

# General Education Teachers on Effective Writing Strategies in Inclusive Education: A Phenomenological Study

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*Abstract* — This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of general education teachers who teach students with special needs in writing in the United States of America. The study employed a phenomenological, qualitative methodological approach. The study included ten co-participants, all of whom have a Bachelor of Secondary Education degree with a specialization in English. These individuals have a minimum of five years of teaching experience. This study explored the attributes and sources of self-efficacy in the inclusive setting, specifically emphasizing enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and physiological/affective states. Additionally, it highlighted the actions taken by the co-participants to resolve their problems, along with the learners' motivation and engagement. The aim of the phenomenological qualitative technique was to collect crucial data from the ten General Education teachers through a thorough interview. The data were collected and presented using descriptive analysis. From the collection of data, the following themes were generated: (1) Educator-based Effective Writing (2) Achieving Mastery Through Active Practices (3) Positive Role Models Exude Confidence In Students' Abilities, (4) Utilizing Evaluations to Exhibit Learning (5) The Power of Encouragement, (6) Overcome Writing Anxiety: Healthy Writing Management, (7) Predicament in Inclusive Education, (8) General Education Teachers as Classroom Changers, (9) Learners' Affective, Behavioral, & Cognitive Engagement, (10) Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation of Learning. These characteristics of participants' perspectives characterized certain perceptions and lived experiences during inclusive classes. Participants in inclusive settings managed obstacles by establishing rules, teaching writing skills, and providing tutoring. High self-efficacy was achieved when elements like mastery experience, vicarious experience, social/verbal persuasion, and physiological/affective states were present. High academic engagement was evident, driven by extrinsic motivations like rewards and recognition. It is recommended that teachers expand the strategy's assessment phase and include coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety while implementing effective writing in the classroom. To assist them in generating fresh and creative ideas, educators are advised to take advantage of the educational tools available today. Educational technologies like NoredInk, Eduprotocol, Common lit, computer programs, etc., may be used to accomplish this purpose. Teachers are encouraged to continue using innovative methods and approaches to classroom management that foster positive feelings in an inclusive classroom. It is advised that teachers participate in comprehensive training workshops on effective writing strategies, special education strategies (accommodation/modification of the lessons), and activities that benefit the class. The quality of self-efficacy elements is related to academic Motivation and engagement. Appropriate writing abilities and knowledge are developed via this instruction. Implement the DFEIW Model

(Definitive Factors for Effective-Inclusive Writing). Additional research may also be undertaken, including route analysis incorporating these tactics with academic accomplishment, higher-order thinking abilities, and whole-brain thinking.

**Keywords** — *Effective Writing Strategies, Inclusion, Self-Efficacy, Special Education, General Education*

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## I. Introduction

Research shows that teachers' self-efficacy strongly influences their ability to support students with special educational needs. Kazanopoulos et al. (2022) found that special education teachers were more confident using inclusive practices, managing behaviors, and collaborating with others. Although global education policies are becoming more inclusive, the social integration of students with special needs still faces challenges (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). A new study aims to develop strong classroom-based writing strategies for these students, focusing on general education teachers' perceptions.

Research by Young et al. (2022) and Graham et al. (2016) highlighted that writing instruction for students with learning disabilities (LD) needs improvement; few teachers consistently use accommodations, and those with more experience provide better support. Special education teachers often feel less prepared and enthusiastic about teaching writing, contributing to students' struggles with basic writing skills.

The study also draws on Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, showing that teachers with higher self-efficacy adapt better to classroom challenges. By exploring participants' experiences in inclusive settings across the USA, the research seeks to understand how to enhance effective writing practices and foster student motivation and engagement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is essential for academic success, civic engagement, and professional advancement (Graham, 2019). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emphasize developing explanatory, opinion, and narrative writing skills from kindergarten onward, especially for the 7.3 million students with disabilities protected under IDEA (Schaeffer, 2023). Effective writing instruction involves research skills and self-regulation strategies, such as goal-setting and emotional control (Teng et al., 2019). Studies show that students with higher initial fluency perform better in writing interventions (Alvis et al., 2019), while challenges like transcription and sentence structure require targeted instruction (Gupta, 2023). Researchers like Young (2022) highlight the urgent need for explicit writing instruction for students with learning disabilities. Techniques like the Guided by Principles (Acar, 2023), self-regulated strategy development (Whitney, 2020), and tools like graphic organizers (Hughes et al., 2019; Evmenova et al., 2020) have been effective in enhancing student writing performance.

Additional strategies like using sentence starters and stems (Rodriguez-Mojica & Briceño, 2018) and frameworks like Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (Platt, 2020) strengthen argumentation skills. The Jane Schaffer Academic Writing Program supports students, particularly those with dyslexia and ADHD, through structured writing processes (The Prentice Team, 2024). Collaborative writing has also improved content quality and organization (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019). Technology-driven graphic organizers and self-regulation tools have shown promise for students with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders (Evmenova & Regan, 2019). Finally, with the rise of artificial intelligence (Brinkman et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020), AI writing assistants now offer personalized feedback to support student growth in writing, addressing the challenge of providing individualized instruction in large and diverse classrooms (Wu, 2024).

Writing is critical for academic achievement, career readiness, and civic life (Graham, 2019). The Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association, 2010) highlight the need for explicit instruction in explanatory, opinion, and narrative writing from early grades, especially for the 7.3 million students with disabilities (Schaeffer, 2023). Research emphasizes the importance of self-regulation strategies like goal setting and emotional control (Teng et al., 2019), and shows that early fluency strongly predicts later writing success (Alvis et al., 2019). Students often struggle with transcription, sentence construction, and organization (Yu, 2021; Gupta, 2023), making targeted support essential. Young (2022) stresses the urgent need for systematic writing instruction for students with learning disabilities, while practical approaches like Guided by Principles (Acar, 2023), Self-Regulated Strategy Development (Whitney, 2020), and graphic organizers (Hughes et al., 2019; Evmenova et al., 2020) have been shown to improve writing outcomes.

Further, scaffolds such as sentence starters (Rodriguez-Mojica & Briceño, 2018) and frameworks like Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (Platt, 2020) help students organize their ideas and strengthen argument writing. Programs like the Jane Schaffer Academic Writing Program (Prentice Team, 2024) offer structured support for students with dyslexia and ADHD. Collaborative writing improves organization and detail quality (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2019), while technology-based tools, including graphic organizers and self-regulation apps, enhance writing development for students with disabilities (Evmenova & Regan, 2019). With advancements in artificial intelligence, writing assistants (Brinkman et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020) and AI feedback systems (Wu, 2024) are becoming valuable resources to personalize instruction and meet the needs of diverse learners in increasingly complex classrooms.

Assistive technology (AT) supports students with disabilities by improving reading, writing, and overall educational experiences. McNicholl et al. (2019) advocate using mainstream assistive technologies to foster inclusivity and reduce stigma. Almgren Bäck et al. (2022) found that AT significantly boosts reading skills and motivation, especially for students with profound challenges, while Svensson et al. (2021) emphasized the benefits of text-to-speech (TTS) tools for

decoding and comprehension. Kambouri et al. (2020) demonstrated that speech-to-text (STT) interventions, like Dragon software, enhance writing quality and self-esteem in students with communication challenges. Rosario et al. (2019) and De Smedt et al. (2018) highlighted the value of instructional support like weekly journals, SRSD strategies, and self-regulation techniques to improve writing proficiency.

Research on writing development stresses the importance of motivation, self-regulation, and exposure to high-quality texts. Hebert et al. (2018) recommended cognitive strategies like sentence combining, text structure teaching, and self-regulated strategy instruction to support struggling writers. Graham et al. (2019) found that writing motivation, strategic behaviors, and knowledge significantly impact writing quality, while Novia (2020) and Tat (2021) highlighted the role of positive attitudes and extensive reading in writing success. Studies by Paulsrud and Nilholm (2020), Sundqvist (2018), and Magnússon (2019) explored the challenges and benefits of inclusive education, including co-teaching models advocated by Pihlaja et al. (2021) and King & Strogilos (2018). Xy and Kuti (2021) stressed the need for appropriate classroom accommodations and IEP alignment to ensure that students with disabilities succeed in inclusive settings.

Special education and general education teachers collaborate closely to modify instructional strategies and adjust lesson plans based on student needs and successes, a practice emphasized by Parrish (2019). Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL), they ensure accessibility by teaching material in multiple ways, maintaining student interest and offering accommodations like voice-to-text tools to all students, not just those with IEPs. Research by Kirkpatrick et al. (2019) supports that such collaboration enhances student support, promotes shared responsibility, and strengthens teacher relationships. Similarly, Bray and Russell (2018) found that although general education teachers implemented IEPs, they often lacked adequate modifications or detailed guidance from special educators. Building on this foundation, Camacho et al. (2021) and Ives et al. (2020) stressed that student engagement in writing must address emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and social factors, while Pearson (2024) critiqued current feedback practices and recommended more authentic research contexts. Luo et al. (2024) also demonstrated the strong connection between academic self-efficacy, learning engagement, and academic achievement, advocating for longitudinal studies to better understand these causal relationships.

Studies by Azila-Gbettor (2020), Olivier et al. (2019), Singh and Abdullah (2020), and Zhen et al. (2017) consistently found that self-efficacy positively impacts peer engagement and academic achievement. Research by Zhao (2021) and Gan et al. (2023) further explored the mediating role of self-efficacy and perceived social support in student engagement. Kodden (2020) and Tacla (2022) supported the broader impact of self-efficacy on well-being and motivation. Tomas et al. (2019), and Alemany-Arrebola et al. (2020) identified writing self-efficacy as crucial to overcoming anxiety and improving performance. Meanwhile, Shin and Bolkan (2021) and Schunk and Benedetto (2021) highlighted the influence of intellectually stimulating practices and

self-efficacy theory on student motivation. Studies by Wink et al. (2021), and Trautner and Schwinger (2020) underscore the necessity of empathetic, inclusive pedagogies and motivation regulation strategies for fostering a positive learning environment and enhancing student success.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of general education teachers who teach writing to students with special needs. The following guidelines and questions led to the purpose of this study.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following problems:

1. How do the co-participants describe their lived experiences as general education writing teachers in inclusive education?
2. What themes emerged from the significant meanings formulated?
3. Based on the findings of the study, what output may be proposed to improve the writing skills of the students in inclusive education?

#### II. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach, providing a valuable framework for educational research. It allowed the researcher to conduct adaptable activities that captured and enhanced understanding of complex phenomena, such as various aspects of human social experience (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The design's significance lay in its ability to capture the essence of teachers' lived experiences, offering a rich and nuanced understanding. However, it is important to note that "phenomenology" can be interpreted differently depending on theoretical and practical circumstances (Sage Research Method Community, 2021). The researcher used a flexible qualitative approach, gathering data in familiar settings, employing both inductive and deductive strategies, and relying on intuition to identify patterns and themes. The findings contribute to existing literature and may call for educational changes, emphasizing the importance of understanding the experiences and perspectives of the target audience.

Data generation began with the dissertation adviser's review and approval of the interview guide, followed by obtaining permissions from the district superintendent and the school principal. Once participants gave consent, virtual interviews lasting thirty minutes to an hour were scheduled at their convenience. Before each interview, the researcher built a strong rapport with co-participants to ensure their comfort, clarified comments during the interviews, and recorded sessions for accurate transcription. Co-participants—ten diverse educators from the United States, each with at least five years of inclusion teaching experience—provided insights into students' behaviors, engagement, motivation, and learning experiences. Ethical standards were upheld

through informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and member checking to ensure the reliability of findings. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on specific characteristics aligned with the research criteria (Hussain, 2024). Data analysis involved thematic reflection following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process, from familiarization with the data to producing a detailed report using vivid descriptions and direct quotes from participants, ensuring the authentic representation of their lived experiences.

### III. Results and Discussion

The results of the study led to the fact that the majority of the participants in the Inclusive Education were in the following:

1. Most participants used writing processes like workshops, graphic organizers, paragraph frames, and mentor texts to strengthen their skills in organizing a thesis, introduction, body, and conclusion using Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning. Direct instruction, support, and feedback helped improve their coherence, content, self-efficacy, engagement, and motivation. Collaboration with teachers and the use of structured paragraph examples enhanced participants' confidence and made inclusion classes more exciting and successful. Access to technology encourages even students with specific needs to seek innovative ideas, approach challenges with optimism, and stay highly engaged. Students were both intrinsically motivated by joy and creativity and extrinsically motivated by rewards, grades, and recognition.
2. The study's conclusion highlights features of participants' lived experiences in implementing effective writing strategies in an inclusive setting, resulting in ten derived themes. These themes emphasized participants' strategies, challenges, confidence-building role models, stress-relieving techniques, and students' engagement and motivation. Ultimately, the findings were transformative, helping the researcher develop a model to support students' writing improvement and reduce writing anxiety through inclusive resources.
3. The proposed *Andrews's Definitive Factors for Effective-Inclusive Writing (DFEIW)* model is a functional writing framework that challenges, engages, effectuates, and builds learners' confidence in an inclusive setting. It aims to promote purposeful, recalibrated equality among students with special needs in general education classes despite differences in culture, religion, nationality, and learning styles. This model highlights the significant role of teachers by providing effective writing strategies to enhance learners' critical thinking and communication skills. It also supports students in assessing their motivation, engagement, strengths, weaknesses, and fosters empathy, enthusiasm, and adaptability for their academic growth.

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