online questionnaires administered to 11 parents of LD students and to 19 teachers (regular and support), observations, and artifacts (AdvancEd Accreditation Report, Vision and Mission Statement, SIP documents, Modifications and Accommodations documents) were collected. The instruments were formulated based on the research questions, the researcher's journal and the reviewed literature. A sample is presented

in Table 1 below. The complete table is in Appendix A. Also the observation checklist was created based on the study research questions to check for the availability of the data and to compare to the answers retrieved from teachers, parents, coordinator and researcher's journal for triangulation.

Table 1: Sample Data Collection Questions Addressing Research Question 1, 2 & 3

	Principal's Journal	Coordinator of LD Interview	Teachers' Interview Questions	Parents' Interview Questions
Research Question 1: How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?	How is coordination done among regular teachers, support teachers and other relevant professionals, to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties?	Give example of how the school encourages all staff members to participate in professional development in special education.	How is parental involvement and contact between parents and teachers encouraged and facilitated by the school? Give examples.	How confident are you in ensuring that your child's school meets your child's learning needs? Give examples.
Research Question 2: How are students' psychosocial and academic needs being addressed?	How does the school offer a safe, inspiring and motivating environment for all students?	How are students supported socially and academically in class? Give examples.	Are all students, including those with learning difficulties, encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities? Give examples.	How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her school? How do you know?
Research Question 3: How is the curriculum being modified to meet students' needs?	Do all the teachers apply differentiation to meet the needs of all the students? How?	What resources does your school have to teach students with learning difficulties?	How do you assess students with learning difficulties? Give examples.	Did you participate in curriculum modifications done to the educational plan given to your child? How?

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the purpose of the study in examining the school's implementation of inclusion and its value for the school and other sister schools that belong to the same Association. The following Chapter two includes a review of available relevant literature about the history of inclusion, its advantages and disadvantages, and characteristics of its successful implementation. Chapter three presents the methodology used and discussion of how to establish validity and reliability, the participants in the study, the instruments applied to collect data and the methods of data analysis. Chapter four presents data results obtained from triangulating data from these different instruments and the research findings are analyzed and discussed with comparison to the literature in chapter two. Finally, Chapter five states the conclusion, including suggestions and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on inclusion of students with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. It summarizes how special educational policies have developed through the years, both nationally and internationally, and provides a definition of inclusive education and a list of characteristics that defines successful inclusion. It also includes studies that are relevant to the research questions. The purpose is to provide basis against which the findings of this study will be compared.

2.2 Background and History

In the past, students with learning difficulties were separated from regular schools and placed in their own special schools, which led to minimal contact between regular students and students with learning difficulties. However, this began to change when in the United States, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the law for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 commanded that students with disabilities should be educated with regular students (ElZein, 2009). Consequently, several initiatives supported inclusive education starting with the UNESCO Salamanca statement in 1994 that stated, “Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions” (UNESCO, 1994, p.6). Some other acts that influenced inclusion were the 1998 Education Act and the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (McMillan, 2008).

Upon comparing inclusion between The United States and Europe, Linn (2011) found that in the United States the main reason for inclusion is academic achievement while

in Europe it's for social acceptance and belonging. At ABSS the aim is both. ABSS goal for inclusion is for the students to achieve academically and to feel accepted socially and valued in society.

Several Arab countries such as Morocco, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Tunisia have implemented the UNESCO Education for All projects, combining the regular and special educational systems (Yacoub, 2000).

In Lebanon, academic inclusion started with SesoBel in 1982, where 77 children with different mental and physical handicaps were integrated in nearby schools as a pilot study for future inclusion of special needs students, according to Dirani (1996). According to Ismail (2004), in Lebanon, educational services, for students with learning difficulties, are only provided in the private sector of education and not in the public sector.

Recently, in 2013, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon, with the collaboration of Smart Kids with Individual Learning Differences (SKILD), assigned the 22nd of April as a National Day for learning difficulties. Also, MEHE is currently considering special education in public schools, it will start implementation with thirty schools as pilot schools.

2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusion

Inclusion of students with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms has several advantages and disadvantages for LD students, for regular students and for the regular and LD teachers. The first advantage, according to Algozzine and Ysseldyke (2006) is that the mainstream classroom has a stimulating environment and role models where students with learning difficulties can have better friendships and enriched academic and social activities, leading to better success. A second advantage, according to Cooper and McEvoy (1996) is that inclusion will lead to better reading performance

and better achievement of Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) goals. A third advantage of inclusion, according to Salend (2001) is that it helps regular education students to understand and accept the differences and needs of others. As for the regular teachers, inclusion allows them to appreciate their students' differences, detect their strengths that they can build on for better achievement, and learn different teaching strategies and methods, which increases their creativity in teaching and creates cooperative and collaborative teamwork as they have to work with different specialists, parents and school members.

On the other hand, there are several disadvantages of inclusion. The first disadvantage of inclusion is that more emphasis is put on the social aspect than the academic one for students with learning difficulties. A second disadvantage is that inclusive classrooms are big in size, which leads to more distraction. A third disadvantage is that regular classrooms lead to low self-esteem for the students with learning difficulties because they can see the difference between their abilities and those of their peers (Berg,2004). Additionally, students with LD, sometimes exhibit involuntary behavioral and vocal distractions that may disrupt the whole class. Also, the special treatment and modifications for students with learning difficulties may lead to resentment and teasing from their regular friends who are not getting the same attention, (Berg, 2004). According to Jordan, et al. (2009), regular teachers may develop a negative attitude towards inclusion because of their fear of not being able to deal with students with learning difficulties due to their lack of training and the need for extra preparation time.

2.4 Characteristics of Successful Inclusion

To have a successful inclusive classroom, many characteristics should be ensured such as support from administration and from special education personnel, positive

classroom atmosphere and acceptance of students' differences, appropriate curriculum with differentiated instruction, effective general teaching skills such as clarity, engagement and enthusiasm, peer assistance, and effective teaching methods (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

According to the Consultative Forum for the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, there are ten themes for inclusion which include provision of information, appropriate physical features, inclusive school policies, an Individual Education Plan (IEP), student interactions, staffing and personnel, external links, assessment of achievement, curriculum, and teaching strategies (Winter & O'Raw, 2010).

2.5 Social Justice and Social Equity

In including students with learning difficulties in mainstream classrooms we as educators depend on the collaboration of all the factors of success that were mentioned before as well as on the learning theories. There are many learning theories in psychology that emerged explaining why people behave the way they do, and they are centered on the environmental power of the learning method. According to Obiakor et al. (2012) the ground for inclusion is social justice since it maintains care, respect, recognition and empathy and is a major component of the belief system of educators, where students are provided with equal opportunities to achieve socially and academically. Stavroula, Leonidas, and Koutselini (2011) state that social justice and equity in education can be achieved when teachers are able to attend to the diversity of their students. Attitudes of all school members towards including students with learning difficulties in the mainstream school are very important, and all have to be willing to implement this inclusion and cater for it. Yet, many changes have to accompany this inclusion which includes professional development, parental

involvement, adaptations to curriculum, diverse teaching and learning methods, IEPs and resources. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes how cognitive, behavioral, personal, and environmental factors interact to determine motivation and behavior. Students with learning difficulties tend to learn by observing people around them who become models to them such as their friends and teachers who are working with them the whole day. Bandura (1977) believed that behavior is learned in the environment through observation. Also McCarty (2006) stated that students with learning difficulties develop relationships with their classmates who become their role models for positive behavior, whereas regular students learn that LD students are part of the community and have their own talents and abilities in different areas. Social Efficacy Theory was originated from Social Cognitive theory by Albert Bandura where he defines self-efficacy as the individual's belief that he or she will be able to accomplish a specific task. The level of self-efficacy the students have when they begin a task has a great impact on whether they will successfully complete it. According to Bandura (1989) receiving positive feedback from others is a great way to increase self-efficacy whereas receiving negative feedback will lower self-efficacy. Teachers can work in classroom on motivating students and praising them as well as giving positive feedback for it is the most important precondition for behavior change.

2.6 Differentiated Instruction & Modifications

All students, including LD students, have preferred ways of learning. When learning preferences are acknowledged and accommodated for, students are likely to demonstrate increased motivation for learning and higher levels of achievement. According to Ford (2013) differentiating instructions when a teacher reaches out to every individual and varies his or her teaching in order to produce the best learning experience. It is the effort of the teacher to respond to the differences among learners

in the classroom without letting them feel stigmatized. There is plenty of evidence (Obiakor et al. 2012; Tomlinson, Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Moon, Brimijoin, Conover and Reynolds 2003) that students are more successful in school if they are taught in ways that are close to their readiness levels, interests and learning profiles. Expert teachers are attentive to students' varied learning needs. According to the principal's journal; teachers at ABSS have gained considerable experience and have developed a high level of expertise in meeting the educational needs of their students through professional development inside as well outside the school, nationally and internationally. Therefore, to differentiate instruction is to become a more competent, creative, and professional educator. According to Tomlinson (2008), teachers can differentiate at least four classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile. They can differentiate content, what the student needs to learn from the curriculum, or how the student will get access to the information; process, activities in which the student engages in order to make sense of the content; products, final projects to apply and extend what the student has learned in a unit; and learning environment, the way the classroom works and feels. Parents, regular teachers and LD teachers suggest appropriate modifications for the students concerning class accommodations, homework, daily work, and assessment. A list of modifications and accommodations of the regular curriculum is devised for every student and is attached to his/her Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

2.7 Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

The IEP states the goals and objectives for every student and the services that will be provided to meet the student's goals whether the student is in the regular classroom or in the resource room. According to Roe (2008), the objective of the IEP is to bring about effective teaching, learning, and improved outcomes for students with learning

difficulties. It is very important to address the unique needs of students, to ensure their access to the curriculum, and to allow them to reach their full potential. A whole team should be involved in developing the IEP for each student, starting with regular teachers, LD teachers, parents and sometimes students should be involved. According to Tomlinson (2008) assessment should be ongoing because whatever information the teachers get about their students' readiness, interest and learning helps them in planning next steps of instructions and also helps in evaluating learning. There should also be differentiation in assessment (Freiberg, 2009) where every student can deliver the learning content in the way he feels able to express, as long as the learning content is achieved. The student can act it out, write short answer, present a project, or even deliver the material orally in his own words. This way the teacher can assess how much the student could achieve or master according to his Individualized Education Plan. Roe (2008), states that when parents are involved in the setting and meetings of the IEP, the students show less behavior problems and better academic achievement.

2.8 Resource Room

According to Tremblay (2007), students with learning difficulties attend the resource room for less than half their school day, and there they receive basic skills instruction that adds to their general education program as well as they receive additional instruction in language arts and mathematics. Students at ABSS who are diagnosed with specific as well as general learning difficulties attend the resource room, which is one of the learning environments for students with learning difficulties. The percentage of their presence varies from 20% to 60% depending on the need. Students are supported outside the regular classroom in the three main subjects: Math, English and Arabic. They go to the resource room between 1 to 4 periods a week per subject depending on their performance in the regular classroom. In the resource room, LD

teachers work on students' weaknesses, re-teach topics, conduct tests and help students complete their unfinished work. Differentiation is essential; we should differentiate work for students with learning difficulties in regular classes and also in the resource room. Sometimes, and for few cases, LD teachers provide help to students in the regular classroom in case there is a whole class activity that students will benefit from while joining the rest of the class. Once a week, meetings are held between the regular teachers and the LD teachers for each subject to share the weekly plan and discuss students' performance. All that is done based on the IEP for each student. At ABSS the IEP is developed based on the formal evaluation, observation, parents' intervention and any extra assessment from speech therapist, psychomotor specialist or psychologist. It states the level of performance expected including strength, weaknesses, and needs. Also it sets time frame to attain the set goals with expected level of achievement with the required strategies and resources needed, and sets time for reviewing the IEP.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented a literature review about inclusion, its history and how it started nationally and internationally, and then it listed the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion, the characteristics of successful inclusion and ended with learning theories that suit the study. The following chapter will address the methodology that was used.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design used and the reason it is chosen. This is followed by the sampling and the instruments for data collection, the techniques used to analyze this data and the ethical procedures that were followed.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative case study was carried out to check how inclusive ABSS is in relation to educating students with learning difficulties. Merriam (2009) defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. x). Bounded phenomenon is a circle with a heart in the middle. The case is in the heart of the circle. In this study the case which is the heart, is the inclusion of LD students, and the heart is the focus of the study. According to Zucker (2009) case studies are useful in describing specific events or projects and providing an understanding of specific experience. They are used in educational innovations as well as program evaluation and making policies due to their strength that is based on dealing with real life situations. This study emphasizes a real experience to be examined within a limited period and space which is Inclusion of Students with Learning Difficulties. It aims at describing how inclusive the school is in accordance to how students’ needs are identified, how their psychosocial and academic needs are catered for and how the curriculum is modified to meet those needs. Researchers sorted out case study into different categories, to Yin (2003) there are three categories of case study which are

descriptive, explanatory and exploratory, while Stake (1995), discriminated three types of case study: the intrinsic, the collective and the instrumental, whereas McDonough and McDonough (1997) stated that case study is in two categories interpretive and evaluative. This research is a descriptive case study because there is a need to investigate, examine, analyze deeply, describe and present the experience of inclusion (Yin, 2003). Descriptive designs thoroughly describe characteristics and facts regarding a certain occurrence or the relationship among several observable facts (Merriam, 2009). The research design is a singular case study since it is dealing with one school (Zainal, 2007). Data for this case study was collected by interviews, online questionnaires, observation and artifacts. The data was collected from the principal, coordinator for the learning difficulty department, mainstream and LD support teachers, and parents.

3.3 Sampling

The school is a convenience sample since I, the school Principal, have access and want to explore how inclusion is implemented in it. Participants in the study are purposively selected; they can provide rich information about inclusion processes they are involved in. A purposive sample is selected based on researcher's personal judgment and prior knowledge of the population where researcher decides whether a particular sample is representative or not (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The participants are the principal, LD coordinator, all 19 regular and LD teachers, and 11 parents who accepted to participate in the study (out of all 20 families). Every member of the sample was contacted by phone to take their consent to participate in the study before sending the questionnaires to be answered. All the instruments were also attached with a consent paragraph informing participants that they have the choice to participate or decline as well as that they can quit at any time during the study period with no penalty.

Participants were informed as well that all the personal data collected will remain confidential. All the processes follow the Institutional Review Board (IRB) rules and after the researcher completed The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participant”.

3.4 Instruments for data collection

There are several instruments used to collect data for a case study, which increases its credibility according to Yin (2003). Some of these instruments are interviews, surveys, journals, physical artifacts, document analysis, and observation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this study I use all. Using Survey Monkey, two separate online questionnaires were created, one for the parents and one for the teachers. For ethical reasons, each started with a consent paragraph explaining the purpose of the study and that the answers will be confidential. The parents were contacted by a phone call to receive their consent before sending them the link to the survey; 11 out of 20 parents of students with learning difficulties accepted to participate. Teachers were also contacted to receive their consent prior to sending them the survey link. All 19 teachers accepted to participate. A semi-structured interview was conducted for the Coordinator of the LD department which started with a consent paragraph explaining the purpose of the study and that the answers will be confidential. When the answers to the interview questions were written they were sent back to the coordinator to approve them before using in the analysis.

3.4.1 Interviews

In qualitative studies, a major data collection method is interviewing (Merriam, 2009). Interviewing is an important method because it gives the chance to the participant to share his/her attitude, beliefs and experiences in his own words. Interview questions

are structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Structured questions have predetermined wording and order of questions, while unstructured questions are open-ended and have more flexibility. Semi-structured questions fall between both structured and unstructured questions, and they are used to obtain specific data from the interviewees (Merriam, 2009). For this reason, semi-structured interview questions were used in this study to collect data because views and experiences are important in a case study. Sample questions for the coordinator are: How do you insure that teachers know their duties regarding students with learning difficulties? How are students supported socially and academically in class? Give examples.

3.4.2 Surveys

Surveys are an inexpensive and common method for collecting data, and nowadays online surveys have a more efficient and faster way for collecting data than paper surveys (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Therefore, based on the journal of the Principal, the semi structured and structured survey questionnaires for 19 teachers and another for 11 parents of students with learning difficulties were developed on the web upon their acceptance to participate in the study. The links of the survey questionnaires were sent to the school teachers as well as to the parents by e-mail through Survey Monkey, and the answers were collected. Sample questions for teachers are: Give example of how you are encouraged by your administration to participate in professional development in your specialty as well as special education. Are all students, including those with learning difficulties, encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities? Give examples. How does the school provide for each student with learning difficulties? Give examples. Whereas parents' sample questions are: What are the resources used to cater for your child's needs, and how are they used? Did you participate in

curriculum modifications done to the educational plan given to your child? Give examples.

3.4.3 Observation

Observation is another method for collecting qualitative data in a natural setting where the observer is the instrument for data collection, and behaviors can be documented as they are happening. The researcher observes the settings to collect the data needed and to triangulate it with data collected from other methods (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the researcher is a nonparticipant observer, meaning that sat aside and watched, without getting involved in the observed situation (Fraenkel et al., 2012). First, based on the literature, a checklist was created (Appendix D) containing elements related to the research questions such as the availability and use of resources, if the teacher is using differentiated teaching methods, if the teacher is engaging all students, if LD students participate in extracurricular activities, and if parents are actively involved. During the observation, notes were taken whether the above mentioned elements were available or not.

3.4.4 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a type of qualitative research where documents of public records like policy manuals, mission statement, media posts, handbooks, students' reports and many other documents can be interpreted by the researcher to add meaning for the study (Tellis, 1997). Documents can have several uses such as providing background and context, information that can inspire additional questions for the research, a way for tracing any development or change, and validation of other data sources and findings. Document analysis is a procedure in which the researcher reviews and interprets different types of documents such as public records, personal documents

(which include journals/reflections, newspapers, etc.) or physical evidence in order to highlight the significance and importance of the assessed topic. Document analysis has several advantages which include availability, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, stability, exactness, and coverage. (Bowen, 2009). In this study, artifacts were collected to support and give more credibility to the study. For example, IEPs, AdvancEd Exit Report, educational assessments, and school policy and mission were collected and analyzed and checked against data from the other instruments for consistency.

3.5 Data analysis

The data collected for this study is qualitative data since it was collected through interviews, questionnaires, observation and artifacts, and this information is about quality that cannot be measured by numbers (Fraenkel et al., 2012). According to Merriam (2009), data analysis starts with the first interview, observation or document read. The analysis of this study started with my journal. Merriam (2009) continues to explain that qualitative data analysis can either be comparative or inductive. In this study, comparative data analysis was used. For example, themes that were extracted from the journal were traced in the other interview transcript and relevant responses were highlighted. Then the same was done for the observation data.

Data analysis is an ongoing process, according to Merriam (2009). As the data is received, it is analyzed and built upon for further data collection. So, building on the journal, interview questions for the coordinator of the LD department were formulated addressing the research questions (see Appendix A). The coordinator was interviewed in person and her answers were documented. After the interview, the answers were typed and sent back to her to do any correction before sending it back to be used by the researcher. This was done for content validity and ethical issues. The answers were analyzed and compared to the journal, and based on this analysis online questionnaire

for the parents and the teachers were formulated. After the parents and the teachers filled out the online questionnaires, I analyzed data from parents and teachers' online questionnaire/ survey by simple frequency counts and then I added the percentages under each relevant research question and compared results to those from the other instruments. Simultaneously, observation was conducted in classrooms, in the playground and in different areas in the school, and the checklist was filled. At the same time, artifacts relating to the research questions were being collected such as school mission statement, AdvancEd Exit Report, IEPs sample, consent papers, etc. All the data collected from the different instruments was compared for common themes to achieve triangulation.

However, this method does have its limitations which include insufficient detail since the study was conducted in only one school which will also make generalization difficult. Still, the advantages outweigh the limitations (Bowen, 2009). In this case study I used multiple sources for data collection to provide wide range of data and to ensure triangulated results and validity and reliability of findings.

3.6 Validity, reliability, triangulation

According to Merriam (2009) since human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, data will be interpreted or translated as the researcher sees them, even observation of an event will be changed, so validity must be assessed in terms of credibility and not reality which is holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing, also the researcher is trustworthy in carrying out the study in an ethical manner. In order to lessen the bias against case study research, (Merriam, 2009); Yin (2003) advised using data triangulation, where data collected from different sources is compared. The findings of the data collected from the interviews, surveys, observation and artifact, and its analysis are considered valid and

reliable because the data collected was triangulated. Yet there might be some impact on the validity and reliability due to some factor such as some participants might not have answered all the items, or some might not have expressed true opinion. Validity is when the degree to which a method, a test, or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure. Data validity can be inhibited by the interests and opinions of the individual researcher. What a researcher considers important maybe influenced by his interest and opinion. To insure validity, a piloting for the interview and survey questions was conducted to make sure the language is clear and that the instrument measures what it's supposed to measure. The instruments were given to the advisor of the study because she is an expert in the field and she edited the questions for me. Reliability was ensured when similar concepts and phrases were detected in data from several instruments (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000)

Triangulation means that this data collection using several instruments and from several sources is combined and compared during the analysis phase of the case study instead of analyzing each piece of information separately, which strengthens the findings because the combination of the several pieces of data provides a holistic and better comprehension of the case being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.7 Ethics in Research

I followed the principles of ethical research as required by the Institutional Review Board at the Lebanese American University and as recommended by the literature such as Robson (2000). For example, consent and privacy were insured, and all participants were protected from harm by keeping their identities anonymous. Written consent was obtained from all participants, and the researcher minimized bias by reporting all data including data that was not positive. Data was deleted once the study was completed.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the method used to carry out this research was discussed. The instruments used to collect the data were listed and the analysis techniques were explained. In the following chapter the results and data analysis are presented.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

In order to answer the research questions, each of the three research questions was divided into different aspects related to it. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data collected from the researcher's journal, the interview with the LD coordinator, the survey questionnaires given to the parents of LD students and to all the teachers, the observations and the artifacts (AdvancEd Accreditation Report, Vision and Mission Statement, IEP documents, Modifications and Accommodations documents). The research findings are discussed and presented along with a comparison with the literature presented in chapter two in order to point out similarities and differences.

4.2 Findings

According to the literature review, the most important point for inclusion is the school's acceptance of students with learning difficulties in its system, and that starts with the school's admission policy, and its vision and mission. This point can be an added value in this case study since all the aspects specified in documents revolve around it. For ABSS, the stated mission is

“The purpose of the school is to create a lifelong learning environment where students with different capacities have the chance to learn and serve the community embracing modern styles of education”.

Its stated vision is “ABSS school has set the direction for its students with their different learning abilities to be leaders in this domain” (see Appendix F). This statement is displayed all over the school and it was confirmed in the journal of the

principal. In addition, this statement was further verified in the answers of the parents when they were asked why they chose this school for their children; 54.5% of the parents answered that it was for its system of serving children with learning difficulties. As for the teachers, when they were asked if they agree that the school admission policy facilitates the admission of students with learning difficulties, 90.5% agreed and 9.5% strongly agreed. More so, the Accreditation Report from AdvancEd (2013) (found in Appendix G), stated that “Another example of the school’s commitment to its purpose can be seen in its efforts to address the educational needs of students perceived as having learning difficulties”.

4.2.1 Research Question 1

The first research question “How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?” is addressed by various data: qualification of staff, professional development, availability of support system, and parental involvement. These were checked in the researcher’s journal, interview and survey and observations as well as artifacts collected at school.

According to the Principal’s journal (Appendix B), when the teachers detect a problem with one of the students, they have to write a referral form to the Consultant so she can observe the child and give an intervention method and if it doesn’t work she will refer for medical assessment to rule out visual or hearing problems; afterwards she sends for a specialist for Educational assessment. The Coordinator of LD department explained in her answer to question number 4 (Appendix C) the same procedure. When the teachers detect the problem with the student they have to fill a referral form to her so she can observe, write down her intervention suggestions to be tried and later she has to refer to medical assessment and at the end to an educational assessment. When observing the school’s files of the LD students, these documents were detected as well

as the educational assessment report of each of the LD students and the signatures of the parents on the interventions. This in turn adds evidence for parental involvement. Also the school has a speech therapist who comes to school twice per week. She manages sessions with students on average of once or twice weekly. When observing her sessions, it was noticed how friendly she was with the kids and how professional. Every time she returns the student to class she gives feedback to the classroom teacher about the progress of the student and proposes strategies she needs the teacher to do with the student. The speech therapist meets with the parents frequently to update them about their child or to ask for new reports.

Professional development is ongoing in the school. Every teacher follows professional development according to his/her specialty as well as according to LD topics. Qualifications of the staff were obvious in the principal's journal and in the AdvancEd accreditation report. Also the parents provided positive feedback about the quality of differentiated instruction their kids are receiving from the teachers. Moreover, all the teachers are trained and followed up by the Consultant who is considered the Coordinator for the program, as well, and she follows on the professional development of the teachers in-house and outside the school, and provides individual support to the teachers, each according to their needs.

The teachers' answer to question number 11 concerning if they had adequate training to teach students with learning difficulties revealed that 76.19% agreed. Their answer to question number 12 concerning if they are encouraged by the school administration to participate in professional development relevant to their specialty and special education were positive, as shown in the figure below.

Q11 Do you think you have had adequate training to teach students with learning difficulties?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

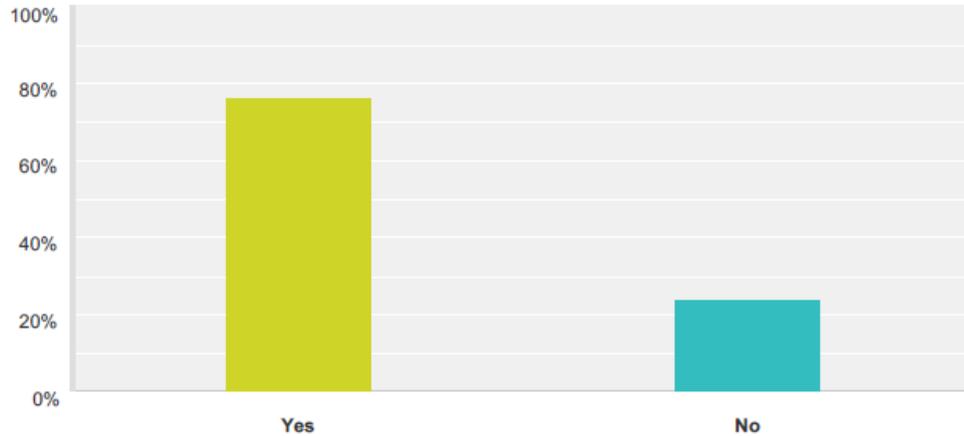


Figure 1: Teachers' Q11

Q12 Are you encouraged by your administration to participate in professional development in your specialty as well as special education?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0

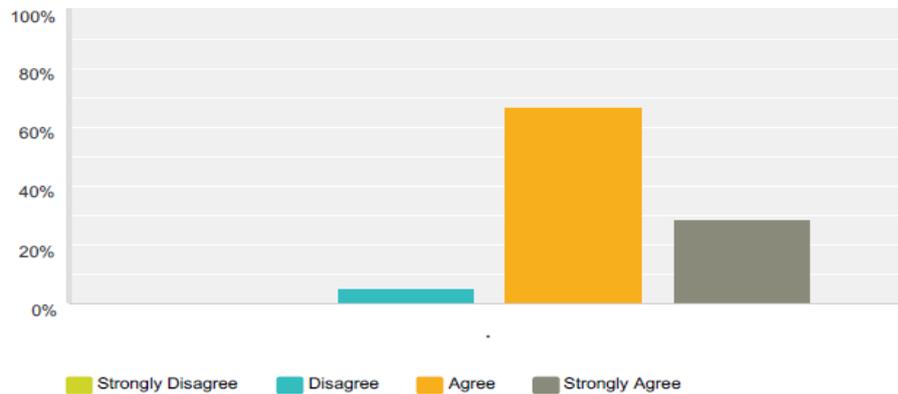


Figure 2: Teachers' Q12

Moreover, when the parents were asked in question 13 if they think that all the teachers and staff members are qualified to deal with all the students' needs, 45.45% chose somewhat agree, 45.45% agreed and 9.09% strongly agreed, which is positive at 54% of combined agreement responses.

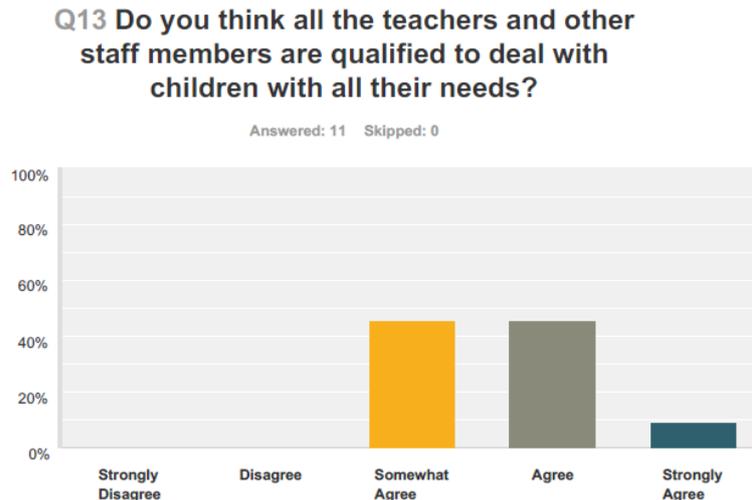


Figure 3: Parents' Q13

The Accreditation Report from AdvancEd (found in Appendix G) states that ABSS is privileged to have a qualified and well-certified staff with excellent professional development and that was discovered through their investigation during the External Review Visit (AdvancEd, 2013).

In conclusion, when comparing data results of question number one: “How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?” to the literature review in chapter two, we find that according to Jordan et al. (2009), staff qualifications and professional development are obvious. Also parental involvement, as mentioned in ElZein, (2009), was very clear at ABSS. Differentiation was also in different aspects from content to process to product and to the learning environment as advised by Tomlinson (2008).

4.2.2 Research Question 2

The second research question “How are students’ psychosocial and academic needs being addressed” is investigated through three aspects: supporting students inside and

outside the classroom, participation of students in extracurricular activities, and positive school environment.

A strong point that distinguishes ABSS is the small number of students in the classrooms which ranges from seven to nineteen students per class. This gives the teachers the time and energy to cater for the needs of every single student easily, to engage them in all the activities in the classroom and give them plenty of time to participate and show their work, and at the same time this will increase the self-confidence of the students. Students' drawings, individual projects as well as group projects are displayed on bulletin boards inside and outside the classroom. This was noted and recorded through observation and the positive environment of the school is very well noticed through the friendly atmosphere of the school and the strong relationship among all its members. The school seems to have the relation of a family, where everyone knows every member by name. The best view is when the kids gather for breakfast or for lunch in the dining room and they share the delicious food prepared by the cook and served prepaid with tuition fees.

Another way of getting data for this aspect was asking the parents in question 11 about the relationship of their children with their teachers, and most of the answers showed excellent relation full of love and emotions. Whereas in question 14 when they were asked about their children's enthusiasm for attending school a high percentage of the answers (45.45%) were positive.

Q11 How can you describe the social and emotional relations of your child with his/her teachers?

Answered: 9 Skipped: 2

#	Responses
1	highly emotional to some of the teachers
2	My child loves his teachers very much
3	Excellent
4	My child's relation with his teachers is normal
5	Very close and full of love
6	Very good
7	From my child point of view most of them are likeable .
8	The relationship is good and teachers understands the need of each child
9	Excellent social and emotional relations

Figure 4: Parents' Q11

Q14 To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

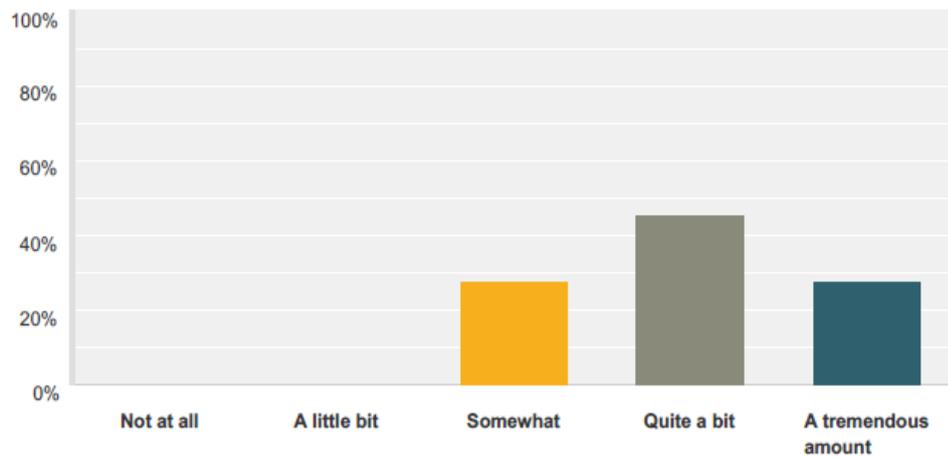


Figure 5: Parents' Q14

Another point is that the school has a Facebook page where all the activities are posted on daily basis and it shows all the students participating in those activities. Also there are Live Posts of presentations of Speaking Competitions, Choir and learning activities where parents can watch their kids' activities live while at work or at home. This

increases the students' sense of belonging and their self-confidence and gives them pride in their work and achievement, as also noted by teachers and parents.

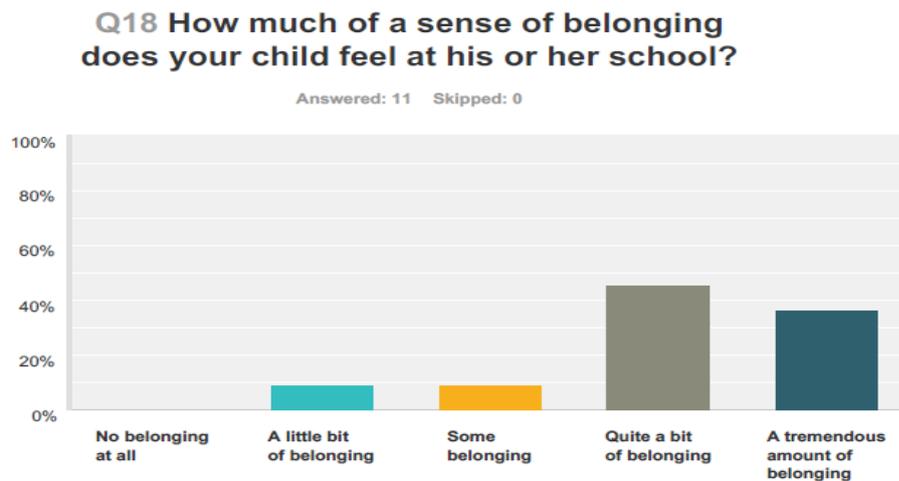


Figure 6: Parents' Q 18

All the students of the school are given equal chance to participate in all the co-curricular and extracurricular activities according to their desire. This was emphasized in the Principal's journal, where it was mentioned that all the students have the same chances in participating in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. For example: all basketball, handball and volleyball teams include students with different needs; they participate in tournaments and they are always told that they are winners even if they lose the game as long as they are doing their best. A trophy is in the Principal's office won by the students for the team spirit and for their fair play in the sports tournament two years ago, where most LD students participated. This was evidence on the empowerment by the school for the students' psychosocial aspect. Also when the Coordinator was asked about this issue in interview question number 14, her answer was that all students are encouraged to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Regular students and those with learning difficulties have the same access to all that at ABSS. Students with learning difficulties have hidden talents that show up in such activities and this gives them more self-confidence and

enthusiasm. That was also clear in the parents' answers to question 12 where the positive answer amounted to 90.1% and the teachers' answers on question 17 were 76.18% Agree and 23.81 strongly agree.

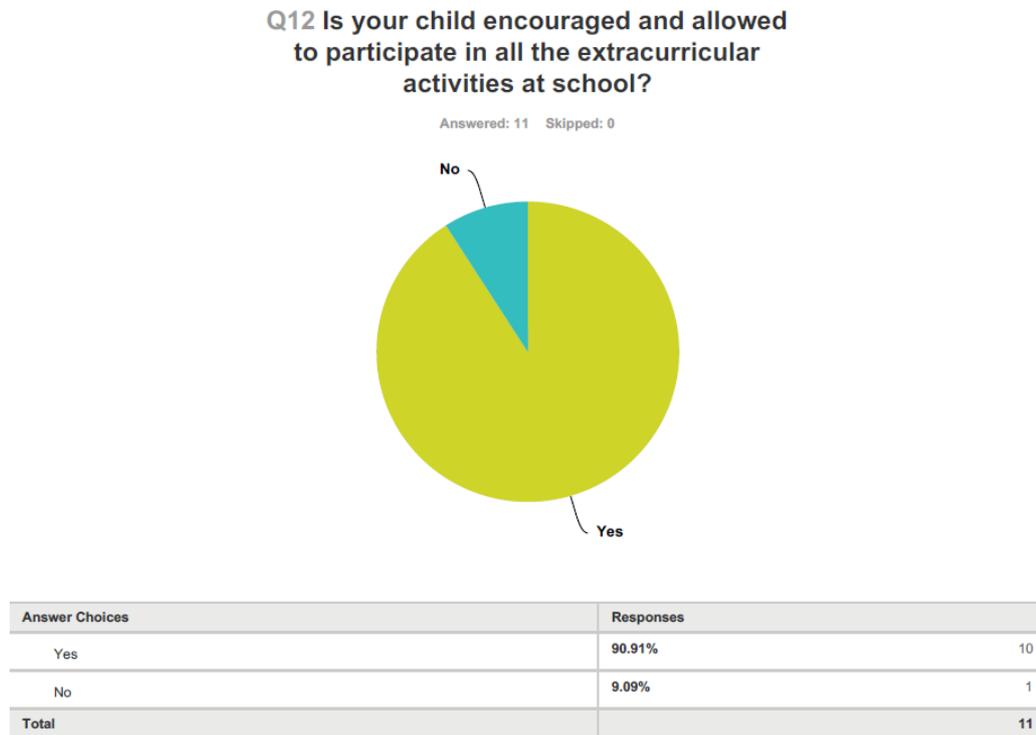


Figure 7: Parents' Q12

In conclusion, when comparing data results of question number two: “How are students’ psychosocial and academic needs being addressed”, to findings in the reviewed literature, we find according to Bandura (1977, 1989) that social justice and self-efficacy are well implemented at ABSS. Students are taught social skills as well as academics, and they are allowed to participate in all activities regardless of their capacities, to support them socially and emotionally.

4.2.3 Research Question 3

The third research question “How is the curriculum being modified to meet students’ needs” is checked according to three aspects: availability of Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), differentiation in teaching, and the availability of resources.

Availability of an IEP for all LD students was mentioned in the principal’s journal namely that every LD student at the school has an IEP which is developed after the modifications are set by the parents, the coordinator and the regular as well as the LD teachers. The IEP is revised continuously to set any modifications required during the academic year. In addition, the coordinator confirmed in her interview that the parents are involved in the modifications done before setting the IEP for their children. A point that was noticed through observation was the naming of the IEP. The students’ files have these documents under the name of SIP (Appendix J) and the answer to that was found in question number 10 of the Coordinator’s interview, where she explained that this is Student Individualized Plan that includes the same components of the IEP but not as comprehensively because the cases of the students are mild to moderate and they work on the regular program as well as specific objectives that the students have weakness in dealing with. Parents, regular teachers and LD teachers suggest appropriate modifications for the students concerning class accommodations, homework, daily work, and assessment (Appendix I). Based on this, the whole staff collaborates and works together and they all help in developing the modifications and the Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) for their students and also with the participation of the parents in the modifications set in the IEP of every student. It’s a team work. This supports what was mentioned in chapter two about participation and collaboration of all staff, parents and sometimes students in developing IEPs (Roe, 2008).

Q9 Did you participate in the modifications done to the educational plan given to your child?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

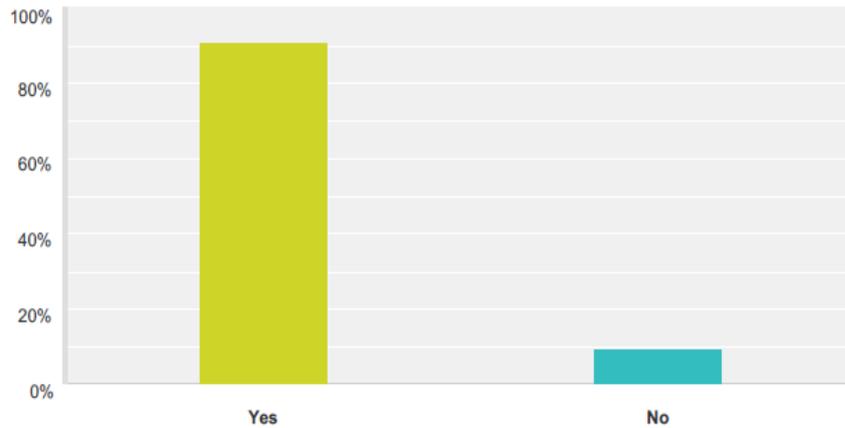


Figure 8: Parents' Q9

In asking the teachers if they use differentiation to meet the needs of all the students (question number 9) the answer was 100% yes. This is supported in question number 13 when they were asked to list 3 different teaching styles they use in their classrooms, where it was obvious that they use several styles such as group work, student centered approach, re-teach and enrich, learning through play, think pair share, kinesthetic, peer teaching, inquiry-based learning, active board, etc. This is in harmony with Tomlinson et al. (2003) that teachers can differentiate in content, process, product and learning environment. Also, that was supported with the answer of the coordinator in her interview question number 8 where she stated that regular and LD teachers use differentiation in their teaching but they still require some improvement. This is because some of the teachers are new comers and although they were recruited according to their shared vision with the school and their qualifications concerning LD yet they still need more workshops and training to enhance their skills. When asking the parents in question number 16 their answers varied from 36.36% for fairly well to

45.45% for quite well, this is not totally aligned with recommendations in the reviewed literature.

Q16 How well do the teaching styles of your child's teachers match your child's learning style?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 0

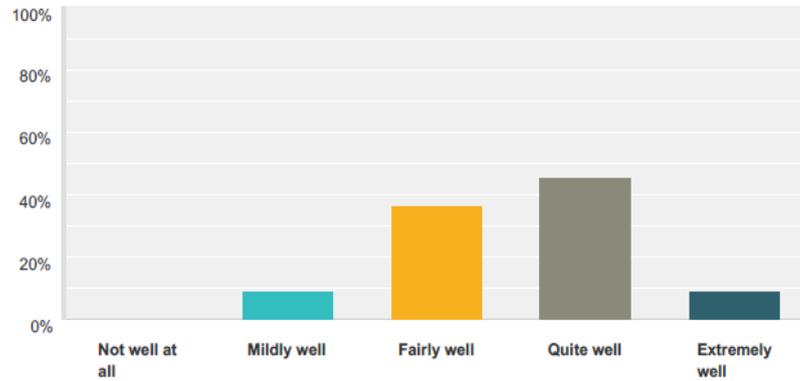


Figure 9: Parents' Q16

When the parents were asked in question number 10 if the school has adequate resources to cater for their child's need, the answers were as shown in the table below.

Q10 In your opinion, does the school have adequate resources to cater for your child's needs? If yes, what are these resources?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 3

#	Responses
1	Yes the school helps my child and supports him
2	Yes . Special tools , resources, teachers, rooms..
3	Yes
4	From the plan and their care
5	Yes, visual aids - computer -
6	Yes , named by resource room .Includes all the materials needed to insure complete understanding of lessons with help of learning difficulties teachers.
7	Yes they have
8	Pull out system / strategies used to let him understand in an easier way/ psychological follow up with the student, teachers and parents

Figure 10: Parent' Q10

When the Coordinator of the program was asked about resources (question number 9), she mentioned that the school still misses the adaptation and implementation of intervention books for LD students which she considers an important resource.

In conclusion, comparing data results of question number three: “How is the curriculum being modified to meet students’ needs” to findings in literature review, we find according to Roe (2008) that all LD students have modification lists and IEPs that are developed with the help of all the teachers, support team and parents.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the data collected from researcher’s journal, the interview with the LD coordinator, the survey questions given to the parents of LD students and to all the teachers, the observations and the artifacts (AdvancEd Accreditation Report, Vision and Mission Statement, IEP documents, Modifications and Accommodations documents). Then research findings were compared with the literature presented in chapter two in order to point out similarities and differences.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the conducted case study along with the study limitations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Case Study

As was mentioned in the literature review previously, to have a successful inclusion program, many characteristics should be dominant such as support from administration and from special education personnel, positive classroom atmosphere and acceptance of students' differences, appropriate curriculum with differentiated instruction, effective general teaching skills such as clarity, engagement and enthusiasm, and peer assistance, (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). The purpose of the study is finding how successful is the school in implementing inclusion and its value for the school and in expanding this experience to other sister schools that belong to the same Association. The data collected for this study is qualitative data since it was collected through interview with coordinator, questionnaires for teachers and parents, observation of inclusive practices and artifacts.

The findings from this case study revealed that a positive attitude towards inclusion is evident in school mission and vision statements to administration, to teachers, students and parents and by all school members and parents as obvious in the triangulated data results.

According to ElZein (2009) parental involvement has positive impact on the progress of students' learning in the inclusive classrooms. Parental involvement was very

obvious at the school and it was reflected in the answers of the parents, teachers and principal. Also parental involvement was evident in their signatures on official school papers, a proof of their participation in school decisions and activities. More so, the pictures on school Facebook page show the social participation of parents in school activities.

The aim of inclusion is for all students to learn and work together in a peer supportive community without ignoring the individual differences of each student (Obiakor et al., 2012). This was obvious in the results showing every student at ABSS was included in the age appropriate classroom with the same services of their colleagues and was given the opportunity to participate as their schoolmates in all school activities, yet each student had his own IEP which targets his own needs, qualifications and expectations. According to the Consultative Forum for the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 curriculum, teaching strategies and Individual Education Plan (IEP) are important themes in inclusion (Winter & O'Raw, 2010). This is obvious at ABSS where every LD student has his own IEP which was set by the coordinator with collaboration of all the teachers, regular and LD, and with the involvement of the parents.

Concerning resources and support system, the findings show that they are good but some things are missing and need to be dealt with to improve the inclusion process. All the participants did feel that the school can be more inclusive in resources such as intervention books (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Intervention Books), in professional development such as more training for all teachers, regular and LD, and the school still needs to recruit a psychomotor therapist.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The findings from data collected from the interviews, online questionnaires, observation and artifacts, and its analysis are considered valid and reliable because the data collected was triangulated, yet there might be some impact on the validity and reliability in that some participants might not have answered all the items, or some might not have expressed true opinion. In addition, there may be bias due to the fact that the researcher is the school's principal.

5.4 Suggestions

As mentioned before, ABSS has been implementing inclusion for the past 12 years and the time has come for all the leaders of the other sister schools to implement inclusion. This needs work starting from changing their school policies to awareness for all parents and staff about what inclusion is and what elements are needed to be successful. Professional development is needed for all school staff to learn to differentiate instruction in all subjects and to deal with social and psychological aspects. Later a similar single case study can be conducted in each of the sister schools to assess its success as an inclusive school.

Bibliography

- AdvancEd (2013). *External Review: Makassed Abi Bakr El-Siddeeq School*.
Reported by Dr. Cortland Mckee.
- Algozzine, B. & Ysseldyke, J. (2006). *The fundamentals of special education*.
Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Avramidis, E., Bayliss, P. & Burden, R. (2000). A survey into mainstream teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the ordinary school in one local education authority. *Educational Psychology*, 20(2), 191-211.
- Avramidis, E. & Norwich, B. (2010). Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: a review of the literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17 (2), 129-147
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(2), 1175-1184.
- Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13 (4), 544-559.
- Berg, S. (2004). The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities into Regular Education Classrooms. A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science Degree in Education, University of Wisconsin, Stout. Retrieved from <http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/lib/thesis/2005/2005bergs.pdf>
- Bowen, G. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9 (2), 27-40. doi: 10.3316/QRJ0902027
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education*. (5th ed.). New York: Routledge.

- Cooper, C. & McEvoy, M. (1996). Group friendship activities: An easy way to develop social skills of young children. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 28 (3), 67-69.
- DeBoer, A., Pijl, S.J. & Minnaert, A. (2010). Attitudes of parents towards inclusive education: A review of the literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 25 (2), 165-181
- Dirani, L. (1996). Intégration scolaire des enfants handicapés. Unpublished manuscript, Saint Joseph University: Human Sciences Division, Lebanon.
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. Retrieved from <https://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf>
- ElZein, H. (2009). Attitudes toward inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools: A case study from parents' perspective. *Education Research and Review*, 4 (4), 164-172.
- Ford, J. (2013). Educating students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 3(1).
- Fraenkel, J., Wallen, N. & Hyun, H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Freiberg, K. (2009). *Educating Children with Exceptionalities*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Friend, M. & Bursuck, W. (1999). *Including students with special needs: a practical guide for classroom teachers*. Needham Heights, MA: A Viacom Company.
- Ismail, R. (2004). Welcoming Schools: A Lebanese Model. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis. American University of Beirut, Lebanon.
- Jordan, A., Schwartz, E., & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25 (4), 535-542.
- Katz, J. & Mirenda, P. (2002). Including students with developmental disabilities in general educating classrooms: educational benefits. *International Journal of Special Education*, 17(2), 14-24

- Lewis, R. & Doorlag, D. (2011). *Teaching students with special needs in general education classrooms*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Leyser, Y. & Kirk, R. (2007). Evaluating inclusion: an examination of parent views and factors influencing their perspectives. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*. 51 (3), 271-285.
- Linn, M. (2011). Inclusion in two languages: Special education in Portugal and the United States. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 92 (8), 58-60.
- Mastropieri, M. & Scruggs, T. (2001). Promoting inclusion in secondary classrooms. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 24 (4), 265-274.
- McCarty, K. (2006). Full Inclusion: The Benefits and Disadvantages of Inclusive Schooling. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496074.pdf>
- McDonough, J. & McDonough, S. (1997). *Research methods for English language teachers*. London: Arnold.
- McMillan, N. (2008). Inclusive Education: The Benefits and the Obstacles. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1455&context=eht_theses
- Merriam, Sh. (2009). *Qualitative research a guide to design and implementation*. CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Obiakor, F., Harris, M., Mutua, K., Rotatori, A. & Algozzine, B. (2012). Making inclusion work in general education classrooms. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 35 (3), 477-490. doi: 10.1353/etc.2012.0020
- Oxford Dictionaries Online. (2016). Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/learning_difficulties
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research (2nd ed.)* Oxford: Blackwell

- Roe, K. (2008). Perceived Efficacy of Individual Education Plans: A Literature Review. A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science Degree in Education and Counseling, University of Wisconsin, Stout. Retrieved from <http://www2.uwstout.edu/content/lib/thesis/2008/2008roek.pdf>
- Salend, S. (2001). *Creating inclusive classrooms: Effective and reflective practices*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research: Perspective in practice*. London: Sage.
- Stavroula, V., Leonidas, K. & Koutselini, M. (2011). Investigating the Impact of Differentiated Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms: Its Impact on the Quality and Equity Dimensions of Education Effectiveness. Retrieved from: <http://www.icsei.net/icsei2011/Full%20Papers/0155.pdf>
- Tellis, W. (1997). Introduction to case study. *The Qualitative Report*, 3 (2).
- The Department of Education in Western Australia.(2009). Retrieved from <http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/definitions/whole-school-approach.en>
- Tomlinson, C. (2008). The goals of differentiation. *Educational Leadership*, 66 (3). Retrieved from http://shop.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el200811_tomlinson.pdf
- Tomlinson, C., Brighton, C., Hertberg, H., Callahan, C., Moon, T., Brimijoin, K., Conover, L., & Reynolds, T. (2003). Differentiating Instruction in Response to Student Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile in Academically Diverse Classroom: A review of literature. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 27(2/3), 119-145.
- Tremblay, P. (2007). Special Needs Education Basis: Historical and Conceptual Approach. Retrieved from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/History_Inclusive_Education.pdf
- UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

- Wang, H. (2009). Should all students with special educational needs (SEN) be included in mainstream education provision? A critical analysis. *International Education Studies*, 2(4).
- Werts, M., Culatta, R. & Tompkins, J. (2007). *Fundamentals of special education: What every teacher needs to know*. Columbus, OH: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Winter, E. & O'Raw, P. (2010). Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs. Retrieved from http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NCSE_Inclusion.pdf
- Yacoub, Y. (2000). Higher education and manpower planning in Lebanon. Unpublished master's thesis, American University of Beirut, Lebanon.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Applications of case study research*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Zainal, Z. (2007). Case study as a research method. Retrieved from http://psyking.net/htmlobj-3837/case_study_as_a_research_method.pdf
- Zucker, D. (2009). How to Do Case Study Research. Retrieved from http://scholarworks.umass.edu/nursing_faculty_pubs/2

Appendix A

Table of Data Collection Questions Addressing Research Questions 1, 2 & 3

	Principal's Interview (Journal)	Coordinator of Learning Difficulties Interview	Teachers' Questionnaire	Principal's Interview (Journal)
Research Question 1: How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?	1-How aware are teachers of their duties regarding students with learning difficulties?	1-How do you insure that teachers know their duties regarding students with learning difficulties?	1-What are your duties regarding students with learning difficulties?	1-What are your views on qualifications of teachers and other staff members to deal with children with all their needs?
	2-How is coordination done among regular teachers, support teachers and other relevant professionals, to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties?	2- What are your views on the qualifications of teachers and other staff members to deal with children with all their needs? How do you insure that coordination takes place?	2- What are your views on coordination among regular teachers, support teachers and other relevant professionals to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties?	2- Were you asked by the school to do an educational evaluation for your child? Give examples of how this was used.
	3- How does the school encourage staff members to participate in professional development in special education?	3- Give example of how the school encourages all staff members to participate in professional development in special education.	3- Give example of how you are encouraged by your administration to participate in professional development in your specialty as well as special education.	3- How confident are you in ensuring that your child's school meets your child's learning needs? Give examples.
	4- How is parental involvement and contact	4- Give example of parental involvement	4- How is parental involvement and contact	4- How frequently do you meet with your child's

	between parents and teachers encouraged and facilitated by the school?	and contact between parents and teachers encouraged and facilitated by the school?	between parents and teachers encouraged and facilitated by the school? Give examples.	teachers? For what purpose.
Research Question 2: How are students' psychosocial and academic needs being addressed	1-How are students supported socially and academically in class?	1-How are students supported socially and academically in class? Give examples.	1-How are students supported socially and academically in class? Give examples.	1- How can you describe the social and emotional relations of your child with his/her teachers?
	2- How do co-curricular and extra-curricular activities support and enhance learning available to all students?	2- Give examples of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that support and enhance learning available to all students?	2- Are all students, including those with learning difficulties, encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities? Give examples.	2- Is your child encouraged and allowed to participate in all extracurricular activities at school? Give examples.
	3- How does the school offer a safe, inspiring and motivating environment for all students?	3- What type of environment is provided for all students?	3- Give examples of safe and motivating environment that you are aware of at your school?	3- How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her school? How do you know?

Research Question 3: How is the curriculum being modified to meet students' needs?	1- Do all the teachers apply differentiation to meet the needs of all the students? How?	1- How do all the teachers apply differentiation to meet the needs of all the students? Give examples.	1- How do you use differentiation to meet the needs of all the students?	1- Does your child use the same books for his grade level as his classmates? What is your opinion about this issue?
	2- How does the school curriculum provide for each student with learning difficulties?	2- How does the school curriculum provide for each student with learning difficulties? Give examples.	2- How does the school provide for each student with learning difficulties? Give examples.	2- How does the school curriculum provide for your child to meet his needs? Give examples.
	3- How are students with learning difficulties assessed at your school?	3- How are students with learning difficulties assessed at your school?	3- How do you assess students with learning difficulties? Give examples.	3- Did you participate in curriculum modifications done to the educational plan given to your child? How
	4- Do you think you have adequate resources at your school to teach students with learning difficulties?	4- What resources does your school have to teach students with learning difficulties?	4- Do you think you have adequate resources at your school to teach students with learning difficulties? Give examples.	4- What are the resources used to cater for your child's needs, and how are they used?

Appendix B

Interview Questions based on Principal's Journal

I am a graduate student at the Lebanese American University (LAU). I am doing a study about inclusion of students with learning difficulties as my Thesis. If you agree to participate, it would involve filling out this questionnaire that would take about 10 minutes of your time. There are no risks associated with the study. You are under no requirement to participate in this study and should feel free to decline. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be penalized for not participating or for withdrawing. No information that identifies you personally will be collected. Your participation will be anonymous and all information will be kept confidential. Your answers to the interview questions will indicate your permission to use your data.

- 1- An inclusive school is a place where all students are educated together academically and socially regardless of their needs. Based on this definition, do you consider your school to be inclusive? Give me examples.
- 2- Does the school's admission policy facilitate the admission of students with learning difficulties? Give me examples.
- 3- What kinds of learning difficulties do you have at your school? Give me examples.
- 4- Does the school have a support system for students with learning difficulties? Give me examples.
- 5- How aware are teachers of their duties regarding students with learning difficulties? Give me examples.
- 6- Do all the teachers apply differentiation to meet the needs of all the students? Give me examples.
- 7- Do you think you have adequate resources at your school to teach students with learning difficulties? Give me examples.

- 8- How is coordination done among regular teachers, support teachers and other relevant professionals, to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties?
Give me examples.
- 9- Does the school provide an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for each student with learning difficulties?
- 10- How does the school encourage staff members to participate in professional development in special education? Give me examples.
- 11- Is parental involvement and contact between parents and teachers actively encouraged and facilitated by the school? Give me examples.
- 12- How are students supported socially and academically in class? Give me examples.
- 13- Are co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that support and enhance learning available to all students? Give me examples.
- 14- Does the school offer a safe, inspiring and motivating environment for all students? Give me examples.
- 15- How are students with learning difficulties assessed at your school? Give me examples.
- 16- Do you think you have adequate resources at your school to teach students with learning difficulties? Give me examples.

Appendix C

Interview Questions for LD Coordinator

I am a graduate student at the Lebanese American University (LAU). I am doing a study about inclusion of students with learning difficulties as my Thesis. If you agree to participate, it would involve filling out this questionnaire that would take about 10 minutes of your time. There are no risks associated with the study. You are under no requirement to participate in this study and should feel free to decline. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be penalized for not participating or for withdrawing. No information that identifies you personally will be collected. Your participation will be anonymous and all information will be kept confidential. Your answers to the interview questions will indicate your permission to use your data.

- 1- An inclusive school is a place where all students are educated together academically and socially regardless of their needs. Based on this definition, do you consider your school to be inclusive?
- 2- Does the school's admission policy facilitate the admission of students with learning difficulties? Give example.
- 3- What kinds of learning difficulties do you have at your school?
- 4- How do you detect students with learning difficulties at your school?
- 5- Does the school have a support system for students with learning difficulties? Give example.
- 6- How do you insure that teachers know their duties regarding students with learning difficulties?
- 7- Do you think all the teachers and staff members are qualified to deal with children with all their needs? Give examples of how school encourages all staff members to participate in professional development in special education.
- 8- Do all the teachers apply differentiation to meet the needs of all the students? How?

- 9- Do you think you have adequate resources at your school to teach students with learning difficulties? Explain.
- 10- Does the school provide an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for each student with learning difficulties? Give example.
- 11- Give examples of how parental involvement and contact between parents and teachers is actively encouraged and facilitated by the school?
- 12- How are students supported socially and academically in class?
- 13- Are co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that support and enhance learning available to all students? Give example.
- 14- How are students with learning difficulties assessed at your school?

Appendix D

Survey Questions for Teachers

I am a graduate student at the Lebanese American University (LAU). I am doing a study about inclusion of students with learning difficulties as my Thesis. If you agree to participate, it would involve filling out this questionnaire that would take about 10 minutes of your time. There are no risks associated with the study. You are under no requirement to participate in this study and should feel free to decline. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be penalized for not participating or for withdrawing. No information that identifies you personally will be collected. Your participation will be anonymous and all information will be kept confidential. Your submission of the survey questionnaire will indicate your permission to use your data.

- 1- What grade level do you teach?
- 2- What subject do you teach?
- 3- Are you currently teaching students with learning difficulties?
- 4- What kind of learning difficulties do you have at your school?
- 5- An inclusive school is a place where all students are educated together academically and socially regardless of their needs. Based on this definition, do you consider your school to be inclusive?
- 6- Does the school's admission policy facilitate the admission of students with learning difficulties? How?
- 7- Does the school have a support system for learning difficulties? How?
- 8- Are you aware of your duties regarding students with learning difficulties?
Give examples.
- 9- Do you use differentiation to meet the needs of all the students? Give examples.
- 10- Is there an assigned teacher responsible for coordinating among regular teachers, support teachers and other relevant professionals to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties? Explain.

- 11- Do you think you have had adequate training to teach students with learning difficulties? Explain.
- 12- Are you encouraged by your administration to participate in professional development in your specialty as well as special education? How?
- 13- Mention 3 different teaching styles that you use in your classroom.
- 14- Do you think you have adequate resources at your school to teach students with learning difficulties? Give examples.
- 15- How do you describe your job? What do you like most about it?
- 16- What would you consider to be the biggest challenges that you face when teaching students with learning difficulties?
- 17- Are all students, including those with learning difficulties, encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities? Give examples.
- 18- Does the school provide an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for each student with learning difficulties? Explain.
- 19- Is parental involvement and contact between parents and teachers actively encouraged and facilitated by the school? How
- 20- Does the school offer a safe, inspiring and motivating environment for all the students? How?
- 21- How are students supported socially and academically in class?
- 22- How are students with learning difficulties assessed at your school?

Appendix E

Survey Questions for Parents

I am a graduate student at the Lebanese American University (LAU). I am doing a study about inclusion of students with learning difficulties as my Thesis. If you agree to participate, it would involve filling out this questionnaire that would take about 10 minutes of your time. There are no risks associated with the study. You are under no requirement to participate in this study and should feel free to decline. Even if you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be penalized for not participating or for withdrawing. No information that identifies you personally will be collected. Your participation will be anonymous and all information will be kept confidential. Your submission of the survey questionnaire will indicate your permission to use your data.

- 1- What grade is your child in?
- 2- Why did you choose this school for your child?
- 3- What is your child's learning difficulty and how was it detected?
- 4- Were you asked by the school to do an educational evaluation for your child?
- 5- An inclusive school is a place where all students are educated together academically and socially regardless of their needs. Based on this definition, do you consider your school to be inclusive?
- 6- If you answered yes to the previous question, what, in your opinion, are the important factors that make it an inclusive school? If you answered no to the previous question, how do you think this school can be more inclusive?
- 7- How frequently do you meet with your child's teachers?
- 8- Does your child have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that meets his needs? Give examples.
- 9- Did you participate in the modifications done to the educational plan given to your child? How?
- 10- In your opinion, does the school have adequate resources to cater for your child's needs? If yes, what are these resources?

- 11- How can you describe the social and emotional relations of your child with his/her teachers?
- 12- Is your child encouraged and allowed to participate in all extracurricular activities at school? Give examples.
- 13- Do you think all the teachers and other staff members are qualified to deal with children with all their needs? Give examples.
- 14- To what extent do you think the children enjoy going to your child's school?
- 15- How motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school?
- 16- How well do the teaching styles of your child's teachers match your child's learning style?
- 17- How well do administrators at your child's school create a school environment that helps children learn?
- 18- How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her school?
- 19- How well do you feel your child's school is preparing him/her for his/her next academic year?
- 20- How well do the activities offered at your child's school match his/her interests?
- 21- To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at school?
- 22- How confident are you in your ability to make sure your child's school meets your child's learning needs?
- 23- Do you have any other suggestions concerning your child and the school?

Appendix F

Observation Checklist

Observation Checklist			
Research Question 1: How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?			
Does school administration facilitate inclusion to the school system?			
Is there any referral form for detected students' needs?			
Does the building provide a safe environment for the students?			
Do the playgrounds provide a safe environment for the students?			
Does the class provide a safe environment for the students?			
Are there set meetings with parents to discuss their children's needs?			
Does the school provide speech and psychomotor educators?			
Research Question 2: How are students' psychosocial and academic needs being addressed?			
Are the students with LD given the chance to participate in class activities and group work?			
Are the students with LD given the chance to participate in extracurricular activities?			
Is appropriate behavior noticed and praised or rewarded?			
Research Question 3: How is the curriculum being modified to meet students' needs?			
Does the teacher use differentiated teaching methods?			
Does the teacher use multi-sensory teaching approaches?			
Does the special education teacher observe students in regular classroom settings?			
Does the teacher give time and support before answers?			

Appendix G

Artifacts (AdvancEd Accreditation Report)

External Review

Makassed Abi Bakr El-Siddeeq School

Part II: Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

The External Review Team for Makassed Abi Bakr-El Siddeeq School (ABSS) arrived into Beirut, Lebanon, on Sunday, April 28. On Monday morning, the team conducted its initial orientation meeting, followed by a tour of the area, which included a luncheon with members of the administrative and instructional staff. The formal, three-day External Review began on Tuesday, April 30. During the scheduling process, the fact that Wednesday, May 1, was a national holiday with school closures throughout the country had been overlooked. The result was that Tuesday and Thursday were normal school days with students in attendance. Wednesday, May 1, was a holiday. Teachers were asked to come in on Wednesday morning to assist with teacher interviews and standards reports. Parent, student and support staff interviews took place on Tuesday, as did 15 learning environment observations. The school has an enrollment of slightly more than 100 students, thus allowing for all classrooms to be visited several times. The team felt that the integrity of the review was not compromised due to this abbreviated schedule.

The school was well-prepared for the External Review. Materials, artifacts, and pieces of evidence were well organized and complete. The team found the stakeholders, parents, students, and school personnel were forthright in their comments. Cooperation between team members and school personnel greatly facilitated the review process, which included interactions with the school's two major administrators, 22 instructional staff, 5 support personnel, 15 students and 14 parents. The self-assessment process involved a large majority of school personnel and was conducted in an honest attempt to measure the capabilities of the school as well as identify areas in need of improvement. The listing of those areas in need of improvement was a testament to their thorough approach. It must be noted, however, that the school referenced data from the Student Performance Documents in determining that several academic areas were below expected levels of performance, experienced negative trends, and showed the overall lowest performance levels. These areas were not referenced in the school's improvement plan. The perspective of the team in viewing the school and its various capacities varied slightly from that of the school, which resulted in differences in several ratings. Nonetheless, team members and school personnel alike expressed agreement that the self assessment process as well as the External Review process provided the school and its stakeholders with valuable information which would assist in its improvement efforts in the future.

Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

The Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association in Beirut, Lebanon, was established in 1878. Among its many endeavors and interests is education. The association has established schools throughout the nation, one of which is the Makassed Abi Bakr El Siddeeq School (ABSS), founded in 1923. The support

External Review

Makassed Abi Bakr El-Siddeeq School

and direction provided to the school by the association helps explain its success and its longevity. Its purpose of creating a lifelong learning environment where students with different capacities have the chance to learn and serve the community, while at the same time embracing their human, Islamic, Arab, and national identity is evident throughout the entire school. This commitment to the purpose and direction of the school as well as to the association is worthy of note. Like all Makassed schools, there is a mosque within the school grounds. Students have access to its facilities. Islamic culture, religious teachings, and values form an important part of the school's teachings. Additionally, a myriad of activities and opportunities, both within the school and within the community at large help in fostering a sense of purpose and direction for its students. Through a variety of character development activities and lessons students are provided with real life opportunities to practice and make permanent and relevant their nascent role in the Lebanese society. This was evident in the Well-Managed Learning Environment, one of the more highly rated domains in the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT) data

Another example of the school's commitment to its purpose can be seen in its efforts to address the educational needs of students perceived as having learning difficulties. Instructional staff dedicated to providing remedial interventions for students in math, English, and Arabic are available to assist within a "pull-out" model as well as to work within a classroom setting. Recognizing the educational needs of students with learning difficulties is something not often found in schools within the region. Yet another aspect of the school's commitment to its purpose and direction can be found in its efforts to attract and maintain a qualified instructional staff. Many staff members hold graduate degrees. Several are currently enrolled in specialized programs and will eventually be able to fill areas of need within the school's instructional program. The Early Childhood program, in an attempt to provide quality instruction and individual attention to the needs of its students, has maintained a low teacher-student ratio. Parent interviews revealed that these efforts are greatly appreciated. Interviews also revealed great appreciation for all the efforts made by the school to remain true to its purpose and direction.

The ABSS is fortunate to have a well-certified and qualified instructional staff. Professional development opportunities are provided throughout the year, on a regular basis. The focus of these trainings varies, and is often determined by occasional training opportunities offered within the area. Though this episodic approach will well-intentioned, it is recognized that certain areas are often overlooked. Discussions with administration and teachers alike referenced the lack of a long term professional development plan, one that would identify areas of need, plan for consistent and reinforced training and follow up, as well as to identify ways to measure implementation and success. Initial efforts to provide expertise in the collection, analysis, and use of data in its many forms have begun. However, this expertise is not wide-spread and the real results of these efforts have yet to be fully understood. The administration recognizes the need to further develop skills necessary to make more comprehensive and robust use of the data it provides.

Through discussions with staff and through an examination of artifacts and materials, the team found that many of the assessment measures used throughout the school are developed and coordinated by the instructional staff and reviewed by the administration staff. Regular meetings to review the development, implementation, and results of these measures take place. Ancillary textbook materials are used to supplement the testing process. A uniform format and consistent use of criteria to help ensure reliability and validity of the tests or the grading procedures was not evident. Rubrics to assist with this process were not available. To date, little evidence of a formal, articulated and comprehensive assessment plan

External Review

Makassed Abi Bakr El-Siddeeq School

exists. Though the school has made initial inquiries regarding the use of a standardized test (Measures of Academic Progress), formal adoption and implementation has not yet begun.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

ABSS is located in the downtown area of Beirut. It is housed in a converted villa, with several play areas for students, though these areas present few opportunities for extended sports activities. Due to construction in the area, one of the playing fields is currently not being utilized. Rather, it is being used to house building equipment from the nearby construction. This situation is thought to be temporary. Efforts have been made to provide access to sports clubs in the area to meet the needs of the older students. Efforts to provide play areas for the youngest students are evident though the overall availability of safe, age-appropriate playground equipment is limited. A security staff maintains a protection wall around the facilities which is monitored continuously. As mentioned before, there is a mosque on school grounds. Though it is open to the general public, access to the school is restricted and student usage of the mosque is closely monitored.

The villa setting helps support the family-like atmosphere so proudly espoused by all stakeholders. There is a sense of a well-managed learning environment throughout, for which, it was explained, educational programs and efforts were largely responsible. Administrative offices and the Early Childhood program are located on the ground floor as is the small library and several resource rooms. The classrooms for grades 1 through 6 are upstairs. These rooms are comfortable and spacious, each with air conditioning units. The upstairs classrooms have active Smart Boards with video projectors. It was noted during classroom observations that the use of instructional technology was somewhat limited, with teachers often underutilizing its interactive capability. Few students were seen using equipment or technology in any form. Classrooms in the Early Childhood Program were not equipped with technology devices nor did they provide meaningful opportunities for interactive use of digital equipment. There was little evidence of an infrastructure that would support the use of technology in these rooms. Though references to professional development opportunities that support a variety of strategies were made, few were observed. Many of the instructional strategies observed involved teacher directed activities. Though students were active in their participation, it was frequently in response to teacher generated questions or requests. Few examples of group activities or sustained interaction among students were observed. Likewise, concerted efforts to engage students in higher order thinking skills were not evident.

The Makassed Abi Bakr El Siddeeq School provides a unique educational opportunity for students in Beirut and its immediate surrounding area. Its 80 year history is rich with accomplishments. The AdvancED External Review Team is proud to have had the opportunity to see the school in action. The degree to which its mission and purpose plays such a vital role in its operation is impressive. The team will long remember the hospitality with which it was received. The administration and instructional staff provided answers, responses, and insights to each of the many questions and inquiries made by the team, always with a sense of graciousness.

Appendix H

Artifacts (Mission and Vision)



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
جَمْعِيَّةُ الْمُقَاوَدَةِ الْخَيْرِيَّةِ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةِ فِي بَيْرُوتَ
تأسست ١٢٩٥هـ - ١٨٧٨م
مدرسة أبي بكر الصديق

Out of one we are many

School Purpose Statement (Mission)

The purpose of the school is to create a lifelong learning environment where students with different capacities have the chance to learn and serve the community embracing modern styles of education yet preserving their Human, Islamic, Arab, and National Identity.

School Direction Statement (Vision)

Upon our society's need for committed individuals who serve with no boundaries, Makassed ABSS School has set the direction for its students with their different learning abilities to be leaders in this domain. From one ABSS many deeds are spread to create a better society.

Appendix I

Artifacts (Modifications and Accommodations List)



Mabassad Abu Bakr El Siddiq School
Out of One We Are Many

Remedial Intervention Division
Modifications and Accommodations
2014-2015

Student Name:	Regular teacher:	
Subject:	Special teacher:	
Duration:	Beginning Date:	Ending Date:
Placement:	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Special classroom

		Daily	Weekly	Monthly
Test	Oral			
	Short Answer			
	Extended time for completion			
	Multiple sessions			
	Exams of reduced length			
	Read test for students			
	Modify test format			
	Record student responses			
	Test alone in a separate room			
	Test in a small- group setting			
	Test in special education classroom			
	Assignments	Allow copying from paper/book		
Lower difficulty level				
Shorten assignments				
Reduce paper//pencil tasks				
Directions given in a variety of ways				
Allow students to type assignments				
Avoid penalizing for penmanship				
Avoid penalizing for spelling errors				
Extended time for completion				



Mahassad Ali Babu El Siddiq School
Out of One We Are Many

**Remedial Intervention Division
Modifications and Accommodations
2014-2015**

Texts	Highlighted			
	Provide home set of textbooks/materials			
	Large print			
	Simplified texts			

Other: _____

Appendix J

Artifacts (IEP)

Remedial Intervention Division *Student Individualized Plan (SIP)*

The following document includes most of the necessary components of the Individualized Educational Program. It is called Student Individualized Plan because students with special needs at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] get support for the general curriculum in Math, English and Arabic subjects. The purpose for the development of this document is to tell where the student is, what will be planned, and how s/he is progressing.

Date of the SIP Meeting: -----

Participants:

<u>Names</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Signature</u>
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----

Student Individualized Plan (SIP)

Student Information

Student: -----

Date of Birth: -----

Grade: -----

Parent's Phone Number: -----

Placement: -----

Student Profile:

Annual Goals and Instructional Objectives Area	Math		
Annual Goal			
Instructional Objectives	Evaluation Method (How)	Evaluation Schedule (when)	Date Attained (for each Objective)

Annual Goals and Instructional Objectives Area	English		
Annual Goal			
Instructional Objectives	Evaluation Method (How)	Evaluation Schedule (when)	Date Attained (for each Objective)

Annual Goals and Instructional Objectives Area	لغة عربية		
Annual Goal			
Instructional Objectives	Evaluation Method (How)	Evaluation Schedule (when)	Date Attained (for each Objective)

Modifications and adaptations to Regular Program

Appendix K

Table of Sample Answer Quotes

	Principal's Journal	Coordinator of LD Interview	Teachers' Interview Questions	Parents' Interview Questions
Research Question 1: How does the school insure awareness, coordination and needed skills for its LD program?	Once a week a meeting is held between the regular teachers and the LD teachers for each subject to share the weekly plan, discusses individualized plans and monitor the students' progress.	Professional development is ongoing in the school. Every teacher follows professional development according to his/her specialty as well as according to LD topics.	Teachers should attend various specialized workshops and lectures about handling learning difficulties and motivating kids through implementing methods that are based on encouragement, creativity and self-learning.	I found improvement with my child's education and way of learning and the teachers are very caring
Research Question 2: How are students' psychosocial and academic needs being addressed?	An advantage that we have at school is the small number of students in every classroom and our classes are spacious, which makes catering for students with LD easier	Because all the students learn with each other and participate in all school activities equally regardless of their capacity	Terrific job, I like the hope into student's eyes. It is interesting. What i like most about it is making a difference through teaching where every child would be better with guidance and care.	Excellent social and emotional relations/ The relationship is good and teachers understand the needs of each child/ belonging
Research Question 3: How is the curriculum being modified to meet students' needs?	Detect the strong points and the weak points of the child from the assessment, write down all the modifications that the child needs, and develop an IEP for the child.	Differentiation/ Educational assessment / SIP for every student/ Modification in all areas	We accept oral answers, and short answers, modified exams, Diagnostic test, formative test, Summative test, student 's portfolio	Pull out system / strategies used to let him understand in an easier way/ Educational plan to meet his needs

Appendix L

NIH Certificate of Completion

