

SCHOOL-BASED EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION
OF SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the participation of secondary students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Specifically, this study sought to understand: (a) the motivating factors that affected the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in school clubs, and (b) how students participated in school club activities. Using a multiple case study, the experiences of three high school students participating in school clubs were documented. Data were collected through interviews with special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents; observations of students participating in school club activities; and document reviews of school club information sources as well as Individualized Education Programs. Data analysis entailed coding interviews, observations, and document reviews for categories. A second level of analysis included a cross-case thematic evaluation of all data sources. Participating in fun activities with peers was the primary motivating factor for why students joined school clubs, while adult encouragement and being a part of a group were motivational factors affecting students' continued involvement in school club activities. In general, students participated differently than their peers in school club activities. Students also received various amounts of personal support during their participation in school club activities, and were rarely supervised or monitored by an adult.

To Preston Grae

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Sitting in Mrs. Snipp's sixth grade classroom at St. Leo's Elementary School, as an eleven year old young dreamer, the idea of pursuing an advanced degree first came into reality. The journey to receiving my PhD has ultimately fulfilled a lifetime goal and provided me with the opportunity to advocate for those in my field. I would like to give my sincerest appreciation to the following individuals who had a profound impact on my life in reaching this accomplishment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Active participation in school-based extracurricular activities can lead to well-rounded meaningful school experiences for all students. For students with severe disabilities (SD), participation in activities can afford students with the opportunity to find their niche within the larger context of their school communities. These experiences are invaluable learning opportunities, as these students have greater chances to explore interests, gain a variety of skills, and develop and strengthen relationships with club members of their schools. There is a rich history of research documenting the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., Burnett, 2000; Holland & Andrea, 1987; Kleiber & Powell, 2005; Lipscomb, 2007; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; McNeal, 1995; Osgood, 2005). This research also points to reasons why students participate in extracurricular activities, such as perceived competence and increased self-worth.

However, few studies have specifically investigated the extent to which secondary students with SD have participated and benefited from their involvement in extracurricular activities and no studies have examined why these students participate in activities. In fact, students with SD have been found to have the lowest levels of participation compared to other categories of disabilities (Cadwallader, Wagner, & Garza, 2003; Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen, & Brent, 2001; Wagner, Cadwallader, Garza, & Cameto, 2004). Given the importance of extracurricular involvement for students with SD, there is an essential need for practitioners, administrators, and parents to utilize effective strategies for promoting increased participation for these learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the involvement of high school students with SD in extracurricular school clubs. A multiple case study design was used to explore this topic. Data collection included: (a) interviews with special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents of students with SD; (b) observations of students with SD participating in school club activities; and (c) document reviews of school club information sources as well as Individualized Education Programs. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the motivating factors that affect the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in school clubs?
2. How do students with SD participate in school club activities?

Overview of Manuscript

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on secondary school-based extracurricular activities. The following areas of the literature have guided the development of research questions and include: (a) a historical perspective on extracurricular activities, (b) participation of students in extracurricular activities, (c) factors that facilitate participation in extracurricular activities, (d) importance of including students with disabilities in extracurricular activities, (e) participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities, (f) participation of students with SD in extracurricular activities, and (g) motivating factors that affect the inclusion of students with SD in extracurricular activities. The final section of chapter two includes a statement of the problem.

Chapter 3 details the methodology of the study. Based upon the review of literature, a multiple-case study was designed to examine the research questions. Three cases were selected and one student with a severe disability served as the focal student for each case. Participants in

this study included individuals from three separate high school settings. In each case, participants consisted of a special education teacher of students with SD, a student with a severe disability that was participating in an extracurricular school club, the parents of the student with a severe disability, a club sponsor, student club members, and any adults present during club meetings. Several instruments were developed for this study, including five interview protocols, one observation protocol, and two document review forms. Interview and observation protocols were piloted prior to data collection. Data collection procedures encompassed a 6-month timeline and data were collected concurrently across all three cases. The order of data collection included: (a) conducting document reviews; (b) interviewing the special education teacher and club sponsor; (c) conducting a minimum of three observations of the student with SD participating in school club activities; and (d) interviewing the special education teacher, club sponsor, and the parents of the student with SD. Finally, data analysis involved coding sources of data for categories and themes. The sequence of analysis entailed the following: (a) analyzing interview, observation, and document data per each case; (b) integrating data into a final case study report for each case; and (c) conducting a cross-cases analysis of all data sources across all participants.

Chapter 4 contains findings for each case. Findings were synthesized and organized into individual case study reports. The following case study reports are included in this chapter: (a) David and the Mighty Hawks; (b) Nicole and FCCLA; and (c) Tiffany and the Key Club. Included in each case study report is a detailed account of findings from interviews, observations, and documents. Case study reports are organized by school and student background information; evidence to support each research question; and a final summary of findings.

Included in chapter 5 are findings from the cross-case analysis. Results are presented by themes that emphasize the commonalities across all cases. The first section explains motivating factors that affected the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs. In this section, themes are presented (i.e., who you know matters, what you know matters, finding a niche) that describe the primary motivating factors affecting students' initial and ongoing inclusion in school club activities. The next section provides information about how students with SD participated in school club activities. Similar to section one, findings are organized by themes (i.e., Going with the Flow; Social Obstacles: On the Outside Looking In; Supports Provided: Too Much, Too Little, Just Right; Safety in Numbers).

Finally, chapter 6 presents a discussion of major findings. This section begins with a brief review of significant results. Next, three main topical areas are discussed at length, including motivation, skills, and support. Research limitations as well as implications for practice are presented. Finally, directions for future research are examined.

Definitions/Terminology

To assist the reader, key terminology referring to various participants and commonly used terms in this study are defined as follows:

1. *Student with a Severe Disability*: A student having a severe to profound intellectual disability (i.e., extensive to pervasive support needs) that met the eligibility criteria for taking the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA).
2. *Special Education Teacher*: A high school special education teacher with a special education teaching license who had at least one year of teaching experience working with students with SD.
3. *Club Sponsor*: A public high school teacher who was responsible for directing and facilitating the extracurricular school club in which the student with a severe disability participated.
4. *Parent*: A parent of a student with a severe disability that was participating in the study.

5. *Club Member*: A student who was a member of a school club and actively participated in club meetings.
6. *Stakeholder*: Adults who were closely involved with the student with a severe disability and held knowledge about the student's involvement in the extracurricular school club. Adults included the special education teacher, club sponsor, and/or parents of the student with a disability.
7. *School-Based Extracurricular Activity*: Activities that were sponsored by the school and were not part of regular class activities or the basis of academic credit; including sports, school clubs, prosocial activities, performance activities, and school involvement.
8. *Extracurricular School Club*: A student-based organization tied to academic, social, hobby, or special interest; requiring regularly scheduled meetings that were facilitated by a club sponsor; and where membership was open to all students.

Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the involvement of secondary students with SD in extracurricular school clubs. Specifically, this study examined motivating factors that affected the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs and how students with SD participated in school club activities.

Perceptions of parents, special education teachers, and sponsors were used to describe the motivating factors affecting the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs. Across cases, stakeholders believed that students' desire to be with their friends and participate in fun activities were important motivating factors. Less common motivating factors related to recruitment efforts by club members, relationships with the club sponsor, prior experience participating in clubs, the variety of extracurricular activities from which to choose, and having an adult advocate for the student. In addition, students were perceived by stakeholders to continue their involvement in school clubs because they liked being part of a group and were encouraged to continue participation. Having a relationship with peers outside of school club activities and learning new skills were less frequent motivating factors for students' ongoing participation.

The participation of students with SD in school clubs varied across cases. Overall, students participated in the same types of activities as their peers (e.g., going to meetings, riding the activity bus), yet their actual engagement in activities was different than their peers. Oftentimes, students participated by completing simpler tasks, watching others participate, talking only to adults. In part, students had different participation patterns than their peers because they had fewer skills and individuals in the club (i.e., club sponsor, club members) were uncertain about how to include students in school club activities. The only type of support that students received during their participation was personal support provided by the special education teacher, club sponsor, peers, or parent. There was also a large discrepancy between the amounts of personal support provided to students (e.g., too much, too little). Finally, students were infrequently monitored or supervised by an adult (e.g., club sponsor, special education teacher) during their club involvement.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Secondary public schools offer many types of extracurricular activities. These activities afford students with opportunities to learn teamwork with peers; skill building; individual and group responsibility; as well as physical strength and endurance. Extracurricular activities provide additional opportunities for students to connect with new individuals in their schools, through shared experiences, and cultivation of school community and membership (McNeal, 1995; Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Participation also provides a channel for reinforcement of lessons and skills learned in the classroom. When participating in activities, students have the opportunity to apply skills in a real-world context, which in turn, leads to a well-rounded educational experience (Kleiber & Powell, 2005).

This study focused on school-based extracurricular activities, which are defined as “activities that are school-sponsored but are not part of regular class activities or the basis of academic credit” (McCarthy & Cabron-McCabe, 1992, p. 126). Eccles and Barber (1999) identified five distinct categories of extracurricular activities, including: sport participation, school clubs, prosocial activities, performance activities, and school involvement. For purposes of this research study, specific focus was placed on school clubs. School clubs are defined as student-based organizations tied to academic, social, hobby, or special interest; requiring regularly scheduled meetings that are facilitated by a club sponsor; and having membership that is open to all students.

A Historical Perspective on Extracurricular Activities

The debate about the place of extracurricular programming in public schooling has a long and rich history, beginning as early as the 20th century. During this time, educational reformers

were concerned with the misuse of students' available leisure time after-school. Extracurricular programming offered a solution to this dilemma by providing students with a safe and constructive environment to spend quality time with peers, while avoiding risky delinquent, criminal, antisocial, and self-destructive behaviors (Kleiber & Powell, 2005; Osgood, 2005). Over time, a variety of extracurricular programs began to slowly develop in many secondary settings across the country.

By the end of the 20th century, a new emphasis on academic achievement was emerging in the public education system and the value of extracurricular programming began to be critically scrutinized. Some community members, parents, and school personnel viewed extracurricular activities as primarily recreational, and believed that students' involvement in these activities could be detrimental to their academic achievement (Burnett, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). At this time, school officials were also facing increased pressures to allocate financial resources for programming that facilitated improved academic benefits. Holland and Andre (1987) argued that many secondary schools began to eliminate extracurricular programs due to budgetary concerns, without considering the positive effects of these programs. As a result of these concerns, researchers began to investigate the outcomes associated with student involvement in extracurricular activities, and new research began to emerge that linked participation to student benefits (see Holland & Andre, 1987; Marsh, 1992).

Today, this body of research has continued to steadily expand and there is supportive evidence to suggest that participation in extracurricular activities leads to increased academic and social-emotional developmental for youth (e.g., Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Lipscomb, 2007; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). Currently, many school systems are supportive of extracurricular programs and offer a wide-range of opportunities for student involvement.

Participation of Students in Extracurricular Activities

The primary types of extracurricular activities in which youth have participated include school-based athletic sports (e.g., cheerleading, football), lessons (e.g., music, language, dance), and clubs (e.g., hobby, special interest). Findings from the National Survey of Families (NASF, 1997) indicate that among youth ages 12 to 17, 57% participated in athletic sports, 29% participated in lessons, and 60% participated in clubs or organizations after school or on the weekends during the prior year. More recent findings from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) found that 57% of children between the ages of 6 and 17 participated in at least one after-school extracurricular activity. Results also suggest that children were more likely to participate in sports (i.e., 35%) than lessons or clubs (i.e., both 29%).

The majority of research involving the participation of students in extracurricular activities has utilized cross-sectional or longitudinal survey methods. These studies typically link participation in activities with beneficial outcomes. These outcomes include educational attainment, social and emotional development, as well as decreases in problem behaviors.

Educational attainment, and social and emotional development. Over time, youth involved in extracurricular activities have been found to increase academic and educational attainment as well as social and emotional development. For instance, athletic participation has been linked to higher rates of college attendance for lower-achieving and at-risk male students (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Holland & Andre, 1987; McNeal, 1995). Other studies have reported findings related to improved self-concept, interpersonal competence, increased high school grade point averages, improved standardized test scores, and declines in high school dropout rates (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Elder & Conger, 2000; Fredricks &

Eccles, 2006; Lipscomb, 2007; Mahoney, 2014; Mahoney, 2000). Youth involvement in extracurricular activities during secondary education has also been associated with long-term benefits spanning into adulthood. Researchers have reported that participation in activities is a predictor of future healthy adult outcomes, including: (a) higher educational achievement; (b) improved mental health; and (c) continued community activities and sport engagement (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Marsh 1992).

Decreased problem behavior. Participation in extracurricular activities has also been connected to decreases in negative behaviors. Reduced rates of criminal offending behavior as well as lower rates of substance abuse have been reported for youth actively engaged in extracurricular activities compared to their uninvolved peers (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; McNeal, 1995; Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). Mentoring from adult activity leaders, having positive role models, and engaging in challenging activities of interest are potential reasons for the reduction of problem behaviors of youth involved in extracurricular activities (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Larson, 2000).

Factors that Facilitate Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to explore the factors that facilitate participation in extracurricular activities for students. Articles investigating factors were published in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Researchers have utilized semi-structured in-depth interviews with students and parents (see Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; Patrick et al., 1999); questionnaires (see Fletcher et al., 2000; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Hueber & Mancini, 2003; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Weiss & Smith, 2002); in addition to one longitudinal study (see Bohnert, Martin, & Garber, 2007) to answer the question of *why* students choose to participate in

activities. Two factors emerged from the literature, including both individual and social-environmental influences.

Individual factors. According to one study, individual (or psychological) factors have been found to contribute to students' decision-making process of whether to join an extracurricular activity. Fredricks et al. (2002) reported that out of 41 high school students who had been involved in extracurricular programs focused on athletics and/or art, enjoyment was the most common reason why youth chose to participate in an activity. These youth described feelings of pleasure, fun, and satisfaction as reasons why they selected to participate and continue involvement in extracurricular activities. Youth also reported less common reasons for wanting to participate, such as filling their free time, gaining skills that could be useful in future careers, as well as a release from pressures felt from school or family life.

Weiss and Williams (2004) describe perceived competence as “a child's belief about his or her own ability” (p. 228). Youth that join and continue participation in extracurricular activities oftentimes do so because they believe they are ‘good at it’. Fredricks et al. (2002) reported that adolescents who perceived being good at an activity kept investing in the same activity over time because they felt they had the abilities to be successful, thus increasing their self-confidence. Increased self-worth (i.e., self-esteem) has also been found to influence students' decisions to participate in activities. Bohnert et al. (2007) examined the relationship between adolescent self-worth to activity involvement and found that adolescents with high levels of self-worth were more involved in extracurricular activities during high school, compared to students who did not report high levels of self-worth. The authors suggest that students with high levels of self-worth tend to expect more positive gains and rewards (e.g.,

contact with peers, awards and honors) from participation, which is an underlying motivating factor for their initial decision to become involved in activities.

Social-environmental factors. Social-environmental factors affecting participation in extracurricular activities have been focused on the role of parents and friendships. Parental encouragement for involvement in extracurricular activities has been shown to increase youth participation (Fletcher et al., 2000; Hueber & Mancini, 2003; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Through parental endorsement for participation in activities, parents send strong messages to their children about the value of involvement. Parents that have high expectations for their child's success in extracurricular activities, are more willing to provide access to such opportunities, thereby positively impacting their child's motivation to participate (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Hueber & Macini, 2003). Parents' decisions and resulting behaviors (e.g., signing their child up for music lessons, buying sporting equipment) influence children's interests, skills, and preference for future activity choices. In addition, parents that value community civic engagement and are highly involved in community activities, provide a positive model for their child, resulting in more active extracurricular participation for their children (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Friendship is another reason why youth choose to participate in extracurricular activities. Specifically, peer relationships may take on heightened importance during adolescence, compared to earlier years of development, due to the redefining nature and complexity of peer networks (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Opportunities to spend time with friends as well as make new ones has been linked to higher involvement of youth in extracurricular activities (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002; Fredricks et al., 2002; Hueber & Mancini, 2003). Also, continued involvement in an extracurricular activity has been shown to increase the likelihood

that youth will develop sustained relationships with peers participating in the activity (Patrick et al., 1999).

Fostering relationships with peers has been found to influence students' decisions to participate in extracurricular activities. Youth who identify with club members as sharing common values and interests as their own are more likely to sign-up for membership, compared to youth who perceive club members as having different values and interests (Fredricks et al., 2002; Patrick et al., 1999). Youth may also desire to expand their social networks. For instance, Patrick and colleagues (1999) assert that youth perceived their involvement in activities as increasing the extent to which they came into contact with new peers, thus expanding their peer network. As youth create new peer relationships and nurture existing ones, they are continuously improving social skills, concepts of well-being, and motivation to continue involvement in the activity. However, when youth lack the skills to build satisfying peer relationships within the activity, their motivation for involvement decreases as time spent with friends outside of the activity becomes more important (Lovitt, Plavins, & Cushing, 1999; Patrick et al., 1999). Youth participating in athletics have been found to have greater enjoyment and intrinsic motivation for continuing involvement in the activity when they have established personal friendships with other team members (Weiss & Smith, 2002; Weiss & Williams, 2004).

Importance of Including Students With Disabilities in Extracurricular Activities

Meaningful participation in extracurricular and nonacademic school activities is equally important for students with disabilities. These experiences enable youth to explore their personal interests, gain important skills, and strengthen relationships with peers, teachers, and school staff (Carter, Swedeen, Moss, & Pesko, 2010; Kleinert, Miracle, & Sheppard-Jones, 2007a; Swedeen, Carter, & Molfenter, 2010; Vinoski, Graybill, & Roach, 2016). Through engagement in these

activities, students with disabilities have greater opportunities for developing and practicing important skills, resulting in an enhanced quality of life (Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen, & Brent, 2001).

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) highlight the importance of including students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. In particular, IDEA requires Individual Education Program (IEP) teams to consider the supplementary aids, services, and supports students with disabilities need to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities (Sec 614 (d) (1) (A) (i)). Through enactment of these mandates, school districts are charged with the responsibility of ensuring opportunities for all students to participate in extracurricular programming.

Participation of Students With Disabilities in Extracurricular Activities

Youth with varying types of disabilities have participated in a range of school-based extracurricular activities, including: (a) athletic sports; (b) performance and creative activities; and (c) school clubs. Athletic sports included activities such as football, basketball, volleyball, track, wrestling, swimming, and cheerleading (Abells, Burbidge, & Minnes, 2008; Agran et al., in press; Cadwallader, Wagner, & Garza, 2003; Kleinert, Miracle, & Sheppard-Jones, 2007b; Lovitt et al., 1999; Simeonsson et al., 2001). Performance and creative activities cited in the literature are typically tied to humanities courses like choir, drama, fine arts, band, and orchestra (Agran et al., in press; Cadwallader et al., 2003; Kleinert et al., 2007b; Simeonsson et al., 2001). School clubs have emphasized topics related to academics, socialization, civics, and special interests (Agran et al., in press; Cadwallader et al., 2003; Kleinert et al., 2007b; Simeonsson et al., 2001).

Few studies have specifically investigated the participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. Existing research is limited to descriptive studies about participants, examining variables related to students' age, ethnicity, gender, disability, and supports. Results have demonstrated that these variables (i.e., age, ethnicity, gender, disability, supports) have some level of influence on the participation of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities. Children with disabilities under the age of 10 are the least likely to participate in activities, while youth with disabilities ranging in age from 13 to 14 participate most frequently (Simeonsson et al., 2001). For both male and female youth with disabilities, white students have the highest participation rates in extracurricular activities compared to African American and Hispanic students (Cadwallader et al., 2003; Simeonsson et al., 2001). Male students tend to participate more frequently in sports teams while female students are more likely to participate in performance and creative activities (Cadwallader et al., 2003).

Students with SD have been found to have low levels of extracurricular involvement (Agran et al., in press; Wagner, Cadwallader, Garza, & Cameto, 2004). According to the National Longitudinal Transitional Study-2 (NLTS2), more than one-third of adolescents with disabilities had not participated in an organized group at school or in the community during the past year (Wagner et al., 2004). Specifically, students with severe disabilities (SD) had the lowest level of participation in school-organized activities as compared to students with milder disabilities. In contrast, students with attention, language, or learning problems have been found to have the highest participation level compared to all other disability types (Cadwallader et al., 2003; Simeonsson et al., 2001). The type of support most frequently cited, that enabled students to participate in activities, was personal assistance provided by parents, special education

teachers, general education teachers, peers, and paraeducators (Eriksson, 2005; Kleinert et al., 2007a).

Participation of Students With SD in Extracurricular Activities

The literature focused on the participation of students with SD in school-based extracurricular activities describes benefits and barriers, with the majority of articles centered on barriers. The literature encompasses empirical studies as well as a limited number of practitioner articles. Researchers have utilized cross-sectional surveys and semi-structured interviews with families, teachers, and service providers (e.g., social worker) to measure participation.

Beneficial outcomes. There is limited research about the outcomes associated with participation in extracurricular activities for students with SD. Most of this literature has focused on benefits, including: (a) a sense of belonging, (b) increased social relationships, and (c) skill development.

Research has shown that students benefited from participation by feeling a greater sense of connectedness to their school community and through the development of social relationships with peer group members (Cadwallader et al., 2003; Pence & Dymond, 2016; Sodac, 1997). Cadwallader et al. (2003) found that students with SD who participated in some kind of extracurricular activity had more active friendships, received more weekly telephone calls from friends, and were invited to significantly more social activities as compared to youth who did not participate in an extracurricular activity. Curricular outcomes have also been linked to engagement in extracurricular school clubs. Findings from Pence and Dymond (2016) demonstrated that increased functional skills (e.g., communication, ability to make choices, independent living) were beneficial outcomes for students with SD who had participated in school clubs.

Barriers to participation. The literature suggests that secondary students with SD are often excluded from participation in extracurricular activities due to a variety of barriers. These barriers include: (a) skill deficits, (b) limited supports, and (c) lack of access to activities.

Skill deficits. Issues related to deficits in communication, social skills, independence, and self-determination skills have been cited as barriers to students with SD participating in extracurricular activities (Carter et al., 2010; Kleinert et al., 2007a; Lovitt et al., 1999; Pence & Dymond, 2016). For example, youth lacking sufficient interpersonal skills might have restricted social networks and be perceived as not having the necessary social skills to participate in activities. When students with SD do participate in activities, they are often unable to form sustainable relationships and reciprocal friendships with peers due to deficits in social skills. Having limited social skills, in turn, creates a barrier that restricts students with SD from involvement in social activities and relationships with peers (Abells et al., 2008; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Plata, Trusty, & Glasgow, 2005). Students with limited choice-making and self-determination skills might also experience additional barriers that restrict their participation. These students will require additional assistance to explore activities of personal interest, make choices about activities for involvement, and build connections with activity participants (Carter et al., 2010; Kleinert et al., 2007a; Swedeen, Carter, & Molfenter, 2010).

Limited supports. Students with SD require supports to participate in extracurricular activities to gain the same meaningful benefits as their typically developing peers (Abells et al., 2008; Kleinert et al., 2007a; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008). Some of the most common issues related to supports that are discussed in the literature, include: (a) an over-emphasis on adult-provided supports (Carter et al., 2010; Eriksson, 2005; Kleinert et al., 2007a); (b) inadequate strategies for supporting student engagement in activities (Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; Carter et

al., 2010; Pence & Dymond, 2016; Swedeen et al., 2010); (c) limited input from the special education teacher in facilitating different types of supports (Kleinert et al., 2007a; Pence and Dymond, 2016); and (d) limited parental support and encouragement for involvement (Carter et al., 2010; Kleinert et al., 2007a; Pence & Dymond, 2016; Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2010; Swedeen et al., 2010). Both Kleinert et al. (2007a) and Eriksson (2005) concluded that students with SD relied heavily on the supports provided by school staff (i.e., instructional aids and special education teachers) to participate in extracurricular activities. When too much emphasis was placed on adult-provided supports, a social barrier was created that obstructed students' autonomy and potential for greater involvement with typically developing peers (Carter et al., 2010; Eriksson, 2005).

School personnel who serve as club sponsors also play a role in creating an inclusive, engaging, and welcoming environment for students with disabilities; however, these school personnel often lack the information and strategies they need to confidently and appropriately support students with SD in extracurricular activities, resulting in limited student involvement (Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; Carter et al., 2010; Pence & Dymond, 2016; Swedeen et al., 2010). In addition, research has demonstrated that special education teachers seldom help to facilitate and integrate different types of support (e.g., adapted materials, assistive technology) into school club activities (Agran et al., in press; Kleinert et al., 2007a; Pence & Dymond, 2016). For instance, Kleinert et al. (2007a) reported that teachers seldom utilized assistive technology to include students with SD in extracurricular and recreational activities. However, due to students' complex communication and support needs, their participation could be enhanced with utilization of AAC and assistive technology supports.

Parent encouragement and support has been found to play a pivotal role in the willingness of students with disabilities to engage in extracurricular activities (Simeonsson et al., 2001); yet, parents are often cited as having a lack of resources or supports in place for including their child in an extracurricular activity (Kleinert et al., 2007a; Pence & Dymond, 2016; Swedeen et al., 2010). Issues raised by parents regarding the participation of their child in activities include concerns about the safety of their child, the extent to which the environment afforded to their child during participation is welcoming, and anxieties about their child's limited interactions with peers and lack of reciprocated friendships (Carter et al., 2010; Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2010; Swedeen et al., 2010). These issues result in some families being less willing to encourage or facilitate involvement of their children in extracurricular activities.

Lack of access to activities. A major barrier that restricts the involvement of students with SD in extracurricular activities involves issues with access to peers, activities, and resources. For example, in the home environment students with SD often engage in a majority of leisure activities (e.g., watching TV) that tend to be passive and solitary in nature (Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008; Orsmond et al., 2004; Solish et al., 2010). Additionally, children with SD frequently participate in more social activities with adults and/or parents than do typically developing children (Abells et al., 2008; Solish et al., 2010). Abells and colleagues (2008) reported that the most common reason for not participating in activities with family members was lack of interest; while the most common reason for not participating in activities with peers was because of a lack of available opportunities and choices from which to participate. These results suggest that students with SD might have broader interests outside of the family home and may enjoy spending more time with peers when appropriate supports are in place to help facilitate participation.

In the school environment, students who spend large amounts of their school day in self-contained settings might become isolated from school activities and peers. These separate education experiences might result in some students with SD unable to make informed choices about potential activities for participation and their special education teachers uninformed about opportunities that exist for participation (Carter et al., 2010; Kleinert et al., 2007b; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008; Swedeen et al., 2010). Some studies have also reported environmental barriers that have prevented students with SD from gaining full access to school activities and facilities. These have included lack of environmental modifications, man-made environmental barriers, the nature of the activity, the manner in which the activity is organized (e.g., not all students feel welcomed), and the presence of few activity choices (Eriksson, 2005; Simeonsson et al., 2001). Although specific examples of environmental modifications and man-made environmental barriers were not cited by the authors, it is evident that these types of environmental constraints can become contributing factors that explain why students with SD choose not to participate in an activity. In essence, the way in which the student perceives the environment will affect how that individual perceives participation.

Issues with transportation and financial resources have restricted some students with SD from fully accessing extracurricular activities. Since many of these activities occur before or after school hours, students with SD must have adequate transportation services provided in order to participate. Findings from several studies cited lack of transportation as a key reason why students with SD did not participate in extracurricular activities (Abells et al., 2008; Agran et al., in press; Kleinert et al., 2007a; Pence & Dymond, 2016). In addition, some activities require a fee that students must pay in order to participate (e.g., purchasing equipment or team uniform). Consequently, students from lower-income families might be restricted from

participating when they have limited financial resources (Cadwallader et al., 2003; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008).

Motivating Factors that Affect Inclusion of Students with SD in Extracurricular Activities

The literature related to motivating factors affecting the inclusion of students with SD in extracurricular activities is limited to textbooks, practitioner articles, and opinion-based articles. The majority of the literature provides value-based judgments concerning the importance of including students with disabilities in extracurricular activities as a rationale for involvement in activities. Currently, no empirical studies have investigated motivating factors affecting the inclusion of students with SD in extracurricular activities.

Friendships. Opportunities for students to learn how to enjoy their leisure time with their peers is often cited as a motivating factor for why students with SD participate in extracurricular activities. A major aspect of extracurricular activities is networking with peers. For instance, students have additional opportunities, extending beyond the regular school day, to share in mutually enjoyable activities with peers who possess similar interests (Sodac, 1997). Through participation in activities, students with SD have greater opportunities to develop new friendships and strengthen existing ones (Agran et al., in press; Kleinert et al., 2007b; McDonnell & Hardman, 2010; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Swedeen et al., 2010).

Skill acquisition. In the secondary years, many authors stress the need for students with SD to participate in extracurricular activities to improve academic, social, self-determination, and functional skills (Agran et al., in press; Hamill & Everington, 2002; McDonnell & Hardman, 2010; Pence & Dymond, 2015; Snell & Brown, 2006; Vinoski, Graybill, & Roach, 2016; Westling & Fox, 2009). Acquiring important social, communication, and interpersonal skills through participation might also help students with SD be better adjusted for life beyond post-

secondary education (McDonnell & Hardman, 2010), and further their desire to participate in extracurricular activities. Through interactions with peers, students with SD develop interpersonal skills that help to build rewarding social relationships (Hamill & Everington, 2002; Westling & Fox, 2009). Experiences participating in extracurricular activities afford students with SD opportunities to learn the social and communication skills necessary for future community living (McDonnell & Hardman, 2010). As transition becomes a major focus during the secondary years for students with SD, extracurricular outlets provide additional avenues for students to explore potential career opportunities and develop independence from their families (Stainback & Stainback, 1992). These opportunities, in turn, continue to drive students' individual motivation to stay involved.

Statement of the Problem

Little is known about what motivating factors affect the inclusion of students with SD in extracurricular activities. Some of the literature points to plausible explanations such as socialization with peers and skill acquisition. However, existing research for typically developing peers and youth with challenging behaviors suggest additional reasons such as perceived competence, increased self-worth, and parental encouragement. Currently, there have been no empirical studies investigating this topic for students with SD. Understanding motivating factors that affect the inclusion of students with SD in extracurricular activities is critical for providing evidence as to the importance of these experiences for students.

Research investigating the participation of students with SD in extracurricular activities has been limited to explorations of outcomes and barriers. Currently missing from this literature are studies examining how students participate in activities and the types of supports they receive. This information could assist secondary school personnel improve how they structure

extracurricular activities to promote increased participation of students with SD and how they arrange supports to enhance students' extracurricular involvement. Changes to the ways in which students participate in extracurricular activities might also provide students with SD, who have typically low levels of participation in extracurricular activities, greater access to these programs as stipulated in IDEA (IDEA, 2006).

To address these gaps in the literature, a research study is warranted to investigate the involvement of students with SD in extracurricular activities. Of the various types of extracurricular activities, research may be best focused on the involvement of students with SD in school clubs. Typically, school clubs are open to all students, allow for a variety of students with different strengths and abilities to participate (including those who might not excel academically at the same rate as their peers), and might provide additional opportunities for participation and learning not readily available in other extracurricular activities. In order to understand the experiences of this heterogeneous population of students, in-depth interviews with multiple stakeholders (i.e., parents of students, special education teachers, school club sponsors) as well as observations of students with SD participating in activities is needed.

Chapter 3

Methods

The current study investigated the participation of high school students with severe disabilities (SD) in extracurricular school clubs. A multiple case study design was used to collect, organize, and analyze data. Through application of this design, data were systematically gathered to provide comprehensive and in-depth information about each case of interest, conduct a within-case analysis, followed by a cross-case analysis (Patton, 2015; Stake, 2006). “The student’s involvement in a school club,” was defined as the case (Stake, 1995). Participants encompassed individuals from three separate high schools. Within each case, participants included a special education teacher of a student with SD, a student with SD that participated in a school club, the parents of the student with SD, a club sponsor, student club members, and adults present during club meetings. Data were collected through: (a) interviews with special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents of students with SD; (b) observations of students with SD participating in school club activities; (c) document reviews of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); and (d) document reviews of additional sources related to the school club (e.g., school website, student handbook, school club brochures, meeting minutes). Two overarching research questions guided this study:

1. What are the motivating factors that affect the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs?
2. How do students with SD participate in school club activities?

Qualitative inquiry was the ideal method for investigating the research questions. Each case was examined individually and holistically (i.e., across all cases) to provide a wider breadth of understanding about the constructs of *motivating factors* and *participation* (Stake, 2006; Yin,

2009). The construct of motivating factors was defined as a perspective given by an individual about the rationale, reasoning, and/or purpose affecting the inclusion of a student with SD in a school club. The construct of participation was defined as (a) engagement (i.e., what actual participation looks like for the student during school club activities) and (b) opportunities (i.e., what creates opportunity or prevents opportunity for the student to participate and learn).

Employing a multiple case study design was also useful for achieving a deeper understanding of the phenomena (i.e., constructs) through the views, experiences, and lenses of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2007; Morse & Richards, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009).

Researcher Identity

In qualitative inquiry, the process of self-disclosure of one's personal experiences, values, and positions in relation to the research problem are essential for acknowledgement of the individual researcher's identity. According to Richards (2003), identities of researchers are dynamic and continuously shifting during all phases of the study. Furthermore, the researcher carries assumptions about the world and how it can be understood, and must seek to gain awareness about their own subjectivities through preparation and reflection (Morse & Richards, 2002; Stake, 2006). Therefore, in an effort to maximize my awareness while minimizing subjectivities, I utilized a researcher identity journal (see Maxwell, 2005). This journal provided a space for me to challenge my assumptions and biases and to be reflexive in interpretations formed throughout the study. An ongoing memo log of personal goals, experiences, assumptions, feelings, and values related to research objectives was used once at the beginning of the study and subsequently each day that I collected data.

In development of my researcher identity, I will make explicit my prior experiences related to the objectives of this study as well as my beliefs regarding extracurricular school clubs

and the involvement of students with SD. The following section is my initial entry in my researcher identity journal.

As a special education middle school teacher for seven years, I have had many diverse experiences educating students with moderate, severe, and multiple disabilities in the state of Kentucky. I have taught a functional-math skills class and have sponsored extracurricular school clubs related to topics of crafting, school spirit, technology, and service learning. My experiences as a teacher and a club sponsor inform my personal beliefs about educating students with significant disabilities and my research agenda. These beliefs are grounded in ideals of equality, respect, inclusion, choice, and opportunity.

As a club sponsor, I had many rich experiences helping to foster relationships between many of my students and their peers while encouraging a club culture based on principles of student-centered learning, shared experiences, and mutual respect for each club member's strengths and talents. The purpose for participation in school club activities was to afford all students with the opportunity to engage in activities of particular interest, learn new skills related to this topic, and expand their connections with students and teachers from across the school community. However, some of my students with the most significant disabilities were unable to participate in school club activities due to resistance from parents and other special education staff members. Many of these individuals cited concerns about transportation to and from activities, a lack of individualized support from paid school personnel, and insufficient time for preparing the student for participation. Consequently, this resistance caused me to make assumptions about barriers that restrict students with SD from involvement in the same activities as many of their peers.

Throughout the years as a club sponsor, my experience working with students with significant disabilities shaped my perspective about the motivation for students' participation, and how that reason changed over time through students' involvement in school club activities. For instance, one student with severe autism and limited communication skills was a member of the scrapbooking club that I sponsored. According to the special education teacher, the student was signed up for the club because of a potential interest in scrapbooking since the student's mother was an avid 'scrapbooker' at home. The special education teacher also reported that it might be a good way for the student to connect with her peers and socialize with others students with similar interests. Each week, the student would bring an assortment of magazines which she used to cut out various images of items that she liked. By the end of the semester, she had created a book about her favorite things, including pictures from magazines, photographs that her mother sent to school, as well as visual images printed from the internet. Although the goals for including her in the school club (i.e., trying out a new hobby, socializing with peers) were partially reached, there were additional outcomes that far exceeded the special education teacher's initial reasoning for inclusion. Some of these outcomes included the creation of a communication book about her favorite things that she used to connect with her peers and increased computer skills she developed through frequent searches on the internet for images. I highlight this experience because of the

disconnect that can sometimes happen between the initial reasoning for including students in school clubs and the actual participation outcomes.

My experiences as a special education teacher and a club sponsor have led me to develop assumptions about opportunities that exist for learning in extracurricular school clubs and the barriers that restrict students from involvement in school club activities. One particular assumption is that I believe that all students should be afforded with opportunities for participation, regardless of the challenges or obstacles that might be in place. I also assume that all students can benefit academically, emotionally, and socially from participating in school clubs. Due to my past experience working in a school climate that placed a high value on school clubs, I assume that most public schools hold similar values and offer a variety of school clubs. However, because of the 'pockets' of resistance I sometimes faced with including students with SD in school club activities, I assume that resistance from teachers and parents might also be something I will encounter at other school sites. Finally, since many of my former students were eager to be involved in school clubs, I assume that most (if not all) students with SD will be interested in being involved in school clubs at their schools.

These assumptions may lead to biases that could impact my data collection and analysis. I might place greater emphasis on the beneficial aspects of students' involvement in school club activities while minimizing the negative aspects. I might also be biased towards teachers and club sponsors because I perceive them as underestimating the potential for students' engagement and learning that can occur in this environment. To reduce the potential for bias, I will collect data from a variety of sources to decrease the risk of biases, design interview protocols that are open-ended to minimize opportunities to ask leading questions, and seek respondent validation through the process of member checking (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Additionally, I will have to be cognizant of my biases towards including all students in extracurricular school clubs. Recognizing that I am the main research instrument, and my viewpoints may be either a weakness or strength to this study, awareness of my biases is important to establishing credibility (Walford, 2001). I will work towards mediating my idealistic views with the realities of what teachers and students are experiencing within their specific school environment when interpreting data. To accomplish this goal, I will continuously evaluate my personal biases through writing in my researcher identity journal. I will also challenge my understandings when interpreting data by employing peer-debriefing with a colleague knowledgeable in the area of SD and utilizing a second reviewer throughout the coding process.

Participants

Cases were carefully chosen to demonstrate a variety of perspectives from multiple participants so that each case could be investigated in-depth (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Three cases were selected, each from a different high school, with one student with SD serving as the focus of each case (Stake, 1995). Participants included special education teachers, students with

SD, parents of students with SD, club sponsors, student club members, and adults present during club meetings. Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of each case (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006). Criteria for case selection consisted of agreement by the special education teacher, club sponsor, and student with SD (per parent consent for student) to participate in the study; and no more than one case from any school site.

Selection of each participant included the following sequence: (a) recruitment of special education teachers, (2) teacher nomination and recruitment of a student with SD that was currently participating in a school club, (c) recruitment of the parents of students with SD, (d) recruitment of club sponsors who directed the school clubs, (e) recruitment of student club members, and (f) recruitment of other adults present during school club activities. Procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining consent for participation in the study are explained in the following paragraphs.

Special education teachers were recruited from middle and high schools in Illinois. In an effort to recruit teachers from Illinois, a public search was conducted on the Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS) through the Illinois State Board of Education website for teachers holding Learning Behavior Specialist I and II credentials in Champaign County and surrounding counties (i.e., Douglas, Ford, McLean, Piatt, Vermillion). From this search, an Illinois special education teacher recruitment list was created that included the names, certification(s), and school names of all the special education teachers in the region. Only those teachers working in middle or high school settings were included on the list. Next, teachers' school email addresses were located via a web search of school websites and this information was added to the recruitment list.

A recruitment email was sent to middle and high school special education teachers containing specific information about the purpose, objectives, and inclusion criteria of the study (see Appendix A). Teachers were invited to participate if they currently: (a) were a certified special education teacher of students with SD; (b) had a minimum of one year of teaching experience working with students with SD; (c) worked in an integrated middle or high school public school setting; and (d) had at least one student, on their special education caseload, with a severe disability that participated in an extracurricular school club. A student with a severe disability was defined as having a severe to profound intellectual disability that met the eligibility criteria for taking the Illinois State Alternate Assessment (IAA). For purposes of this study, an extracurricular school club was defined as: (a) being a student-based organization tied to academic, social, hobby, or special interest; (b) requiring regularly scheduled meetings that are facilitated by a club sponsor; and (c) having membership that is open to all students. Teachers who were interested in participating in the study were asked to email the researcher with contact information (i.e., name, telephone number) and a time/date that would be convenient to complete a 5-10 minute telephone screening interview. In addition, teachers were asked to notify their school principal about their interest in the study.

The telephone screening interview (see Appendix B) consisted of the researcher explaining the purpose and research objectives of the study, reviewing the inclusion criteria to ensure all criteria were met, and discussing the process of data collection. Screening interviews continued until three potential special education teacher participants had been chosen. After the completion of the screening, the principals of the teachers that met the established criteria, and were still interested in participating in the study, were asked to meet with the researcher to discuss the study and to seek his/her approval (see Appendix C). If a principal approved the

study, the special education teacher was sent an email explaining that he or she would be invited to participate in the study once consent had been obtained from the parents of the student with SD and the club sponsor.

Each of the three special education teachers was asked to recruit all students who would qualify for the study. A letter was sent home to each of the student's parents to obtain consent for their child's participation in the study. In this letter, the parents were also invited to participate (see Appendix D). In addition, attached to the top of the letter was a recruitment flyer. The purpose of this flyer was to provide jargon-free information about the project (see Appendix E). Parents were asked to sign the consent form and return it to the special education teacher. The special education teacher delivered the consent form to the researcher upon her next visit to the school site. When more than one student qualified for the study, the teacher and researcher worked together to select the student with the most significant SD (i.e., student with challenging support and learning needs in relation to communication, behavior, and physical/mobility impairments). After a student had been selected, the special education teacher sent a copy of the consent form to the parent's home. In total, three students with SD were selected to participate. As an incentive, parents who agreed to participate were given a \$25 gift card at the conclusion of the research project.

Special education teachers provided the contact information (i.e., name, email) for the club sponsors that facilitated each of the extracurricular school clubs in which the selected students were participating. Club sponsors were sent a letter through email notifying them that a club member of their club would be participating in a research study about the participation of students with SD in school clubs (see Appendix F). Information regarding the purpose, research objectives, and data collection process were also included in this letter as well as an invitation to

participate. Club sponsors who responded to this email and were willing to participate in the study were emailed a consent form (see Appendix G). Each club sponsor was asked to sign the consent form and upload it and return it through email or mail it to the researcher. The researcher made a copy of the consent form, and delivered the form to the club sponsor on her next visit to the school site. Three club sponsors were willing to participate and were subsequently selected as research participants. Club sponsors received a \$50 gift card at the completion of the research project as an incentive for their participation.

Upon consent received from the parents of the students with SD and club sponsors, three special education teachers were invited to participate in the study and their consent was obtained. The researcher sent an email containing the consent form to the special education teachers (see Appendix H). Each special education teacher was asked to sign the consent form and upload it and return it through email or mail it to the researcher. The researcher made a copy of the consent form, and delivered the form to the special education teacher on her next visit to the school site. Special education teachers each received a \$50 gift card, as an incentive, for their participation at the conclusion of the research project.

Although not the focus of this study, student club members and adults assisting with school club activities (e.g., paraprofessionals, parent volunteers) may have interacted with students with SD during the collection of observational data. Club sponsors were asked to give their club members an information letter/waiver at school as well as to send an information letter/waiver home to the parents of club members; approximately two weeks before the start of data collection (see Appendices I-J). These letters contained information about the study and provided both club members and their parents with the option to opt-out of being included in data gathered during school club observations. In addition, the club sponsors were also

responsible for providing information regarding other adults that would be present during club meetings. The research study was explained to these adults and written consent was obtained (see Appendix K). Each adult was also given a copy of the consent form for their records.

Table 1 contains demographic information about each student with SD and details about the school and club settings. Expanded information about the students with SD and their clubs are included within the case study reports presented in Chapter 4.

Instrumentation

The following instruments were developed for this study: (a) five interview protocols, (b) one observation protocol, and (c) two document review forms. A description of each instrument and pilot test procedures are delineated in the following sections. In addition, Figure 1 contains a matrix showing how each instrument aligns with the constructs of motivating factors and participation. Under each construct, interview questions are listed by number for each type of data source (e.g., school club information form, school club observation protocol). An extra column is provided for listing interview questions that are related to rapport building and background gathering.

Interview protocols. Interview protocols were designed for the following stakeholders: (a) two for the special education teachers (see Appendices L-M), (b) two for the club sponsors (see Appendices N-O), and (c) one for parents of students with SD (see Appendix P). Protocols were developed based on the literature related to the participation of students with SD in extracurricular activities. In addition, the researcher's knowledge and experience as a club sponsor and a special education teacher of students with SD helped to guide the development of these instruments.

Three interview protocols were developed (i.e., two interview protocols for the special education teachers and club sponsors, one interview protocol for the parents of students with SD). These interview protocols were designed to help generate an on-going dialogue with participants about their personal experiences and understandings (Kvale, 1996). Interview protocols contained initial rapport building questions, followed by open-ended questions that pertained to the research questions. Probes were used for items requiring further exploration and for reducing potential bias from leading questions (Brinkmann, 2013; Foddy, 1993). Questions related to topics concerning (a) motivating factors affecting the inclusion of the student with SD in school clubs and (b) participation of the student during school club activities. The protocol for club sponsors included additional items specific to the school club.

Observation protocol. One school club observation protocol (see Appendix Q) was designed for this study. The purpose of the observation protocol was to capture rich data of students with SD participating in school club activities that were pertinent to the research questions. The observation protocol included three major sections related to: (a) general information; (b) running field notes; and (c) summary and reflection. General information about the school club activities was included on the protocol (i.e., time/date of observation, number of individuals present at school club activity, description of the setting, visual diagram of room). Each time that a new school club activity began, the researcher noted a brief description of the activity and then took running field notes of what was being observed. In the final section, an overall summary of the entire observation was written in a few sentences as well as a detailed reflection that included the researchers' personal insights about what she had observed.

Document review forms. Patton (2002) asserts that document reviews have the ability to provide rich sources of data that can be used to supplement field observations and interviews. In

this study, two document review forms were utilized, including an IEP Document Review Form (see Appendix R) and a School Club Information Form (see Appendix S).

The purpose of the IEP Document Review Form was to collect disability-specific information about each student with SD. There was space on the form to include information pertaining to student demographics (i.e., age, disability classification, Alternate Assessment eligibility); present level of academic achievement and functional performance; current goals, and support needs. In addition, the School Club Information Form was designed to aid the researcher in gathering detailed information about the school club in which each student participated. Items on the form included space for providing specifics concerning: (a) the location, time, and dates of club meetings; (b) any eligibility requirements for becoming a club member; (c) the mission/description statement; (d) the goals of the club; (e) the types of school club activities offered; and (f) any additional information related to the purpose or function of the school club.

Pilot testing procedures. Pilot tests help to determine if there are flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within an instrument (Kvale, 2007). Prior to data collection, the interview questions and observation protocol were piloted.

The teacher interview protocol was piloted with one current secondary special education teacher of students with SD and two doctoral students who were former high school special education teachers with expertise in SD. All three of these participants had previous experience including students with SD in school clubs. Two individuals recommended changing the language of one interview question to make it more clear, and one individual suggested adding a probe to clarify the meaning of an interview question. The words “learning opportunities” were

added to the interview question and an additional probe helped to explain the meaning of the types of learning opportunities.

Next, the club sponsor protocol was piloted with two current general education teachers who had experience serving as club sponsors and including students with disabilities in school club activities. As a result of the piloting, no changes were made to the interview protocol.

Finally, the parent interview protocol was piloted with two parents of children with SD who had prior experience including their child in middle and high school clubs. Individuals were asked about the clarity of the questions, if the content was appropriate given the aim of the study and research questions, and if there was any missing content that should be added. No modifications were made to the interview protocol as a result of the pilot tests.

The observation protocol was field tested on four separate occasions. Participants included college students working on a community service-learning project. Students were observed on two separate occasions creating ceramic wind chimes. As part of these activities, students oftentimes interacted with one another in small groups as well as used a variety of art supplies. The observed activities as well as the duration of observations were chosen because it was anticipated that these observations would most closely resemble the types and length of activities occurring in school clubs. During the pilot tests, the researcher noted any difficulties with the design of the protocol that were too restrictive or time consuming for the type and amount of data that were necessary to record. Based on these experiences, the researcher was able to use the protocol with ease and no subsequent revisions were needed.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews, observations and document reviews were used to investigate the research questions. The order of data collection consisted of: (a) conducting document reviews; (b)

interviewing the special education teacher and club sponsor; (c) conducting observations of the student with SD participating in school club activities; and (d) interviewing the special education teacher, club sponsor, and the parents of the student with SD. Data were collected concurrently across all three cases. Data collection occurred during a six-month period beginning in mid-September and continuing until mid-February. Table 2 contains the timeline during which data collection occurred. Procedures for data collection are described in the subsequent sections.

Interviews. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with each special education teacher, club sponsor, and parent(s) of students with SD. This format afforded participants with the opportunity to expand on ideas at length that they considered of high importance or value (Brinkmann, 2013; Flick, 2007). Each special education teacher and club sponsor participated in two separate interviews. The initial interview occurred prior to conducting observations of students with SD participating in school club activities. The follow-up interview took place after all observational data had been collected. Additionally, a one-time interview was conducted with the parents of students with SD at the conclusion of the study. For privacy purposes, interviews with special education teachers and club sponsors occurred in a quiet location in the school building (e.g., empty classroom) as determined by participants. Parents were given the option of selecting their home residence or a public setting (e.g., private area of a café, office in the school building) that was most convenient for the interview.

Interviews began with the researcher reviewing the goals and format of the interview and requesting permission to audio record the conversation for transcription purposes. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and the researcher's personal laptop was used as a backup recording method. If a participant was not willing to be recorded, the researcher took detailed notes on her personal laptop that was password protected. During the interview, the

researcher utilized interview protocols as a guide. Over-arching questions were asked first and were followed-up with targeted probes. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into participants' responses by asking for further elaboration and clarification of meanings, views, and experiences. Individual interviews with participants took approximately 60 minutes to complete.

The same day that interviews were completed, the researcher filled out a contact summary sheet (see Miles & Huberman, 1994) to summarize and reflect on the field contact (see Appendix T). The document summary sheet was primarily used to organize the researcher's initial musings by answering focused questions related to the field contact. Completed contact summary sheets and notations taken during the interview were then organized into an analytic memo (see Saldana, 2013) that contained emerging codes and any additional interpretations made by the researcher.

Observations. Prior to observing students with SD participating in school clubs, an informal classroom observation was completed. The purpose of this observation was to gain insights about the communication, behavior, and support needs of students. Information gathered from observations was important for assisting the researcher in accurately interpreting students' interactions when participating in future school club activities. This observation occurred during a time when the student was participating in an inclusive academic or elective class with peers. Each observation ranged from 45 minutes to one hour in length. Following the informal observation, the researcher followed-up with the classroom teacher by asking clarifying questions regarding interpretations made about the student's skill level.

Each student was observed multiple times participating in school club activities until data saturation had been reached (see Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2015). David was observed on six

different occasions (i.e., three football games, one girls' volleyball game, one girls' basketball game, one boys' basketball game); Nicole was observed five times participating in a variety of activities (i.e., three club meetings; one club party; one service activity); and Tiffany was observed five times (three meetings, two service activities). In total, sixteen observations were conducted across the three cases. On the day of each observation, assent procedures were implemented to allow the student with SD the opportunity to agree or decline to be observed. At the beginning of the club meeting, the researcher approached the student with SD and stated the following phrase: *"Hi, my name is Alicia and I would like to look at what you are doing today in the club. Is it okay with you if I look at what you are doing? Is it okay with you if I take some notes while I am looking at you?"* Students with SD were provided with the opportunity to respond by whatever means of communication that they typically used. For those students with limited communication, the special education teacher was asked to be present on the first day of observations in order to assist with interpreting all non-verbal communication (e.g., crying, pointing to leave the room, putting head down on desk). All students with SD assented during each observation.

At the start of each initial observation, the club sponsor was asked to make an announcement regarding the attendance of a guest visitor (i.e., the researcher) that would periodically be present to learn about the club. During data collection, field notes were completed using the observation protocol. The primary role of the researcher was to be a non-participant "onlooker" and to make direct observations of the student with SD participating in school club activities (Patton, 2002). While conducting observations the researcher stayed within close proximity of the student with SD (i.e., 2-3 feet), but was not at a distance that would have

impeded the students' involvement in school club activities. The duration of individual observations ranged from 50 minutes to three hours, depending on the length of the club activity.

Following each observation, the researcher reviewed the completed observation protocol and filled out a contact summary sheet to capture personal insights and reflections from the field experience. These efforts were made in order to bring awareness to potential biases that might influence data collection and analysis. Notations from these documents were then synthesized and organized into an analytic memo, containing emerging codes used for subsequent analyses.

Document reviews. Upon consent from parents, the researcher conducted reviews of IEP documents for each student with SD. This process included reviewing the IEP for information related to demographics, present level of academic achievement and functional performance, current goals, and support needs. All information was recorded on a paper copy of the IEP Document Review Form. Demographic information (i.e., age, disability classification) and a listing of current goals were copied exactly as written on the IEP. The researcher answered yes or no to whether the student was eligible for the state's Alternate Assessment and summarized the present level of performance and support needs on the form.

The researcher also completed the School Club Information Form for each of the clubs in which students currently participated. This process involved reviewing multiple documents (e.g., school websites, student handbooks, school club brochures, school club meeting minutes) to obtain information about the school club. For documents not accessible online, the researcher made a verbal request to the club sponsor to attain a photocopy of the materials. When completing the form, the researcher identified each document source that she had reviewed and re-read these sources for necessary information to complete the form. Information was collected on the location, time, and dates of club meetings; the eligibility criteria for participation; the

mission and/or description, and goal statements; the types of activities offered; and any additional information related to the purpose or function of the school club.

Data security and confidentiality of participants. Electronic data from interviews, transcriptions, observations, contact summary sheets, researcher identity journal entries, memos, addendums, and typed notes were immediately uploaded and stored on a secure computer server that was password protected. Document review notes as well as photocopied and printed materials were stored in a document folder located in a locked filing cabinet at the home of the researcher. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned an identification number during the process of data collection. A document containing the participants' names and coordinating identification numbers was kept in a secure locked filing cabinet in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois. To help protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms were used in all subsequent publications and presentations. Digital audio recordings were deleted once they had been transcribed and checked for accuracy.

Data Analysis

A multiple case study approach was used to organize, analyze, and interpret the data. Data analysis was an ongoing and iterative process, occurring during and after data collection. An inductive open-coding strategy was employed across the data sources in which codes, categories, and themes emerged (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The order of data analysis included: (a) analyzing interview, observation, and document data for each case; (b) merging data from each case into a case study report; and (c) conducting a cross-case analysis through a holistic examination of all data sources across participants.

Case analysis. Each case was defined as the student's involvement in a school club (Stake, 1995). Interview, observational, and document review data for each case were coded

separately and then analyzed across measures. Steps were taken to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of analysis, including: investigator triangulation, second level member checks, collaborative work, and thick and detailed descriptions (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Interviews. Member checks were conducted with special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents of students with SD (Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2007). Member checks were used to ensure the accuracy of the data collected and to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their responses. To begin analysis, interviews were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy by comparing transcripts with audio recordings. The researcher then created summaries of the interviews by paraphrasing the interviewee's responses for each interview question into a bulleted list. Special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents were sent summaries of their interviews and asked to provide feedback regarding the content of these documents. All member checks were completed through email, although participants were given the opportunity to discuss their feedback on the telephone or in person. Two participants made recommendations due to the member checks. A special education teacher clarified specific language about peers in the club (i.e., peers were accountable for their actions) and that staff members spoke to her directly if they had issues with her student. In addition, a club sponsor wanted to include updated information about the student's recent leadership role in the school club.

Following the member checks, the researcher and a second reader (i.e., a graduate student) each independently developed descriptive and interpretive codes for the first special education teacher interview transcript using an inductive open-coding approach and the constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Codes were developed through the process of assigning labels (e.g., a word, short phrase) to segmented chunks of data

(Miles et al., 2014). Each emerging code was given a definition and recorded into a codebook to clarify meanings and to aid with the conceptual understanding for reviewers. Next, the two came together to compare codes. This process entailed sitting side by side and reading the first special education teacher interview transcript line-by-line, to extensively discuss codes until there was a shared understanding of each code and definition.

To begin applying codes, the researcher and the second reader independently re-coded the first special education teacher interview transcript using the newly developed codes. Then, the two met to compare codes for the transcript. This procedure involved sitting side by side and re-reading the first special education teacher interview transcript, line-by-line, to discuss and compare codes. At this time, if the researcher and the second reader were in total agreement of codes, then the coding process for the first special education teacher interview transcript was considered complete. However, in the case that the researcher and second reader were not in agreement of codes, then they continued discussing and refining codes until they could reach full agreement. This same exact process for developing codes and coding data was repeated for all other interview transcripts (i.e., second special education teacher interview, club sponsor first and second interview, parent interview transcripts) in the first case. The exact same coding process was repeated for the second and third cases, using the codes that emerged from the first case while still remaining open to any new codes that emerged. The researcher's dissertation chair also met with the researcher on several occasions to review codes for accuracy and definitions for clarity. The final step of analysis consisted of grouping codes into categories that shared similar meanings (Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995). The process began with the researcher and the second reader independently merging codes from all of the transcripts from the first case into categories. Next, the two met again to discuss and refine each of the categories until both

could agree on each of the categories as being accurate interpretations. This exact same categorizing process was then completed for the second and third cases. The dissertation chair also discussed emerging categories with the researcher on more than one occasion.

An audit was conducted by the researcher's dissertation chair to check for consistency in code application and categorization of codes. Because the auditing process occurred in the middle of data collection and was used as an additional step to validate the coding process, a random selection of formulated codes from the two cases in which data had been collected were analyzed. In total, four interviews were checked for reliability and categorization of codes as well as accuracy of interpretations. As a result of the audit, one research question was broadened to include stakeholders' beliefs and two categories were expanded to encompass motivating factors for students joining and continuing involvement in school clubs.

Observations. The identical coding procedures used to develop and apply codes for the interview data, were also utilized for the observation data. These data included information from the observation protocols in which field notes had been recorded (e.g., type of interactions, where the student was seated). Data from the first case were analyzed initially, followed by analysis for the second and third cases. In the final stage of analysis, the exact same categorizing process used to create categories for the interview data were employed for the observation data for all three cases. To check for consistency and accuracy in interpretations, the researcher's dissertation chair discussed codes, definition, and categories with the researcher throughout analysis. As an additional step to help substantiate the validity of the coding process, the chair also independently conducted an audit of observation codes and categories. As similar to the audit procedures for the interview data, the chair randomly selected four observations from only

the two cases in which data had been collected to review. The audit resulted in no additional changes to codes, categories, or research questions.

Documents. School club information forms, analytic memos, and the researcher identity journal were analyzed. A systematic coding process was used in the analysis of school club information forms. For each form, information pertaining to the mission/description statement, club goals, and activities offered were summarized into a bulleted-list format. Predefined codes from interview and observation data were then applied to items on the list in addition to any new codes emerging from the content (Bowen, 2009). Related codes from across all forms were subsequently grouped into distinctive categories through multiple re-readings of the data.

Analytic memos and the researcher identity journal were analyzed for the purpose of uncovering potential issues with researcher biases. Contents of these documents were used in comparison to interpretations made throughout the ongoing process of data analysis. IEP document review forms were used for information gathering purposes only and no further analysis was necessary.

Merging data into case study reports. A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006) and each case must be represented and understood as an idiosyncratic manifestation of the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). It was imperative that the researcher did ‘justice’ to each case by capturing its uniqueness and constructing a deeper understanding of the case as a unit. In order to illustrate the particulars and nuances of each case, three separate case study reports were written (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). These case studies provide a descriptive sketch of each student with SD through the integration and synthesis of analyses across interview, observational, and document review data. The goal of each case study was to provide thick-rich descriptions regarding the (a) motivating

factors affecting the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs and (b) participation of students during school club activities.

Codes developed across data sources (i.e., interviews, observations, documents) for each case were merged into new categories. Data triangulation assured that interpretations were substantiated across data sources and carried the same meanings (Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995). This process entailed review of all data sources to challenge the researcher's understandings and locating confirming or disconfirming evidence supported in the data for these assumptions (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Creswell, 2009; Maxwell 2005). For example, interview data were compared to information acquired from observations and document reviews for inconsistencies, overlapping ideas, and unsupported assertions. The researcher's dissertation chair also served as a second reader for each case study report. Upon review of case study reports, the dissertation chair provided feedback that challenged findings and proposed rival explanations for assertions.

The strategy of respondent validation (i.e., second level member checking) was also employed (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Maxwell, 2005). During participants' follow-up interviews, they were asked to reflect on their responses from the first interviews. For instance, participants were asked if they still agreed with their previous answers for questions that related to motivation, learning opportunities, and benefits. Due to the sensitive nature of reported findings in the individual case studies, participants were not asked to review these items.

Cross-case analysis. The final layer of data analysis involved examining all data sources (i.e., interviews, observations, and document reviews) holistically to answer the research questions. According to Miles et al. (2014) the purpose of cross-case analysis is, "to see processes and outcomes across many cases to understand how they are qualified by local conditions, and thus to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations"

(p. 101). Analysis of multiple cases enhances the transferability of findings through a deeper understanding and explanation of the phenomena being investigated. This process, in turn, helped the researcher to determine if case-specific findings stretched beyond to multiple cases.

To accomplish the goal of a cross-case analysis, coding procedures followed many of the same guidelines as those used for analysis of single case data throughout this study (Merriam, 2009). Analysis began by reviewing codes from each case. Codes from across all cases were merged into new categories that represented all three cases. These major categories were then grouped by similarity and themes were developed that cut across all data and cases. The development of the cross-cutting themes aided in the synthesis of findings, leading to emerging assertions about the multi-case.

To challenge potential biases of claims from the cross-case analysis, the researcher sought two insider perspectives and one outsider perspective (Stake, 2006). Insider perspectives were gathered from a graduate student (i.e., the second reader) and the researcher's dissertation chair. To gain an outsider's perspective, a colleague knowledgeable in SD was also consulted during this analysis. Recommendations and feedback from these individuals were incorporated into analytic procedures and the final report.

Chapter 4

Case Study Reports

The following case study reports were developed to demonstrate the uniqueness and particulars of each case: (a) David and the Mighty Hawks; (b) Nicole and FCCLA; and (c) Tiffany and the Key Club. Reports were written as a synthesis of findings gathered from interviews, observations, and documents. Reports were also organized to contain contextual background information, evidence to support both research questions, as well as an overall summary.

David and the Mighty Hawks Woodford City High School

Driving into Woodford City, a small rural town of 3400 citizens, the feeling of hometown pride comes to mind. A place where there isn't an empty parking spot at the Friday night big game or where this season's senior star quarterback is the topic of conversation at the corner diner. Here, the high school and community are intertwined. Woodford City High School is situated on the edge of the downtown area separated by a set of worn out railroad tracks. With only a student body of 324 students, each individual is somehow known to the other. Some by extended family, others are neighbors, and still there are those who have a long standing friendship connecting them. In this community, extracurricular activities are considered a big deal. There are fourteen athletic teams and a handful of school clubs like the school pep club, the Mighty Hawks.

The Mighty Hawks

On a seasonally warm early November evening, the Woodford City High football team is playing its rival opponent, the Rangers. The stands are filled with spectators; there isn't an empty seat to be found. Adjacent to the stands at the south-end of the football field, a large group of

over 50 students stand in a single formation line. They are the Mighty Hawks, wearing bright colored crimson shirts with slogans like “Crimson Spirt” or “Mighty Hawks—Rise as One.” Some club members are dressed in costumes portraying popular superheroes like batman or favorite holiday personalities like Santa Claus. A team mascot appears running through the main gates leading onto the football field—he is adorned in dark red feathers from top to bottom, with a large expanding wingspan as he raises his arms to do a cheer. Through the brisk rain and with the dust from the wind on their backs, the club members sing in unison as the band plays the school fight song, “Woodford Loyalty” in the near distance. Moments later, a female leader, Dede, is witnessed pacing fervently up and down the single file of club members. Every stride she makes seems to be with intent. She beckons her fellow hawks, “Don’t stop screaming until the game is over,” followed with a loud call, “Who are we?” The club members sing out, “The mighty, mighty, hawks! We won’t back down!” Cheers are chanted in unison over and over, and their energy feels contagious.

The Mighty Hawk’s club sponsor has a strong background in directing student school-based activities, including the national honor society and student council. She is now in her 25th year as a veteran teacher, instructing courses on advanced math topics to senior high students. The club sponsor described the organization as, “A school spirit group . . . our mission is to get as many kids as we can involved in the club.” She explained that all it takes for students to participate is to, “Show up, stay together, and cheer.” Typically the club cheers for football, girls’ and boys’ basketball, as well as volleyball home and away games. The club doesn’t have a designated time to meet during the school day, but it is common for club members to stay after school to prepare signs, posters, and decorations for upcoming pep-rallies or athletic events.

David—Focal Mighty Hawk’s Club Member

David has participated in the Mighty Hawks for three years along with his older sister, Dede. Last year, David also participated in a club devoted to teen safety. David was described by his mother as very athletic and someone who “lived” for game night and being a part of the Mighty Hawks. Outside of school, David also has been an active Special Olympian since elementary school and has won several awards in basketball and bowling—the only two events currently available for participation. His Special Olympics buddy, Sam (a peer without a disability), has been coaching David for the past three years and is also a club member of the Mighty Hawks.

In school, David receives special education services for other health impairment (i.e., ADHD) and a significant cognitive impairment. He is able to use some basic functional math skills needed for daily living and can follow oral directions with prompts. His transitional goals include preparing simple meals or snacks and gaining skills for living in a future supported apartment. David is also working on anger management strategies for handling feelings of frustration, disappointment, sadness, and rejection in a safe manner. For communication, David uses oral language and does not require any specific accommodation. David is also able to make requests and respond to questions in simple sentences consisting of four to six words. Physically, David stands approximately six feet tall and has a very athletic build. He is able to perform complex gymnastics (e.g., back handspring flip) as well as a high vertical jump.

Motivating Factors Affecting Inclusion in the Mighty Hawks

David’s family played an important role in his desire to join the Mighty Hawks. His older sister, Dede, has participated in the club since her freshman year. Since Dede was a year ahead of David, he had the opportunity to observe her participating in school club activities prior to

joining. His mother reported that even though David had tried several different types of clubs at the start of the school year, “he knew right away that he wanted to participate because he saw his sister [Dede] having fun doing it.” His special education teacher described Dede as a “positive role model” and someone who David “looked up to in school.” The club sponsor believed that given Dede’s strong dedication and leadership in the Mighty Hawks, that she had encouraged David to become a member of the club. In addition, his special education teacher felt that David’s parents had also encouraged him, “They’re very free-spirited with him as far as not trying to shelter and protect [him].” In turn, his mother described her family’s strong interest in school athletics as a reason for David’s eagerness to join, “He identifies with sport fandom because that’s what we do all the time as a family.” Perhaps due to his familiarity with athletic activities, David was described as a person who “loves sports” and “enjoys going to games.” Participants further remarked that the club was a good fit for him based on his “boisterous,” “flamboyant,” and “energetic” personality.

Being a part of a group was another major reason why David joined the club. The special education teacher discussed the importance of freshman orientation and pep-rallies as sparking a drive in David to be a part of the club. She stated, “They’re [club members] at [freshman] orientation and the pep assemblies and things . . . I think he’s high energy and just wanted to be a part of that from the start.” The club sponsor believed that David needed to be involved in the club so that he could feel proud of his school and more included with his peers. She viewed David in the same manner as club members without disabilities, “You know kids act better when they’re associated with something bigger than themselves . . . we’re hoping that everybody gets that, [David] is no different than any other kids really.”

A motivating factor that was central to David's continued participation in the Mighty Hawks was the notion of being a participant in an inclusive community of teachers and students. The special education teacher remarked, "Our environment here is just really conducive for inclusion . . . our teachers are pretty much inclusive without needing extra support from me." She and the club sponsor believed that students were "considerate," "tolerant," and "accepting" of David. The club sponsor commented, "We just have a phenomenal student body that are just very nice kids . . . I think we're an anomaly [because] I don't know that this is a regular deal in regular schools that I've seen." The club sponsor also felt that because of the culture of the school community, David felt comfortable participating at games with his peers, "This [Mighty Hawks] is a safe place, there are no entry requirements to participate . . . its low-risk involvement."

Spending time with friends, being a member of a group, and having fun were also important motivating factors for David's continued involvement in the club. According to the special education teacher, David's Special Olympics buddy (i.e., Sam) provided a positive role model for him and helped to "keep him in check" while participating in school club activities. His special education teacher also perceived Dede's friends as feeling comfortable, "facilitating David's involvement when they see that he needs assistance . . . so that he is having fun without crossing a line that becomes annoying." For David, being a member of the club appeared to be something that he valued as important. For instance, the club sponsor commented that David was always punctual to events, dressed up in costumes to show his school spirit, and seemed to demonstrate a sense of school pride. The club sponsor commented, "I think he [David] considers himself a Hawk . . . he wears his crimson and black and he's proud of that." In fact, his high school peers had recently voted for him to receive the monthly Hawk Spirit Award for his

enthusiasm for school athletics. These sentiments were seconded by his special education teacher who gave examples of David speaking to his peers about upcoming activities in the hallway and during lunch, “Are you coming tonight?” “Hey! I can’t wait for tonight are you going?” David’s mother agreed that participation was something he enjoyed and looked forward to, “Going to games . . . they get to stand together in the end zone . . . he realized like this is a fun thing to do . . . he always talks about it at home.”

Participation in the Mighty Hawks

David’s involvement in school club activities differed depending on the type of event and setting. David was more likely to participate in the same activities as club members (e.g., standing to do a cheer, watching the game) when events (i.e., girls’ basketball, girls’ volleyball) were held in the school’s gymnasium with a smaller crowd of spectators. While engaged in school club activities, David participated independently and without support. For instance, he would stand/sit with the group, recite the words to simple cheers (e.g., “We are the Mighty Hawks!”) in unison with his peers, and complete physical movements that accompanied specific cheers (e.g., stretching arms as if he was ready to begin exercising). David’s strong and determined voice added a vibrant and spirited element to the group’s cheering. David would also occasionally attempt to get other club members revved up when there was a lull period in the game by beginning a new cheer. However, sometimes David’s participation appeared different than other club members. For example, while standing to do a cheer David might begin stomping his feet, screaming loudly at the persons seated behind the student section and pacing back and forth in a line. These behaviors made David stand-out from the group, causing club members to keep their distance from him.

David had a mixture of positive and negative interactions with other club members. Positive encounters were limited to a handful of occasions. For instance, peers would provide David with assistance to complete a simple task (e.g., straightening his costume wig, pushing boxing gloves onto his hands). Negative encounters occurred more frequently with peers. David would typically initiate contact with a club member standing close by with unusual comments like, “I’m flammable” or “I’m an undercover agent” and point to an object he was wearing (e.g., flammable sticker, football helmet). In turn, many peers would ignore him by looking in the opposite direction or moving to another spot. Interestingly, David seldom interacted with his sister, Dede. During one negative encounter with Dede, she openly scolded him in front of club members for damaging the club’s mascot costume. After the confrontation, David was so emotionally distraught that he left the game for the remainder of the evening. Since no one followed David after leaving, it was unclear whether he had walked home alone or called someone to give him a ride.

During crowded events like football and boys’ basketball games, David’s participation primarily involved doing activities that were totally different from his peers and unrelated to the club. It was common for David to walk far distances away from the group (i.e., ranging from 10 to 120 yards—or the length of a football field) for long periods of time (i.e., ranging from 10 to 30 minutes). While away from the group David would wander aimlessly by himself. For instance, he would walk from the north side of the football field (i.e., where the group was stationed) to the concession stand located by the entrance, then onto the opponent side of the stadium (i.e., south side of the football field). During basketball games, it was common for David to roam the school hallways, scour the boys’ locker room, loiter outside the concession stand area, or sit in the bleachers with community members.

When away from the group, David had some positive and several negative encounters with community members. Positive interactions occurred more frequently when individuals were familiar with David. For example, David yelled, “Boo!” behind a woman walking in the school hallway during a basketball game. Although the individual was quick to turn around, she immediately smiled when she saw David and responded with, “You better be behaving yourself,” and gave him a hug from the side. Yet, when individuals did not personally know David, they tended to respond in a more negative fashion. For instance, David approached a mother who was holding her toddler and began stroking the young child’s leg. The mother in a defensive tone expressed, “You don’t know her!” and immediately turned her back towards him. In addition, David appeared to be victimized by a peer who was not affiliated with the club. While roaming the perimeter of the football stadium, David was approached by a male peer and told to do several inappropriate tasks (e.g., hug a female peer, hug a male stranger). As David completed these tasks, the male instigator mocked him openly in front of a large group of teenagers. David did not seem to be cognizant of the negative nature of this encounter.

David was rarely supervised or supported during school club activities. In most instances, supervision took the form of the club sponsor or head principal walking past group members and saying hello for a few brief moments. Sometimes, the club sponsor would sit away from the group (e.g., on the opposite side of the gymnasium) while still observing from a distance. The club sponsor talked about supporting David’s involvement in activities as something that was difficult for her. As the club sponsor, she didn’t always feel comfortable serving in a supportive role:

I might tell David to cool it if he is hugging someone if it isn’t anything too much . . . truthfully I usually pass it off to our Vice Principal/Head Coach Mr. Simpson to deal with since he’s very supportive of us. We don’t believe David’s being malicious in some of the things he does, but it’s still not appropriate . . . it makes the girls feel uncomfortable

(e.g., hugging/touching a female in the club that he doesn't have an existing relationship with). So I'll have a conversation with Mr. Simpson [Vice Principal/Head Coach] and Mrs. Kelley [the special education teacher] about you know . . . expectations and I don't know what his cognitive ability is. I didn't sign up for that. I signed up for this. So he has to behave appropriately or he won't be allowed.

In contrast, David's special education teacher viewed the club sponsor as a person who made David feel safe while participating and as the main person who coordinated supports as needed, "I know if David is being outrageous, she [the club sponsor] will address it . . . or recruit peers to help and facilitate." If David was having a major issue while participating, his special education teacher believed that the club sponsor would contact her directly for assistance and she would work with David on finding more "appropriate" ways to participate (e.g., use of personal space, appropriate voice level). However, she also hinted at the need to be present at games, "I always feel better when I am at the game doing ticket duties, cause there's someone . . . you know who is there and can help." During games, the special education teacher was frequently present working as a volunteer selling tickets and food items for the school. Although David would seek her out to say hello during games, she would seldom prompt him to return to the group. For instance, during the second half of the girls' basketball game when David wandered over to the concession stand, his special education teacher asked David to assist her in the concession stand area. For approximately 15 minutes, David moved large furniture items from the cafeteria region to a storage-shed located on the outside of the school.

Lastly, it was fairly common for David's mother to attend many of the school's sporting events. While at these games, his mother suggested that she would, "try to just sort of let him do his thing," but if he was "ramped up" she would look over at him and "give him a look" to let him know to "bring it down a notch." During one of the girls' basketball games, the mother appeared to watch David from her seat in the stands. On several instances she provided a gestural

prompt towards David (e.g., making a Shhh! motion, waving her hand and shaking her head no) to get him back on task.

Summary

David's natural athletic abilities, high-energy personality, and familiarity with the Mighty Hawks and sporting events in general were important motivating factors for his involvement in the pep club. His special education teacher and mother also encouraged David to participate in the school club. Overall, David's participation in the Mighty Hawks differed from setting to setting. For instance, when he was in a more confined area with a smaller crowd present, he was more likely to participate like his peers (e.g., standing to do cheers, reciting chants). However, in open settings or with a large group of spectators, his engagement was frequently different than other club members and unrelated to the club (e.g., wandering the school hallways, running up and down the football field). The nature of interactions with community members appeared to be closely tied to whether or not they personally knew David. For instance, individuals who had a prior relationship with David responded positively to him more consistently than those who were strangers. David also received very little supervision or personal supports while participating in school club activities.

Nicole and FCCLA Rosenberry High School

Rosenberry High School is situated in a quaint small-rural town with a sense of history and pride from its 4,480 residents. This is the type of place where everyone knows everyone and where students grow up together. On a fall evening, it's common for family outings to include a trip to the old-fashioned soda shop followed by watching the town's favorite Raging Tigers football team play their rival opponents. On the outside, the community is well known for having a variety of antique shops as well as a large outlet strip mall. Rosenberry is located within a short

thirty-minute driving distance of a mid-size community with a large public university, an abundance of stores and parks, as well as public transportation services.

Rosenberry School District encompasses three schools—elementary, middle, and high. All of the schools are located one mile apart. District enrollment is around 1000 students, with 400 students at the high school. The district website boasts that they provide, “Individual recognition and attention for fostering self-esteem and enhanced learning,” due to the small class sizes of approximately fourteen students. At the high school, there are numerous extracurricular activities offered, including 12 clubs and 10 sports teams. The school itself is an older facility, but it is evident from the freshly coated exterior paint and clean interior hallways that it has been well maintained throughout the years. Upon entering through the large double-front doors, you are immediately greeted with a sign that states, “We pride ourselves in service and community.”

Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Club

FCCLA is a career and technical student organization that focuses on families. The mission of the organization is to encourage personal growth and leadership through Family and Consumer Sciences education. FCCLA’s primary emphasis is to aid students in development of important life-skills, including critical thinking, interpersonal relationships, and career readiness. Nationally, there are over 3000 chapters with close to 150,000 club members (“National FCCLA,” n.d.).

The FCCLA Chapter at Rosenberry High School has thirty club members (i.e., 25 girls and 5 boys) ranging from freshman to seniors. Membership dues are \$20 each year and help to cover costs associated with a one-time bus rental and food/decorations for a teacher luncheon held in March. There are five officers that retain the positions of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and sentinel. The club is currently club sponsored by the Family and

Consumer Sciences teacher. She has sponsored the club for the last five years because she appreciates the leadership experiences and opportunities it brings to Rosenberry High School students. Meetings are held in her classroom the first Tuesday of each month. The room is a large open area that includes several cooking stations with stoves and sinks as well as large desks and tables clustered throughout the space.

Monthly meetings are centered on fellowship, food, and fun. While enjoying lunch, club members typically socialize with each other for the first half of meetings. Common food options have included the club sponsor preparing a meal (e.g., spaghetti buffet), ordering pizza, or club members bringing their own lunch. Meetings are structured for maximum student involvement, with club officers leading the discussion. The opening and closing of each session is facilitated by the president, who is responsible for directing club members in a choral reading of the FCCLA creed:

We are the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America.
We face the future with warm courage and high hope.
For we have the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious values.
For we are the builders of homes.
Homes for America's future.
Homes where living will be the expression of everything this is good and fair.
Homes where truth and love and security and faith will be realities, not dreams.
We are the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America.
We face the future with warm courage and high hopes.

After the creed is recited in union, the secretary reads the club minutes from the previous meeting. This is followed by the treasurer providing an updated balance of the club's budget. For the remainder of the meeting, the president or vice-president will discuss future opportunities for participation, including activities like decorating socks for sick children, preparing food for a teacher luncheon, and attending a fall club member party. To encourage club member involvement, FCCLA is set up on a point-reward system. Club members can earn one point for

each FCCLA activity in which they participate, including events like attending meetings, service activities (e.g., volunteering at Salvation Army), and fundraisers (e.g., selling raffle tickets at basketball games). Club members within the top-five point earners are invited to take a weekend trip to the state capital in early May. For one day in April, all club members are invited to attend the state-wide FCCLA Conference in Bloomington. At this conference, club members get to attend break-out sessions on a variety of topics like health and nutrition; fitness; and leadership building activities. Fundraisers held earlier in the year generate money to cover the fee for the Conference, so club members do not have to pay any additional costs to attend.

Nicole—Focal FCCLA Club Member

Nicole was born and raised in the town of Rosenberry. Her teachers described her as friendly, good-natured, with a great sense of humor. Nicole's mother reported that her leisure interests are primarily cooking, drawing, and playing games on the computer. When Nicole is comfortable with the person and setting, she can become quite talkative and enjoys making comments about her family. At home, she is the oldest sibling, with two younger brothers and one younger sister. In addition to her siblings, she resides with her mother and stepfather. Her mother self-identified as being a "stay-at-home mom" and stated that she values family above all else. Nicole has lived with her stepfather since she was 4 years old and referred to him as her "dad." Nicole takes great pride in her home and has a large bedroom decorated with patterns of bright yellow and red flowers spread across the bedding and walls. She often spends time in the kitchen helping her mother to prepare dinner and will occasionally join her mother for trips to the grocery store. Outside of school, Nicole has been involved in Special Olympics and Girl Scouts for several years. Nicole's mother reported that she advocated for bringing Special Olympics to the community of Rosenberry and has also sponsored Nicole's Girl Scout Troop for 2 years.

At school, Nicole spends the majority of her day in a self-contained classroom that includes six other students. She is currently receiving special education services for a moderate-severe intellectual disability and speech impairment. Her Individualized Education Program (IEP) states that she “uses a picture schedule at school.” She has a paraprofessional who accompanies her to lunch as well as elective classes (i.e., choir, art). Current goals involve skills related to transition (i.e., work habits), math (i.e., basic numerical expressions), literacy (i.e., reading basic one syllable words), functional life skills (i.e., cooking, reacting appropriately in crisis situations), and speech (i.e., using strategies to increase speech intelligibility). Nicole is very difficult to understand when she speaks. Although she is able to initiate requests and respond to prompts in one to two sentences, significant articulation errors make her speech sound muffled. Physically, Nicole is quite petite in stature and resembles more of a sixth grader than a freshman. Activities requiring fine motor skills are difficult for her, including movements such as tying her shoe laces or using scissors to cut paper. In regards to school-based extracurricular involvement, FCCLA is the first and only club that Nicole has ever participated.

Motivating Factors Affecting Inclusion in FCCLA

A critical motive in Nicole’s journey to joining FCCLA stemmed from her attendance at a freshman orientation open-house event. Upon learning about FCCLA during this event, Nicole told her mother that she was interested in “home-stuff.” Intuitively Nicole’s mother had a sense that FCCLA would be a nice match for her daughter, based on Nicole’s strong interest in food preparation at home. However, she wanted to ensure that the club was an appropriate activity for Nicole, so she inquired about membership with Nicole’s paraprofessional. In turn, the paraprofessional had a one-on-one conversation with the club sponsor about Nicole’s personal interests in food, eating, cooking and other “girlie-stuff.” Nicole was able to try-out FCCLA for a

few meetings to determine if she liked being involved in the club. After attending the first two meetings, Nicole responded “yes” when asked by her paraprofessional if she wanted to become a club member.

From the beginning, forming new peer connections while sustaining old friendships were important reasons for Nicole’s willingness to become a club member of FCCLA. According to her special education teacher, Nicole had a close relationship with two female students with learning disabilities that she frequently spent time with in the resource room. These students were also participating in FCCLA, and Nicole appeared eager to be in a club with her friends.

In addition, encouragement and emotional support from Nicole’s special education teacher helped Nicole to become involved in FCCLA. According to the special education teacher, school clubs were viewed as a way to include students with severe disabilities (SD) in school activities in an effort to have what she described as a “full high-school experience.” This experience meant going to school dances, painting the Homecoming float for the annual town parade, and joining extracurricular activities with same-aged peers. The special education teacher explained:

Having a positive experience in a club, helps Nicole feel like she’s part of a group and that she’s included . . . which makes her more willing to take a risk of going to other school events since she isn’t being treated like she is a special student. We count on clubs . . . we even push clubs on [our] kids.

Nicole’s parents also played a critical role in why she initially became involved in FCCLA. The special education teacher explained that it was a parent priority for Nicole to join a club as a freshman. This was also voiced by the club sponsor who felt that Nicole’s mother wanted her to be involved in something at school as opposed to “just going to school and coming home.” In addition, Nicole’s mother also stressed the importance of Nicole’s stepfather. Her mother implied that it was through the ongoing daily encouragement of her stepfather that she

joined FCCLA and that he was “really pushing her to go.” At home, the mother indicated that Nicole’s stepfather would tell Nicole, “The best part of school is being involved and getting to know the people that you go to school with.” Her mother also emphasized the importance of Nicole learning life-skills (e.g., cooking, cleaning) that would lead to her being self-sufficient and independent. Based on parent priorities, FCCLA seemed like a natural fit for Nicole to be involved with peers in a school-activity while learning important life-long skills. Advocating for Nicole’s initial involvement in a school club was something that her mother felt very comfortable doing. Nicole’s mother had previously experienced working in a school district and discussed how she knew what to expect in regards to her daughter’s education. As a result, her mother took great pride in advocating for what she and her husband felt was best for Nicole.

Nicole’s continued involvement in FCCLA across the year was due in part to the inclusive environment created by the club sponsor. Although it was the club sponsor’s first experience having a student with SD in the club, she felt comfortable including Nicole and described club meetings as being warm and welcoming for all students. To establish this inviting climate, the club sponsor explained how she cultivated a sense of community grounded on the basic principle of “treat everyone the same.” In her previous teacher training program for family and consumer science education, the club sponsor learned about students with disabilities, which she cited as a major reason for feeling at ease around Nicole.

Enjoyment; pride as a club member; as well as familiarity with school club activities, routines, and people were additional motivating factors for Nicole’s ongoing participation in FCCLA. Participants viewed Nicole as thoroughly enjoying participating in FCCLA and commented on how she valued her involvement in school club activities. For example, the club sponsor used the example of Nicole signing up for multiple service activities (e.g., food

preparation for teacher luncheon, selling items for a fundraiser) as illustrative of her dedication and commitment to FCCLA, “If Nicole signs up [for an activity] I know she’s going to do it and I know I can guarantee that she’ll be there.” Her mother referenced the evening that Nicole sold raffle tickets on the night of her birthday because she wanted to be involved in school club activities. Her mother also commented that Nicole’s involvement had contributed to her, “loving to come to high school” and being excited on the days that FCCLA had lunch meetings. Furthermore, the amount of pride Nicole took in her affiliation with FCCLA was apparent when the special education teacher talked about the FCCLA red t-shirt that Nicole had recently purchased to wear to upcoming school events. Over the course of the semester, the special education teacher observed that Nicole’s involvement had increased (e.g., being talkative, asking questions). The club sponsor attributed this to Nicole feeling more comfortable with club routines and activities as the weeks progressed, “She is just more comfortable with the kids, with me, she kind of knows the routine of how the meetings work . . . she comes in and now knows what’s going on.” Her mother credited Nicole’s familiarity with school club activities to what her daughter was learning at home about food when they cooked together in the kitchen each night.

A systematic plan to coordinate Nicole’s involvement as well as a support network helped to ensure her continued participation in FCCLA. All participants believed that it was important to have a plan in place that included a system for communicating information. They described this level of communication as a team or group effort and essential for keeping Nicole as involved in school club activities as possible. The club sponsor would report upcoming school club activities (e.g., lunch meeting time/date) to the special education teacher and/or the paraprofessional through email or in-person and then this information would be written by one of

them in Nicole's daily planner. Each night Nicole's mother would check the planner for updated notes and email the special education teacher and/or the club sponsor with any follow-up questions. The mother also reported that sometimes she would receive an email or text message in addition to the information provided in the planner. In addition, having a solid support network contributed to Nicole's participation. Her special education teacher believed that because of Nicole's support at home from her parents, she was more likely to feel comfortable when taking risks (i.e., participating in FCCLA). The special education teacher perceived Nicole's parents as having high expectations for her and felt that this support contributed to her achievements at school. Although Nicole did not receive any direct/organized supports while participating in the club, the club sponsor felt comfortable knowing that she could talk with the paraprofessional if she felt that an upcoming activity (e.g., using a knife and cutting board) would require additional support.

Participation in FCCLA

Nicole's involvement in FCCLA typically seemed different than other club members. However, she was able to follow the basic flow of activities similar to her peers such as eating when others ate or listening as the officers read their reports. For the vast majority of meetings, Nicole was seated by herself, only spoke to the club sponsor, and was observed remaining silent for upwards of thirty minutes on one occasion. In contrast, her peers were actively engaging in conversation, sharing food, and enjoying their time together. Nicole did not always appear to understand the social-rules tied to participation in the club. This was apparent when she would interrupt officers while they read their reports by blurting out comments like, "I want to help too . . . shirt . . . football". She also struggled to understand how to participate appropriately during opening/closing activities. For example, when club members would stand to read the creed,

Nicole would stay in her seat and continue eating. Nicole seemed to receive different treatment from the club sponsor, which had a significant impact on her involvement in activities. She was seldom redirected when wandering around the classroom or not following the club sponsor's directives (e.g., going through the food line when it wasn't her turn). Sometimes Nicole was not given a choice on her involvement. This was exemplified while selling raffle tickets. Although her fellow peer was allowed to make the choice to walk around and sell tickets, Nicole was told to stay with the club sponsor and sell at the front door entrance.

Nicole's degree of active participation in school club activities ranged from passive to highly involved. Since many of the club meetings revolved around food and fellowship, peers were often busy socializing during the times when the officers weren't discussing their reports. Nicole spent these moments eating silently in her seat while occasionally glancing up to watch peers interact. Interestingly, Nicole frequently participated independently when the club sponsor was not within close proximity. For instance, she was independently able to select a seat, fill her plate with food, request a pen/pencil, sign up for activities, raise her hand to ask a question, offer others a dessert, and listen as club officers spoke. Occasionally, Nicole would partially participate in activities. Partial participation involved Nicole working with a partner (i.e., club sponsor, peer) to complete tasks like decorating socks to give to the hospital and cookies for the teacher luncheon. Typically the partner would assume the role of facilitator and guide Nicole through the process of completing a task by providing short prompts, "Which color do you want to start with first . . . what do you want to do next?"

Throughout Nicole's participation in FCCLA, she encountered a mix of positive and negative interactions. Greetings were commonplace whether it was Nicole or another person initiating. During the fall-winter party at least 10 peers were observed speaking to her, some in

the form of a greeting (e.g., “Hi Nicole”) or making a request (e.g., “Come sit with us”). In addition, Nicole was observed providing help to a peer who arrived late to the party—she handed the peer materials for sock decorations as well as attempted to provide directions. As the year progressed, Nicole’s comfort level appeared to increase. She became more vocal during meetings and the club sponsor seemed to communicate more effectively with her. On the other hand, lack of effective communication was the primary reason why negative interactions occurred. Due to articulation issues, most of her speech was unintelligible resulting in recurrent requests for her to repeat what she said. When individuals in the club communicated with Nicole, it was typically in a juvenile tone (i.e., slow speech, high pitch). Nicole also did not always respond to requests and comments made by others (e.g., “How are you today?”) for unknown reasons.

Nicole’s participation in FCCLA was partially facilitated by person-provided supports. During the majority of observations, the club sponsor was the primary support person and provided intense, on-going assistance. Due to the nature of these supports, Nicole seemed to develop an overreliance on the club sponsor. She would ask the club sponsor to complete simple tasks for her, such as getting her a napkin or ice for her drink. At times, the club sponsor would instinctively do things for Nicole without acquiring Nicole’s input. During the fall-winter party, the club sponsor poured her a drink, selected her food item, and signed her name to the sign-in sheet. However, Nicole was observed completing all three of these tasks independently and without assistance during subsequent observations. Sometimes other persons around Nicole noticed that she was being over-supported. For example, the ‘ticket lady’ at the raffle sale made a disparaging comment to the club sponsor to, “let her do it [give tickets/collect money].” Interestingly, this woman was a retired business teacher who did not personally know Nicole. In another instance, a peer advocated for Nicole while playing a card game by stating, “She doesn’t

need any help!” to a female peer who was attempting to complete a task for Nicole. Beyond this unique example, very seldom were peers observed providing any type of support for Nicole. The few peer supports that were delivered appeared to be more natural in nature (e.g., helping her pour a drink when she was struggling to lift a 2-liter bottle; redirecting her to sign another sign-up sheet when a peer noticed that her name was already on the sheet) and most likely resembled the type of assistance peers would have provided to anyone.

Summary

There were several overarching motivating factors that affected Nicole’s inclusion in FCCLA activities. These primary factors were having (a) a personal interest in food-related activities, (b) friends that were club members, and (c) ongoing emotional support and encouragement from adults. In general, Nicole’s participation in school club activities was different than her peers. A broad description of Nicole’s involvement includes her being (a) isolated during club meetings, (b) unable to consistently participate because of the lack of social skills, (c) over-supported by the club sponsor, and (d) unable to effectively communicate with club members due to expressive language issues.

Tiffany and the Key Club Syracuse High School

Syracuse High School is situated in the rural town of Syracuse and is surrounded by a cluster of seven small towns that are commonly referred to as villages. Like Syracuse, each village typically has a small downtown area with a few local shops, sufficient for the 2000 or less residents living there. The closest eatery to the high school is nearly ten miles away and one’s best bet for dining out is the local gas station and convenient store. When coming up the long drive that leads to the front of the high school, there is a sense of seclusion or remoteness that might be felt. The school is located in the midst of a large open field, surrounded by cornfields

and flat barren land that stretches as far as the eye can see. Upon entering Syracuse High's main lobby, one will quickly notice the cleanliness of the carpeted blue hallways and cream tinted walls. Above the entryway hangs a large welcoming banner that reads, "Our community inspires, educates, and challenges each student to achieve personal success." The aroma of sweet potpourri fills the entrance as you walk past the front desk, reminding one of the inviting-nature of the school, faculty and students.

The Syracuse School District is home to one high school, one middle school, and three elementary schools. There are approximately fifteen hundred students attending school in the district, including 600 at the high school. In particular, Syracuse High offers a wide range of extracurricular activities, including 27 co-ed clubs as well as 19 boys and girl's athletic teams. The school's activity page on their website asserts, "At Syracuse High, there is something for everyone!" Listed on this page is also an activity bus schedule that contains the times and dates that the bus runs each day. Typically, there is transportation to an area elementary school drop-off location every evening around 5 p.m.

Key Club

A popular activity at Syracuse High is Key Club. This club presently has 35 active club members from ninth through twelfth grades. The club has been a chapter of Key Club International for 16 years and follows all of their standard regulations. According to Key Club International's website, the mission and purpose of the organization is to:

Assist Kiwanis in carrying out its mission to serve the children of the world. High school club members of Key Club perform acts of service in their communities, such as cleaning up parks, collecting clothing, and organizing food drives. They also learn leadership skills by running meetings, planning projects, and holding elected leadership positions at the club, district, and international levels ("Key Club International," n.d.).

Meetings are held in a business classroom twice each month for 45 minutes, during a designated time for club meetings called flex-time. The room is situated with four rows of long tables containing desktop computers and mobile office chairs. The club sponsor has been an ongoing local Kiwanis Chapter affiliate for a decade and acts as a liaison between both groups. For example, the club sponsor often relays information from Kiwanis meetings to Key Club members about upcoming community volunteer opportunities. Each Key Club member is asked to pay a yearly membership fee of \$12 and complete 10 service hours each fall and spring semester. The Syracuse High School chapter coordinates some of the volunteer activities (e.g., making blankets and socks for children), while others are community events that Key Club members attend (e.g., Christmas gift drive and wrapping). Club members are also permitted to obtain volunteer hours by working with their church or youth group.

Tiffany—Focal Key Club Member

Tiffany was adopted at infancy and has lived with her adoptive mother, father, and older brother in the quaint village of Acadia since birth. Her brother, who was adopted a few years before Tiffany, also has the same rare neurodevelopment disorder called Williams-Beuren Syndrome (WBS). Tiffany exhibits many common characteristics of WBS. For instance, she has cardiovascular issues as well as poor adaptive behavior and fine/gross motor skills. Tiffany's gait is slow moving and unbalanced, with her head typically positioned towards the ground and tilted to the right side. Tiffany also shares two of the classic traits of persons with WBS—an affinity for music and a strong social personality ("Williams-syndrome," n.d.). Tiffany is a people-person and enjoys smiling and laughing frequently. Interestingly, Tiffany is able to remember the faces and names of every person that she meets even though she has a moderate to severe intellectual disability. She is able to form complete thoughts when speaking and responding to specific

requests, and oftentimes makes exaggerated facial gestures when communicating with others (e.g., frowns when telling a peer that she is tired). At school, Tiffany addresses her peers in the hallway, at lunch, or in the classroom by name and says hello to them. Tiffany spends the majority of the school day in a self-contained classroom. She also takes chorus as an elective for one period each day. Tiffany is currently working on goals related to the improvement of daily living skills (e.g., brushing teeth, cleaning a bathroom) and functional math skills (e.g., using next dollar strategy). Her transition plan includes additional benchmarks for gaining (a) employment skills through volunteering and (b) independent living skills through participating in leisure activities like shopping and family outings.

Tiffany thoroughly enjoys participating in extracurricular and social activities with peers. Her mother reported that she was a club member of her middle school cheerleading team for 2 years and also has been participating in the long jump for Special Olympics since elementary school. She also reported that Tiffany enjoys chorus at school and likes singing at home. In particular, her mother mentioned that Tiffany was very excited about her role in the Madrigal Holiday Feaste (i.e., a holiday musical performance and dinner), where she will be performing one song with the high school choir. In addition, Tiffany participates in a bowling club that is sponsored by her primary special education teacher. This club meets once a week and is only open to club members receiving special education services.

Motivating Factors Affecting Inclusion in Key Club

Being able to participate in social activities with friends was an important factor that motivated Tiffany to join Key Club. Her special education teacher as well as her mother described her as helpful, caring, and extremely social. The special education teacher also believed that the club was a good fit for Tiffany because it involved doing hands-on activities

with some of Tiffany's friends. Rae, Tiffany's peer mentor and friend, initially suggested to the special education teacher that Tiffany should consider joining Key Club, since Rae was already a participating club member. Beyond Rae, Tiffany's friend Cassie from the special education classroom also attended club meetings on a regular basis.

Adult encouragement was also an important consideration for why Tiffany joined Key Club. According to the club sponsor and Tiffany's parents, the special education teacher played a pivotal role in helping her get involved in the organization. These individuals viewed the special education teacher as someone who valued including Tiffany in activities with peers without disabilities as much as possible, "Mrs. Jenkins [the special education teacher] wants her to be included and be around the kids . . . Mrs. Jenkins must feel comfortable with the kids being around her, or else I don't think she would encourage Tiffany to be involved," stated the club sponsor. The special education teacher explained that she wanted Tiffany to try out the club in a way that was similar to her peers.

I didn't really talk to her [the club sponsor], I just kind of showed up with the girls [Tiffany and Cassie]. We don't call the community places that we visit ahead of time to give them a heads up. So I guess I took the same approach with Key Club . . . My students need to be included so I guess I didn't feel a need to ask her [the sponsor].

The special education teacher provided additional reasons as to why she encouraged Tiffany's involvement. Logistically, she believed that the club was a good fit since meetings were held on campus, during the school day, and at a time when Tiffany's schedule permitted her to attend. She also perceived Key Club as a service organization that would provide opportunities for Tiffany to work on "vocational stuff" including, "soft and social skills that can translate into vocational and community settings." Lastly, her special education teacher also credited a lifestyle-based assessment for aiding her decision to encourage Tiffany to join the club. Prior to the start of the school year, the special education teacher sent the assessment home for Tiffany's

parents to complete. From this assessment, she learned that Tiffany's parents valued peer interactions, inclusion, and the development of friendships with peers without disabilities as areas of importance.

Adult participants unanimously agreed that the club members of Key Club were critical to Tiffany's continued involvement in activities. In particular, participants believed that peers were "supportive and respectful" of Tiffany and felt "very comfortable working with her and wanted to include her." The club sponsor believed that peers had a natural desire to help since they were participating in a service organization, "They're in Key Club because they like to help others, and this fits their personality so they are more apt to wanting to help." The club sponsor did not believe that peers viewed Tiffany as a recipient of their help, but instead felt that they were the type of students that would be supportive of all peers in most settings. Similarly, the special education teacher accredited the district/school climate as a key motivating factor where students were prepared to be supportive. She discussed a peer buddy program that began in middle school:

We have four years of generations of peer buddies in the high school that know the kids [students with disabilities] pretty well. And typically these buddies are more likely to be involved in extracurriculars . . . they're like the star students . . . they want to be there.

In addition, Tiffany's enthusiasm for being a part of Key Club was also a motivating factor for her continued involvement. Her special education teacher felt that Tiffany was excited about meetings, "She knows that it's important and a special activity that we don't get to do every week, she looks forward to it." Tiffany's parents remarked on her eagerness to discuss Key Club activities at home, "She is just all excited and has to tell you about what they are going to be doing. She had fun wrapping the blankets." The club sponsor also commented that Tiffany "acts like she wants to be there and always seems to be happy" when participating in activities.

The club sponsor observed Tiffany's enthusiasm for involvement increasing as she gained more experience participating, "I don't think she is quite as shy around the same people as she was around at first . . . I think she now feels more comfortable being involved."

Adult-provided supports, coordinated efforts among stakeholders, valued involvement in activities and preparation efforts were important reasons for Tiffany's ongoing participation. The special education teacher describes her role as providing somewhat limited support, "I am on stand by for support, I just kind of stay on the sidelines . . . I do try to model how to talk to Tiffany." Initially, the club sponsor had strong feelings about the need to have adult-provided supports to include Tiffany in activities. As time progressed, her opinion began to shift,

My comfort level has increased [working with Tiffany], I have learned her limits and capabilities by watching Mrs. Jenkins [the special education teacher] and other students . . . I think they [the special education teacher and other students] taught me how to interact with her.

The club sponsor went on to explain that her expectations had shifted, "I now see that with a little help what she is capable of."

A coordinated effort between adults was also significant to Tiffany's continued participation. According to Tiffany's parents, the special education teacher would communicate with them about upcoming events by sending an email in addition to writing notes in a daily communication folder/notebook organizer. While accompanying Tiffany to events, her special education teacher would take notes on upcoming activities and information about the volunteer opportunities that Tiffany has signed up to complete. Occasionally, she would ask for additional clarifying information from the club sponsor. Lastly, the special education teacher appeared to value Tiffany's involvement and viewed her participation as a time to work on particular skills (i.e., social, soft, vocational), especially generalizing these skills, "It's so difficult for our kids to generalize their skills, for her to have something different after school . . . [Key Club] gives her

access to more new environments with different people.” The special education teacher also commonly pre-taught Tiffany the skills she needed for participation ahead of time. For instance, she engaged Tiffany in a role-rehearsal of how to sign up for a particular volunteer activity.

Participation in Key Club

Overall, Tiffany participated in the same types of school club activities as her peers; she rode the bus to events, attended club meetings, and completed service related tasks. Tiffany was able to independently participate in some of these activities. For example, little support was required for her involvement during club meetings. She was able to independently listen to club officers read their monthly reports, ask follow-up questions to officers, and converse with club members seated within close proximity. On occasion, Tiffany was also able to initiate different types of tasks. She would sometimes greet club members by name as well as make inquiries about the meaning of a specific word or the purpose of a certain activity (e.g., making blankets).

The majority of time, Tiffany partially participated in Key Club activities that required multiple steps. She was typically heavily supported by club members and occasionally supported by her special education teacher or the club sponsor. Working with Tiffany, the support person carved out opportunities for her to complete specific tasks. For example, Tiffany paired with Brittney to wrap presents while participating in Community Care (i.e., a group of civic organizations that join together during the holidays to locate, wrap, and distribute presents for community members in need). Tiffany’s role was to tear off tape from a dispenser and hand it to Brittney to complete the wrapping. In another example, Megan supported Tiffany when tying bows at the candy-cane sale. “Hold this for me Tiffany . . . okay good job, we got it!” exclaimed Megan as she pulled together two long pieces of red ribbon as Tiffany held the center point firmly in place.

Peer provided support was always natural in nature. For instance, a peer would walk up to Tiffany and simply ask her if she wanted help. Each peer helper assisted Tiffany with task completion of activities like making change and signing up for service events. Peers also used a lot of verbal prompts (e.g., “You cut here”), verbal reinforcements (e.g., “Good job Tiffany”), and choices (e.g., “Point to the [gift] tag you want”). One peer in particular, Rae, was observed fading supports while making blankets. Once Tiffany had learned the skill of cutting strands into the cloth, Rae stepped back and gave Tiffany the opportunity to work independently.

Interestingly, most of the peers had a pre-existing relationship with Tiffany. Some had grown up with her, while others knew her from being a PE or lunch buddy. In contrast, adult provided support was commonly in the form of modeling (e.g., using scissors to cut cloth strands) or physical prompting (e.g., using hand over hand to tie a knot). Tiffany’s special education teacher also verbally prompted her to begin new tasks (e.g., inviting a peer to lunch, using a tape dispenser) in addition to getting back on task when Tiffany became disengaged in an activity.

Tiffany had many positive interactions with club members, adults, as well as community members. She was very sociable and often liked to start conversations with those seated close by her. Oftentimes she had a two-way dialogue with club members about age-appropriate topics such as the lunch menu, sporting events, and family. She also greeted others (i.e., saying hello/goodbye) and introduced herself to new persons. Club members appeared to like Tiffany and spoke to her in an age-appropriate tone when they saw her. However, some club members seemed to view Tiffany as different and displayed behaviors that could have been stigmatizing. For example, a club member called her “cute” because she asked a question during a club meeting; the club officers gave her special attention for signing-up to complete a service activity; and a peer helper asked her if Santa was visiting her home for Christmas. On one occasion, a

peer providing support prompted Tiffany to make the correct change, “How many quarters is that [Tiffany] . . . okay that makes 50,” while standing in front of a student customer at the candy cane sale. Beyond the actions of other club members, Tiffany occasionally asked inappropriate questions like, “Am I adopted?” and was frequently off-topic in conversations.

While participating in Key Club, Tiffany was supervised by a variety of individuals. Typically, the special education teacher was present during activities. Tiffany’s special education teacher frequently participated in the same manner as other club members and also provided verbal prompts, physical modeling of task completion, and material adaptations (e.g., tape dispenser) for Tiffany and the other student with SD. In contrast, the club sponsor took a more hands-off approach to involvement. Although present, the club sponsor was normally standing or sitting to the side of activities and periodically conducted a brief check-in with club members. On one occasion, neither the club sponsor nor the special education teacher was supervising Tiffany. While selling candy-canes for the club, Tiffany was supported by a peer. This peer escorted her to and from the event location (i.e., outside of cafeteria), and provided supports (e.g., verbally prompting her to make correct change, physically guiding her hands to make a bow) throughout the activity.

Summary

Tiffany’s inclusion in Key Club was motivated by a variety of different factors. Two overarching factors were (a) participating in social activities with friends and (b) having supportive club members and adults (i.e., special education teacher, parents, club sponsor). Overall, Tiffany’s participation in school club activities was similar to her peers. Typically, she independently participated (e.g., listening attentively during meetings, writing her name on a sign-in sheet) in club meetings and had several positive interactions with fellow club members

(e.g., greeting others by name, carrying on a brief two-way conversation). Tiffany's peers and special education teacher also provided ongoing high-quality supports during her involvement, and facilitated frequent partial participation opportunities in multi-step activities (e.g., tying a bow).

Chapter 5

Cross-Case Findings

Motivating Factors Affecting Students' Inclusion in Clubs

The subsequent results will address the research question, “What are the motivating factors that affect the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in school clubs?” Findings are presented by themes that emphasize the common relationships across all cases (Stake, 2006). The first two themes (i.e., who you know matters, what you know matters) relate to motivating factors that describe why students initially joined clubs. Although there was a range of motivating factors for students joining clubs (i.e., recruitment efforts by club members, prior experience participating in clubs, variety of extracurricular activities from which to choose, relationship with the club sponsor, adult advocated for the student), the most prominent reason was so that students could engage in activities they enjoyed with their friends. The final theme (i.e., finding a niche) explains motivating factors that influenced students' ongoing participation in school club activities. In general, students were perceived to continue their involvement because they liked being part of a group and they were encouraged to participate; less frequent motivating factors related to having a relationship with peers outside of school club activities and learning new skills. Salient quotes for each theme are also provided in Table 3. One caveat to this information is that it is based on the beliefs of adult participants (i.e., special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents). Although these perceptions offer insights into the underlying motives for why students were involved in clubs, it might not be an accurate representation of views held by students with SD. Furthermore, the literature related to leisure preferences of students with intellectual disability has demonstrated that parents seldom select

activities that match the preferences of their child (e.g., Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; Kreiner & Flexer, 2007).

“Who” you know . . . matters. Ultimately, students participated in school club activities because they perceived these events as being fun activities they could experience with someone they knew. In each case, there was at least one club member (e.g., childhood friend, peer mentor, sibling) who played an integral role in motivating students to join the clubs. In fact, all of these club members had a pre-existing relationship with the students and were individuals that the students felt comfortable being around. Interestingly, two of the club members had relationships with students that emphasized providing mentoring or personal support as opposed to reciprocated friendships.

For example, Nicole had known a fellow FCCLA member since childhood. Remarkably, this peer was also the daughter of Nicole’s one-on-one paraprofessional who had supported Nicole since elementary school. The special education teacher described the relationship between Nicole and the club member as being “friends at school.” According to the teacher, the friendship involved in-school activities like eating lunch at the same table or saying ‘hi’ to each other in the hallway, and did not include activities after school such as talking on the phone or going to the movies. For Tiffany, a peer mentor (i.e., a student who tutored her in the special education classroom) helped spark additional interest in Key Club membership. The mentor spoke often to Tiffany and the special education teacher about the fun things she was experiencing in the Key Club. At one point, the mentor even mentioned to Tiffany that she should join the club with her. Participants believed that Tiffany’s awareness of her mentor’s membership was a motivating factor for her eventual involvement in the club.

In one case, participants agreed that a sibling was a major reason why a student with SD decided to join a club. David's older sister, Dede, had been a participant of the pep club for two years before David reached high school. Dede was described by participants as being a leader and active club member of the organization. The club sponsor of the pep club believed that Dede had encouraged David to get involved in the club and even "drug him along [to school club activities]" before he was a club member. David's mother had strong viewpoints about the profound impact that Dede had on David's eagerness to join the club. His mother explained that after seeing Dede participate in school club activities for years, "He just knew right away that he wanted to be a part of it [the club] when he reached high school."

"What" you know . . . matters. Students' interests, experiences, and skills influenced the types of clubs they chose to join. Club selection had more to do with students' familiarity with certain activities and knowing how to participate in the activities than their belief that a club sounded intriguing or their desire to experience something new and different. Before deciding to join a club, students participated in leisure activities with their families. Due to these experiences, students selected to participate in school club activities at school that closely resembled their family activities. In turn, membership in familiar clubs meant that students could capitalize on previously learned skills that closely aligned with what was soon becoming an area of leisure interest.

Family experiences helped to cultivate a sense of curiosity and personal interest in students. These experiences also afforded students with opportunities to gain skills required for participation. In Nicole's case, her mother discussed how Nicole had grown to enjoy cooking:

I always have my kids in the kitchen showing them how to cook, showing them measurements. I always try to include Nicole and the rest of my kids in everything [in the kitchen] because I want them to feel like they are siblings and that they can work together

on stuff . . . I think FCCLA drew her [in] because that is what we do all the time [at home] . . . cooking, home stuff, cleaning, self-care.

Nicole's engagement in family cooking helped her to acquire skills (e.g., making simple measurements, following a cooking recipe) that could be utilized in different types of FCCLA activities such as preparing food for the annual teacher luncheon.

Similarly, David was raised in a family environment that valued participation in sports. In fact, he had spent the majority of his childhood attending his older sibling's basketball and football games. He was described as having a "good understanding" of the basic rules that govern common sporting events (e.g., basketball, cheerleading). Through his involvement in sporting events with his family, David had mastered the skill of cheering. David knew the appropriate way to use voice inflection to articulate his words in a loud and clear tone and how to use many of the hand signals (e.g., raising arm in the air, clapping at the right time) that accompanied the cheers. David had also learned how to perform complicated gymnastics (e.g., round off, back hand spring) that would typically take years of training for the average person to attain. His mother remarked on how the pep club was a natural fit for David based on his familiarity with sports, "He identifies with sports fandom because that's what we do all the time . . . since he was born. I think it's just so much a part of what we do as a family."

Participants (i.e., special education teacher, club sponsor, and parents) described Tiffany as "social" and "helpful." She had a rich history of participating in community events since elementary school, including activities like acting in the play "Annie" and participating in the long-jump in the Special Olympics. She had also served in the role of helping others while volunteering as a greeter for her church. Because of Tiffany's interests, her special education teacher believed that Key Club was a good fit for Tiffany because of the service-oriented nature of the organization. She commented, "The club has been really on point for her [Tiffany] . . . I

knew there would be a lot of opportunities for that [helping others and being social] in Key Club.”

Finding a niche. Factors that motivated students to join school clubs revolved around their desire to participate in activities they enjoyed with peers they already knew. However, an important factor that motivated their continued involvement stemmed from the fulfillment students received from finding their own niche, a place where they fit-in with their peers, within the larger context of their school communities. Students continuously looked forward to going to school club activities and “being with their friends.” On the days that clubs met, students spoke often with their special education teachers about their excitement about upcoming school club activities; while at home, clubs were the hot topic of conversation around the evening dinner table. The FCCLA sponsor reflected on how she perceived Nicole as finding her niche in FCCLA, “This is her club. This is where she comes on Wednesdays once a month . . . she doesn’t want to miss anything because she is having so much fun.”

Students were also committed club members who often took great pride in their affiliations with the club. They demonstrated their commitment by attending all of the club meetings and events as well as signing up for volunteer activities. As one club sponsor noted, “If she [student with SD] signs up for an activity, I know that she will show up for it.” Students were also believed to have participated in more activities than many of their peers. For instance, Nicole won a selfie-stick for being one of the group’s highest sellers of raffle coupons, while the Key Club sponsor perceived Tiffany as participating “more than some of the other students” in the group. As students’ commitment to their clubs deepened, so did a newfound sense of pride for their clubs as well as schools. For example, Nicole purchased an FCCLA t-shirt to wear

during homecoming week, while David was wearing school colors almost every day to school. “I think he considers himself a Hawk . . . he’s proud of that,” the pep club sponsor remarked.

After approximately two months of participating, students became accustomed to the different types of activities and routines in their clubs. As students’ awareness for club rituals strengthened, they began feeling more at ease and comfortable as participants. As a result of these positive experiences, students developed a greater sense of self-confidence in their own abilities to be contributing club members, fueling their motivation for continued involvement. For David, his enhanced self-confidence was on full display when he led his peers in a group cheer during the final boys’ basketball game. For Nicole, she mustered the courage to raise her hand during a club meeting to ask a question. The club sponsors also took notice of the positive changes in students. The Key Club sponsor commented on Tiffany’s more recent involvement: “I think she feels more comfortable now . . . especially since she has gotten to know so many of the [club] members through the activities she came to . . . she doesn’t seem as shy anymore.” Remarkably, Nicole’s self-confidence improved at such a fast pace, that the FCCLA sponsor nominated her to run for a club office. As a result, Nicole was elected to Sentinel Officer by her peers.

Emotional support from individuals in the clubs and their families enabled students to find their niche. Adjectives such as “considerate,” “tolerant of (student’s) idiosyncrasies,” “patient,” and “accepting” were often used to describe club members. Many of the participants also believed their rural and smaller communities had an impact on the inclusivity of the club members. As one club sponsor put it, “We just have a phenomenal student body, they are just very nice kids . . . I think we’re an anomaly.” Club sponsors were also continuously reinforcing the same expectations for everyone. One club sponsor even spoke extensively about her personal

belief in the importance of following the basic principle of “treat everyone the same” while participating in the club. Essentially, club sponsors strongly believed that each club member should be expected to attend meetings, participate in club events, and follow appropriate social norms (e.g., raising your hand before speaking, not touching other club members).

Encouragement from parents was also a contributing factor to students’ ongoing participation in school club activities. Oftentimes, parents placed great value in their children being involved in school activities with their peers. As Tiffany’s mother stated, “I like that she is working with peers [in Key Club] and getting out of that special class all day . . . it’s good for her.” Encouragement from parents happened from time to time. For example, one parent reinforced the importance of extracurricular activities by telling her child, “the best part of school is being involved and getting to know the people you go to school with.” Occasionally, encouragement was shown through supportive actions like providing transportation for events occurring after school hours (e.g., fall-winter party, football game, Christmas gift wrapping) as well as regularly checking their child’s notebook-planners for club information.

Students’ Participation in School Club Activities

This section will discuss the findings of the research question, “How do students with SD participate in school club activities?” Data were obtained primarily through observations of students during school club activities; however, the beliefs of participants are also interspersed throughout the findings as a form of data source triangulation (Maxwell, 2005). Findings are organized by themes that capture the breadth and range of participants’ experiences across the cases. The first theme, “Going with the Flow” touches on the struggles that club sponsors and club members faced with involving students, as well as the type of involvement students had when left to their own devices. The second theme, “Social Obstacles: On the Outside Looking

In” explains how students’ limited social skills affected their involvement in activities with their peers. “Supports Provided: Too Much, Too Little, Just Right” is the third theme and describes a wide range of personal support that students received from special education teachers, club sponsors and club members, as well as parents. The final theme, “Safety in Numbers” delves into safety concerns, and provides details about the actual supervision of students in school club activities. Table 4 contains examples and salient quotes for each theme to illustrate how students participated in school club activities.

Going with the flow. In general, club sponsors viewed their primary role as facilitators, whose purpose was to guide students on an as-needed basis as well as manage the logistics of school club activities (e.g., making copies, securing a location for an upcoming meeting). Club sponsors also held certain beliefs about their roles as well as their expectations for students. The club sponsors did not see their role as one that did anything extraordinary to ensure that students were involved to the greatest extent possible. Instead, club sponsors believed that students should be able to go with the flow of activities and participate like all other club members. One club sponsor was even prepared to keep a student from participating in activities if necessary as evidenced by this statement, “The student has to behave appropriately or won’t be allowed [to participate].” The club sponsor went on to explain that she had “signed up for this, not for that” alluding to the idea that her responsibility was only to those students who had the ability to participate without needing assistance.

Club sponsors also struggled with understanding their role in helping to include students in school club activities. Admittedly, some club sponsors believed that they lacked a general understanding of students with SD and the know-how to include them. The Key Club sponsor remarked, “I don’t have any experience with children with disabilities . . . I am not sure how to

handle [them].” The pep club sponsor found herself questioning David’s aptitude for completing difficult cheers when she stated, “I don’t know what his intellectual capability is . . . some of the cheers that require a little more processing . . . maybe he wasn’t capable of [doing] that.” As a consequence, students had limited involvement in activities in part due to the club sponsor’s uncertainty of students’ skill levels and aptitude.

With little direction or guidance given on how to participate in school club activities, students with SD were left on their own to make decisions about their involvement. As a result, students participated in ways that were much different than their peers and commonly displayed behaviors that made them appear odd, out of place, or even confused. For David, this meant performing wildly animated skits by himself at the back of the cheer line or spending several minutes pacing back and forth behind the line. Other times, students would arbitrarily participate in activities without having a true understanding of what they were experiencing or why they were experiencing it. For instance, during club meetings, Nicole signed her name to every sign-up sheet that was passed around the classroom without any awareness of what she was actually signing up for. While engaged in service activities, Tiffany often failed to understand the purpose of what she was doing and asked questions of peers and adults like, “Why are we doing this?” “Who is this [blanket] for?”

Going with the flow also meant that individuals in the club (i.e., club members, club sponsors) seldom provided students with choice in how they participated. Instead, students were told things such as, “This is your job,” “Do this next,” “When you’re finished with that, start this.” Other times, students became bored because they were given tasks to complete that were too simple. For instance, Nicole signed up to sell raffle tickets for FCCLA during a boys’ basketball home game. On the evening of the event, Nicole arrived at the same time as another

club member. Following a quick greeting by the club sponsor, Nicole was told that she was going to stay with the club sponsor to sell tickets at the front school entrance. In comparison, the club sponsor provided the fellow club member with the option to sell tickets at the back school entrance or by walking around the gymnasium. Consequently, Nicole spent most of the night disengaged in the activity and was frequently observed staring at the floor or shuffling red colored raffle tickets between her fingers.

Social obstacles: On the outside looking in. Due to the social nature of clubs, membership required a certain level of social finesse that students with SD did not always possess. As outsiders looking in, students frequently witnessed their peers having fun interacting in school club activities, as they experienced feelings of isolation and detachment from a distance. In each club, there was an unwritten social code and etiquette that peers naturally followed; however, as a result of students' limited understanding of these social rules, they were not always able to adhere to the same standards as their peers. For instance, Nicole was observed not following the same "rules" as her peers while participating in FCCLA meetings. On several occasions she remained seated during the choral reading of the club's motto while everyone else stood. She also engaged in other activities (e.g., throwing away trash, asking to go to the bathroom) while officers read their monthly reports and she often shouted out random thoughts during meetings ("I like basketball," "I'm bringing candy") while peers listened without interrupting the speakers. Nicole appeared to be unaware that she was participating differently than her peers and was seldom redirected by the club sponsor or other club members seated within close proximity.

Even though many of the clubs provided ample opportunities for socializing, students with SD still struggled as outsiders unable to fit in with their peers because of their limited social

skills. For example, David repeatedly struggled to interact with pep club members at sporting events. After several failed attempts at getting his peers' attention, David would walk away from the group and wander around the school grounds by himself for long periods of time. In an effort to socialize with community members, he would inappropriately yell "Boo!" from behind them, tap them on the shoulder, or give them a large high-five in the air. Oftentimes, while still roaming the grounds, David would watch the pep club participate while occasionally pausing to perform the cheers with them. David's peers never tried to prevent him from leaving the group or encourage him to stay with the group. Nicole experienced similar challenges in socializing appropriately with peers. During monthly FCCLA meetings, club members frequently socialized while enjoying lunch together. Although Nicole was consistently seated at the same table with several peers, she seldom made eye contact or attempted to speak to them. Besides an occasional "hello" from a nearby peer, Nicole spent the majority of meetings eating alone or talking with the club sponsor. When Nicole did try to communicate with others, they often asked her to repeat what she was saying. Tiffany also struggled to interact with peers during Key Club meetings. For instance, in an attempt to socialize with peers, Tiffany frequently greeted club members by saying "Hi, how are you doing?" Despite her ability to initiate an interaction, she lacked the skills to sustain a two-way conversation for any length of time, often appearing to run out of things to say.

Club sponsors and special education teachers perceived students as having few social skills. One club sponsor reported, the student "just doesn't have the social IQ that's necessary" to participate in activities. In addition, another club sponsor explained her dismay for including students in activities that didn't have the necessary skills to participate, "That's probably been the biggest issue . . . when we have any of those lower kids involved [in school club activities], is

the social issues.” Even though participants were aware that students did not oftentimes have the necessary social skills to participate in school club activities, there was no type of instruction occurring to help improve students’ repertoire of skills. Instead, club sponsors believed that students would just organically pick up skills while present at activities. Special education teachers also rarely mentioned the need to pre-teach social skills prior to students’ participation in school club activities.

As outsiders, students also had few established social networks in their clubs. Although having stronger peer ties would have likely helped to socially include students, these connections rarely existed beyond a few familiar peers (e.g., sibling, childhood friend). Nonetheless, familiar peers did not appear to be of much benefit to students. For example, David’s sister, Dede, was a senior leader in the pep club who was a strong participant at club events. Unfortunately, Dede rarely had any type of interactions (e.g., eye contact, physical contact, providing directions) with David at athletic events and when seated with the pep club. In actuality, there was only one occasion where David and Dede interacted, which happened to be a negative encounter that might have resulted in David feeling socially stigmatized from the group. Dede openly scolded David in front of club members for damaging the club’s mascot costume. After the confrontation, David was so emotionally distraught that he left the game for the remainder of the evening.

Students with SD experienced additional social obstacles to developing relationships with peers. Although students with SD perceived club members as being their friends and spoke often about their excitement and eagerness to spend time with them, in actuality, peers rarely socialized with students during school club activities except for an occasional greeting (e.g., “Hi,” “How are you?”). One club sponsor described this experience as a “social incongruity”

or a social mismatch between students and their peers. This club sponsor believed that since peers were so “cordial and nice,” that the student with SD believed that everyone was her friend. However, across cases, club members seldom appeared to have the same mutual feelings of kinship as experienced by the students. As a result of this mismatch, students might have inaccurately believed that peers wanted to socialize with them as friends (e.g., talk to them, sit beside them) during their involvement in school club activities.

Supports provided: Too much, too little, just right. Students received a wide variety of personal supports during school club activities. Individuals providing support included special education teachers, club sponsors and club members, as well as parents. Given that clubs were predominantly facilitated by club members, it seems appropriate that club members would also support the participation of students with SD. However, ongoing peer-support was only utilized in one case. In most cases intermittent support was provided by adults (i.e., special education teachers, club sponsors, parents) and entailed simple verbal prompts (e.g., “go get scissors,” “put your name on this line”). Only one special education teacher delivered additional types of prompting (i.e., gestural, physical). Remarkably, students only received personal supports during their club involvement, although a range of accommodations and support needs (e.g., adapted materials, visual aids, use of sign language) were listed on all of their IEPs.

Too much support was given to Nicole during her involvement in FCCLA, as she received intensive on-going personal supports by her club sponsor. For instance, while selling tickets the club sponsor instructed Nicole to stay with her and complete simple tasks like tearing off tickets to hand to customers, even though Nicole was fully capable of contributing in other ways (e.g., collecting money, greeting customers). Sometimes the club sponsor would actually take over tasks, such as taking the sign-in sheet from Nicole and signing her name to it. Nicole

also seemed to have an overreliance on the club sponsor. For example, Nicole would persistently tell the club sponsor to complete activities for her (e.g., throw her plate away, get her ice), when she was capable of completing these activities independently. Due to the intense level of supports that Nicole received from the club sponsor, she became socially isolated from her peers. Club members consistently kept their distance from Nicole and rarely spoke to her at meetings beyond an occasional informal greeting. Peers also did not offer any additional supports that might have contributed to increasing Nicole's involvement in activities.

Too little support was provided for David during his involvement in the pep club. Consequently, David primarily participated by himself in school club activities even though he might have benefited from having the same types of supports (e.g., scheduled breaks, visual aids) that he received in other inclusive contexts (i.e., science, art classes). Although infrequent, peers provided support on occasion. For instance, a club member would redirect him (show him the correct hand signals for a cheer, tell him to calm down when he became too animated) or help with simple tasks (e.g., putting on boxing gloves, adjusting his costume). The nature of peer provided support appeared to be very natural and most likely resembled the type of assistance that club members would provide to anyone. Support from the club sponsor or special education teacher seldom occurred. The club sponsor acknowledged her discomfort with supporting David and noted that she sought help from the Vice Principal if she had any concerns about David's behavior. Meanwhile the special education teacher relied on the club sponsor to let her know if David needed extra support and she rarely prompted David to return to the pep group when she witnessed him roaming alone at athletic events. David's mother attended some of the games. When she was present, she provided basic prompting (e.g., making a Shhh! motion, waving her hand and shaking her head no) to help David understand how to participate. Remarkably, even

with little assistance during activities, David still managed to participate by reciting simple cheers, making the correct hand motions, and on one occasion leading other club members in a cheer.

Tiffany was the only student who appeared to receive the right amount of support while engaged in school club activities. Support was provided by Key Club members and seemed appropriate for her skill aptitude. Oftentimes, peers offered their assistance by simply walking up to Tiffany and asking her if she needed help with anything. Peers that were more familiar with Tiffany also facilitated her partial participation in activities. For example, Tiffany's lunch buddy Rae, assisted Tiffany in the service activity of making blankets for sick children. While assembling a blanket, Rae tied two strands of material together, and instructed Tiffany to pull the strands tightly to make a knot. During this activity Rae continuously provided simple instructions and lots of encouragement as the pair worked together. At one point, Rae appropriately faded supports while allowing Tiffany to finish a task that she had mastered on her own. In addition, the special education teacher provided occasional modeling (e.g., demonstrating how to use hand-over hand) for peers and the club sponsor. Over time, the club sponsor became comfortable assisting Tiffany with simple tasks (e.g., showing her how to tear scotch tape from a dispenser) after spending several weeks observing how the special education teacher interacted with the student.

Safety in numbers. Across cases, adult participants' appeared to be in agreement that students needed some level of adult supervision while participating in school club activities. Concerns for safety ranged from minor to more serious in nature. While the FCCLA sponsor voiced her concern for potentially harmful materials in the kitchen (e.g., sharp knife, hot stove) that Nicole might use, the pep club sponsor felt uneasy about David's past history of touching

(e.g., tapping shoulder, giving a hug) to females he did not know well. Parents, especially, felt the need for their children to be closely monitored. Tiffany's parents were concerned with their daughter sharing too much personal information with peers that she did not know well. David's mother also voiced her concerns for David's safety while involved in activities. She openly acknowledged that "we struggle with his safety . . . everyone he's ever met is his friend."

Participants rarely discussed whose responsibility it was to ensure the safety of students as they participated. In fact, only one club sponsor and special education teacher reported that supervision was part of their responsibility. The pep club sponsor described her role as "standing in the outskirts as a chaperone, making sure things are safe," while Tiffany's special education teacher believed that "making sure she [Tiffany] is safe" was her responsibility. Some participants might have even been unaware of the lack of supervision. For instance, David's special education teacher had a false sense of security about David's safety while involved in activities. She reported believing that the club sponsor was "keeping a close watch" on David, when in reality this rarely occurred.

Despite participants' beliefs about the need for ongoing supervision, students were seldom closely monitored by adults. The lack of monitoring posed potential safety issues for some students, including David. David was constantly on the move when present for school club activities. He would literally walk around the school grounds, unattended, for anywhere between 10 to 30 minutes at a time. Although the pep club sponsor had previously reported supervision of students as part of her duties, she was rarely within close view of the group. Instead, supervision typically took the form of the club sponsor or head principal walking beside group members to say hello, as if they were performing a quick check-in and then moving on. On one occasion, David appeared to be victimized by a peer who was not affiliated with the club while walking

around the outskirts of the football stadium by himself. David was approached by a male peer who he appeared to recognize from his high school. While standing in the midst of multiple teenagers, the male told David to complete several strange and inappropriate tasks as he and the others watched. David was instructed to hug both a female peer as well as an adult stranger. As David completed each of the tasks, he was openly mocked in front of the group. David appeared to enjoy the negative attention, most likely unaware of the actual nature of his interactions.

Apart from adult monitoring, club members provided an extra layer of supervision for students with SD. Peers truly seemed to embody a spirit of comradeship, caring for the safety of one another. Time and again, peers were observed keeping a watchful eye on students with SD and were keenly aware of ways in which to ensure students' safety in activities. For example, Key Club and FCCLA members frequently volunteered to escort Tiffany and Nicole to school club activities, as they understood that these students could easily become directionally lost on their own. There were times when David would become so animated that he posed a physical threat to others around him because he was running or jumping uncontrollably and club members would need to calmly redirect him. Ultimately, students with SD were the safest when they were participating side by side with their peers.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the participation of secondary students with severe disabilities (SD) in extracurricular school clubs. Specifically, this study sought to understand: (a) the motivating factors that affected the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs, and (b) how students participated in school club activities. Across cases, special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents perceived that students with SD joined school clubs because they wanted to participate in fun activities with their friends. They also believed that students continued their club involvement because of the ongoing encouragement they received and because they enjoyed feeling like part of a group. There was wide variation in how students with SD participated in school clubs. In general, students participated in the same type of activities as their peers (e.g., attending meetings, volunteering for community service) and attended the majority of club events; however, their engagement in activities was oftentimes different than their peers. For instance, students completed simpler tasks, engaged in activities unrelated to the club, and at times were socially isolated from their peers. Students participated differently because they had limited skills, and also because the club sponsor and peers were unsure how to include students in activities. There was variation in the amount of personal support that students received during their club involvement, with only one student being continuously supported by her peers. Special education teachers and club sponsors rarely provided support or monitoring of students during their participation.

Motivating Factors

The majority of stakeholders (i.e., special education teachers, club sponsors, parents) valued students' participation in school clubs, and were very optimistic about students'

motivation to participate in school clubs. However, stakeholders' perceptions might not be entirely accurate. In part, stakeholder beliefs might have been based on their personal beliefs about direct benefits that students could gain from their club involvement (i.e., being with peers, doing something enjoyable, being a part of a group), as opposed to actual factors that motivated students. For example, stakeholders might have personally witnessed various participation benefits for peers without disabilities participating in extracurricular activities in the past that could have narrowed their ideas about why students with SD would be motivated to participate in activities. In reality, students with SD might have been motivated to participate in school clubs for reasons well beyond the scope of stakeholders. Although speculative, these reasons could have been as simple as wanting to visit a new classroom or as complex as desiring to connect with a new peer.

Stakeholders perceived that students with SD joined clubs for the same reasons as their peers without disabilities. Youth with and without disabilities simply wanted to have fun with their friends while participating in activities they enjoyed. This finding is supported in the existing literature on extracurricular activities (see Bohnert et al., 2007; Fredricks et al., 2002; Hueber & Mancini, 2003). Research for typically developing students has also discovered that these youth sometimes have more sophisticated reasons for deciding to join an activity, such as a desire to expand their social network (Fredricks et al., 2002; Hueber & Mancini, 2003). In contrast to this literature, it was believed that students with SD associated joining a club with people they had a pre-existing relationship with (e.g., childhood friend, sibling) and might not have perceived the opportunities to make new friends as a potential motivating factor. Complicating the issue of expanding peer relationships is the disenfranchisement that is often experienced by students with SD. Students, who are spending large amounts of time in

classrooms separate from their peers, have fewer opportunities to create or maintain social networks with peers that are outside the purview of the school day.

This study might also help to substantiate the claim that having fun is an underlying motivating factor for joining activities, potentially holding equal value for students with and without disabilities. However, students with SD might not be able to accurately assess their preference for certain activities because they have few experiences to compare it with. Past research has highlighted the lack of leisure-time activities for students with intellectual disability (Buttimer & Tierney, 2005; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008; Orsmond et al., 2004; Solish et al., 2010). Compounding this issue is that students with SD might associate any activity with their peers as being fun. Moving forward, it will be imperative that students with disabilities have multiple opportunities to experience a wide range of extracurricular activities. Through these experiences, students will have a deeper understanding of what *having fun* feels like and be better positioned to make choices about the activities in which they choose to participate.

Once an extracurricular activity has been selected, students must feel motivated to continue their involvement. Parent encouragement has been found to be a significant motivating factor for students with and without disabilities. Similar to findings in this study, parents' high expectations for students have been shown to influence the motivation of students without disabilities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Hueber & Macini, 2003). As a whole, these results underscore the important role that parents play in supporting youth involvement; however, parents' roles are especially significant for students with SD as many will require additional supports to participate in activities. For instance, activity buses taking children home after school might not be equipped to transport students with complex support and physical needs. As a result, students with SD may have to rely on their parents for coordinating or providing

transportation. Essentially, the influence of parent encouragement might be far-reaching, providing important motivation for students as well as access to activities.

Students without disabilities have been found to continue involvement in extracurricular activities because of their positive self-concepts (i.e., high self-confidence, increased self-worth), as many of these youth have a reputation for being hard workers and over achievers. As these youth maintain their involvement, their self-concepts continue to improve as they are reinforced by positive gains and benefits (e.g., improved athletic skills, increased time with peers) (see Bohnert et al., 2007; Fredricks et al., 2002; Weiss & Williams, 2004). On the contrary, students with SD are believed to only begin to develop a positive self-concept over an extended period of time and after their initial involvement. For these students, their self-concept must be shaped by learning how to participate in activities and interact with peers. For learning to occur, students will need time to adjust to the extracurricular environment and establish new routines. Once students feel comfortable in the setting, their confidence and self-concept will likely begin to strengthen. In order to ensure that students with SD continue their participation, it will be imperative for club facilitators to create a welcoming and accepting climate for all club members.

Needed Skills

Students with SD generally had less engagement in actual activities as compared to their peers. For example, students were frequently observed being by themselves, watching others participate, and displaying peculiar behavior unrelated to activities (e.g., pacing back and forth in a line). In part, a probable explanation to students' limited involvement was their own lack of understanding about how to engage in school club activities and interact with their peers. Time and again, students showed signs of deficits in interrelated skills (i.e., social, communication,

leisure) that were needed to perform a variety of school club activities. For instance, all three students struggled with carrying on a two-way conversation, beyond using a basic greeting like “Hi,” or “How are you?” In addition, students appeared to be missing foundational skills required for participation in most leisure activities (e.g., how to take turns during a card game, how to make a choice between two activities).

One factor that appeared to influence student engagement was the inexperience of individuals in the club (i.e., club members, club sponsor) in working with students with SD. In two of the cases, peers seldom interacted with the student with SD. One possible explanation for peers’ lack of involvement might be their discomfort in working with students with SD. According to Brock, Biggs, Carter, Cattey, and Raley (2016), peers might not be willing to interact with students that have complex communication and support needs. Brock et al. postulate that because of peers’ lack of understanding about students with SD, they simply choose not to interact because they are uncertain how to do so. In addition, club sponsors also appeared to be uncertain about students’ individual aptitudes. On several instances, club sponsors were hesitant to include students with their peers in tasks like using sharp utensils to prepare food or scissors to cut wrapping paper. On one occasion, the club sponsor admitted that she was unsure if the student with SD had the ability to participate in the vast majority of school club activities that involved him reciting a cheer. As a result of club sponsors having little understanding about students’ current knowledge or skill level, they might experience negative feelings about their own abilities to include students in activities (Cameron & Cook, 2013).

An additional factor affecting how students participated in activities was the lack of instruction occurring prior to or during their involvement. Essentially, students were expected to participate with the skills that they already had. In most cases, students’ repertoire of leisure

skills had been developed through family and community involvement. Over the years, students had experienced certain activities with family members (e.g., cooking at home, going to sporting events) and community events (participating in Special Olympics, being a greeter at church) that most likely fueled their interests and talents in these areas. However, at no time did the special education teachers or club sponsors provide any type of instruction to advance these specific skills.

There were also multiple learning opportunities that were never realized by adult participants (i.e., club sponsors, special education teachers, parents). These participants spoke at length about their beliefs regarding the benefits of students participating in clubs. Club sponsors and special education teachers believed that students could gain important skills needed for their futures (e.g., money, employment) while parents felt strongly about opportunities for individual growth in the area of social skills. Even though participants appeared to value the learning opportunities that existed in each club setting, no adults actively pursued furthering students' advancement in these skill areas. A glaring example to illustrate a missed opportunity for skill advancement involves Tiffany working on making correct change. Although the student had a specific IEP goal to master making correct change, and had the opportunity to participate in a service activity where she delivered change to customers while selling candy canes, no instruction was given to ensure that Tiffany was making progress towards this skill. Instead, her peer partner struggled with finding appropriate techniques to help her count the change and used language (e.g., "Okay, good job . . . now is this a penny?") that could have been socially stigmatizing in front of peer customers. A related study by Pence and Dymond (2016) provides additional insights into missed learning opportunities. The authors reported that although special education teachers were found to value including students with SD in clubs; they did not view

their involvement as a time for providing instruction on priority skills. Findings from the current study and Pence and Dymond (2016), help to illustrate how one's values do not always align with their actual practice.

Support for Participation

Person-provided support was the only type of support students received during their involvement in school club activities. Although research has shown that students with SD rely heavily on persons to support their engagement in extracurricular activities (see Keinert et al., 2007a; Eriksson, 2005), this finding was somewhat unanticipated given the fact that students had a range of accommodations listed on all of their IEPs (e.g., visual schedule, extended wait time). Similarly, Kleinert et al. (2007a) discovered that students seldom received additional types of support such as assistive technology that could enhance their participation. Although volunteer activities occurred after school, club meetings always took place during the school day when staff (e.g., paraprofessional, special education teacher) might have been available to provide additional support. Due to the limited types of supports available to students, one might question how other types of supports could have benefited students' involvement. At a minimum, students should be provided with at least the same types of support that they receive during the rest of the school day. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006) requires that IEP teams give consideration to the supplementary aids, services, and supports, that students with disabilities will require for participation in extracurricular activities (Sec 614 (d) (1) (A) (i)). The literature also demonstrates the need for discussion among stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, club sponsors) about how to best support students' engagement in extracurricular activities (Agran et al., in press; Pence & Dymond, 2016; Swedeen et al., 2010). Findings from this study also support this notion.

Understanding the impact of adult-provided support is also necessary when determining the quality of students' engagement. One student, Nicole, frequently received intense and ongoing support from the club sponsor. Oftentimes, the club sponsor stayed within close proximity of Nicole and provided unnecessary assistance (e.g., throwing away trash, refilling a cup of ice). Over time the student seemed to develop an overreliance on the club sponsor, asking her to complete simple tasks that the student was capable of doing. As a result of the intense supports that Nicole received from the club sponsor, she became withdrawn from her peers and seldom spoke to club members seated within a short distance from her. Similar to Nicole's experience, research findings have demonstrated that excessive use of adult-driven support can lead to social isolation from peers (Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005; Carter et al., 2010; Eriksson, 2005). When involvement is supported by adults, it is important to ensure that individuals are aware of the influence their presence may bring, especially in a non-academic environment such as school clubs. Peers might be less willing to socialize with students with SD when adults are within close view (Carter, Sisco, Brown, Brickham, & Al-Khabbaz, 2008; Giangreco, 2010).

When adult-supports are utilized correctly, students with SD can benefit. In this study, students with SD were assigned to a paraprofessional for the majority of their school day. However, these paraprofessionals never provided support for students during their involvement in school club activities. Instead, paraprofessionals were infrequently observed conducting a periodic check-in on students as they participated in school club activities as well as occasionally writing down notes in students' planners about upcoming school club events. Interestingly, special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents rarely discussed the role of paraprofessionals in supporting students' engagement in extracurricular activities, yet

paraprofessionals might have been uniquely positioned to support students. For instance, paraprofessionals had the skills to provide training to individuals in the school club (i.e., club sponsor, club members) about how to interact and support students with SD in school club activities. Additionally, paraprofessionals could have provided assistance with communication by acting as a liaison between home and school as well as club sponsor and special education teacher.

Although previous studies have shown that adults are typically the individuals providing support to students with disabilities during extracurricular activities (e.g., Kleinert et al., 2007a; Eriksson, 2005), there appears to be a trend towards increasing the role of peer-supports (Pence & Dymond, 2016). Findings from this study provide limited evidence to support this shift, as at least one student, Tiffany, was supported by different peers in the club. These supports commonly occurred naturally, as peers would take it upon themselves to offer assistance. With the peers receiving no guidance on how to best support Tiffany, they relied heavily on their own instincts as well as the special education teacher. Frequently, the special education teacher served as a model for peers, demonstrating appropriate techniques for interacting with Tiffany. Amazingly, peers also seemed to serve as additional models in the club environment. On several occasions, peers were observed watching how another peer partner worked with the student. The peers then attempted to mimic what they had just witnessed as a means to enhance the involvement of the student with SD in specific activities. Tiffany appeared to benefit from the peer-provided support, as she had greater social contacts and interactions as compared to the other focal students. Previous investigations have also found similar benefits for peers who had received support from their peers (Carter, Cushing, Clark, & Kennedy, 2005; Copeland, et al., 2004).

Interestingly, peers who were familiar with the student (e.g., sibling, childhood friend) were not always the individuals who chose to offer assistance. This finding is in contrast with related literature that recommends selecting peers for support who have an established relationship with students (Brock, Biggs, Carter, Cattey, & Raley, 2016; Carter et al., 2015). In actuality, there was only one example where a pre-existing relationship appeared to benefit the student with SD (i.e., Tiffany and Rae). This finding highlights the importance of considering many factors when pairing partners, and not simply relying on the individual's familiarity with other club members. The current research on peer support arrangements (i.e., peers who provide academic and social support to students with SD) helps to shed additional insights on this topic. This research suggests selecting peers who have strong social skills, seem excited to help, and have common interests with the student with SD (see Carter, Cushing, & Kennedy, 2009; Carter, et al., 2016).

Due to the lack of consensus among stakeholders (i.e., special education teachers, club sponsors, parents) regarding individual responsibilities for supporting students, low-expectations and low levels of student involvement most likely resulted. Perceptions about stakeholders' responsibilities were quite ambiguous. In two separate instances, the special education teachers referenced the club sponsors as being responsible for communicating with them about students' club involvement. However, club sponsors oftentimes perceived the special education teachers as unavailable and rarely providing guidance on how to include students in school club activities. Club sponsors unsure about the skills of students, their own ability to work with students with SD, or how to involve their peers in supporting students created a dichotomy of confusion that left students with SD unsupported and on their own. Parents of students also appeared uncertain about whose responsibility it was to support their children in school club activities. Oftentimes,

parents seemed to be more concerned about ensuring that their child was present for all the school club activities (e.g., checking their child's notebook planner each night for upcoming school club activities) and seldom mentioned their actual participation

Limitations

The findings from the present study provide important information about the participation of students with SD in extracurricular school clubs and the motivating factors that affected the inclusion of these students in school clubs. When interpreting the findings from this study, several limitations should be considered.

First, this study was limited to three exploratory cases that focused on students who participated in school spirit, family, and service clubs. In addition, all cases were located in similar rural communities at small high schools (less than 500 students). Selection of additional participants, types of clubs (e.g., hobby, academic), and locations (e.g., small urban communities, large urban areas) could have yielded new insights and strengthened transferability of findings.

Second, the duration of field work (i.e., six months) did not capture the entirety of students' club involvement. Data collected at the beginning and end of the school year could have provided additional information. This data could have aided researchers to understand the full range of student's experiences spanning an entire year (Brantlinger, et al., 2005; Creswell, 2009).

Third, interviews with special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents did not accurately capture all of the views from individuals with knowledge of focal students' involvement in the school clubs. Perspectives from paraprofessionals as well as club members might have yielded additional important insights.

Fourth, the methodology used throughout the course of this study was in close alignment with multicase research (see Stake, 2006). Although the researcher primarily conformed to this specific methodology, there are other perspectives and methods for conducting multiple case study research (e.g., Shkedi, 2005; Yin, 2009) that were not considered in this study.

Fifth, respondent validation (i.e., second level member checking) was not used for feedback on the final synthesis of the case study reports or cross-case analysis because of the sensitive nature of research findings. Instead, feedback was sought from a graduate assistant and dissertation chair. Critical input from the research participants could have improved the trustworthiness of concluding assertions.

Finally, although the lead researcher employed several measures to ensure the trustworthiness of findings (e.g., second level member checks, collaborative work), results were ultimately filtered through the researcher's individual lens and might not be an accurate representation of all data.

Implications for Practice

An inclusive philosophy was present across cases, which suggests that such a philosophy may be a necessary prerequisite for students to participate in school clubs. In general, it will be important for all club members and sponsors to uphold a standard that cultivates an inclusive-shared space for everyone. The literature related to inclusive practices for students with SD also acknowledges this important issue (Giangreco, 2007; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2009; Kurth, Lyon, & Shogren, 2015). Club sponsors should work to ensure that they help to sustain high expectations, promote acceptance, and foster openness for each club member. An inclusive school club environment should be one where club members feel comfortable, safe, and accepted.

Due to limited skills, students with SD did not always actively participate in school club activities. In order for students to benefit to the fullest extent possible from being a club participant, special education teachers will need to provide instruction in basic social and leisure skills. Preparing students for their involvement in extracurricular settings might also help to enhance important self-determined behaviors (e.g., making a choice, setting a personal goal). The literature on social skills training asserts that students with SD must be taught using specific strategies (e.g., self-prompting, direct instruction) to gain competence in sustaining conversations (Hughes et al., 2004; Westling & Fox, 2009) or to engage in socially appropriate behaviors through positive behavior support instruction (Downing & MacFarland, 2010). In fact, teaching social skills during leisure instruction has been found to increase social interactions of students with SD (Chan, Lambdin, Laarhoven, & Johnson, 2013; Jerome, Frantino, & Sturme, 2007). Similarly, systematic instruction has been found to be an effective strategy for teaching leisure skills (e.g., Angell, Bailey, & Larson, 2008; Wilson, Reid, & Green, 2006; Yilmaz, Birkan, Konukman, & Erkan, 2005).

Many club sponsors and peers did not have the expertise needed to facilitate the involvement of students with SD in school club activities. These individuals will require an array of tips and strategies for working with students. Having open discussions among stakeholders (e.g., parents, club sponsors, special education teachers) about what accommodations and supports are necessary to include the students with SD might be beneficial. Some researchers have even utilized the technique of person-centered-planning to ensure that multiple perspectives are interwoven into such discussions (Childre & Chambers, 2005; Meadan, Shelden, Appel, & DeGrazia, 2010). Following the principles of person-centered planning, stakeholders might elect

to develop a short-term road map for how the student with SD will participate in school club activities.

Directions for Future Research

Research examining the motivating factors for the inclusion of students with SD in extracurricular activities is warranted. Obtaining the actual perceptions of students with SD should be a priority for future research. Currently, there are no empirical studies that examine this issue from the actual perspectives of students, whose views might be very different from their parents, teachers, or extracurricular sponsors. Additionally, since the beliefs of students with and without disabilities concerning the factors that affect their willingness to participate in school clubs could be quite dissimilar, it will also be necessary to conduct a comparison study between the two groups of students (i.e., students with and without disabilities). Implications from this research could aid practitioners in developing strategies to motivate students with and without disabilities to join extracurricular activities as well as structuring activities in ways that motivate students to continue their involvement.

Students with SD might also benefit in their extracurricular involvement by using the same types of supports utilized throughout the rest of the school day. Moving forward, it will be important to understand how decisions are made about the supports needed for students with SD who participate in extracurricular activities and whether the types of supports that are most beneficial in extracurricular activities are different than those that are effective in academic settings. Further examination of why certain types of support (e.g., personal) are selected in lieu of others (e.g., AAC, adapted materials) is also warranted.

The limited involvement of students with SD in school clubs raises important questions about the type of influence that individuals in the club environment (i.e., club sponsors, club

members) might have on students with SD. A more thorough examination regarding the perceptions of club sponsors and members is needed to investigate how realistic expectations are for these individuals to provide support. In addition, future research should seek to better understand the role that peers' play in club settings. For example, future studies should seek to discover how peers envision their role in facilitating the participation of students with SD and what influences their beliefs in providing support. In particular, the utility of peer partnerships in extracurricular activities might also lead to important findings about the use of peer supports in this environment.

Additional research is required to explore how students with SD can address priority skills in extracurricular activities, and the support that is needed to help students reach their full potential. Issues concerning *whose responsibility* it is to teach skills and monitor students' progress in the context of extracurricular activities raise interesting questions that future researchers should seek to understand. It will also be imperative that researchers examine how to better prepare club sponsors and members for the involvement of students with SD in school club activities.

Conclusion

This exploratory study helped to provide new insights into motivating factors that affected the inclusion of students with SD in school clubs and how students participated in school club activities. In general, stakeholders (i.e., special education teachers, club sponsors, parents) believed that students with SD were motivated by the same factors as students without disabilities (i.e., to have fun, to be with friends, to be a part of a group, ongoing encouragement received). The experience students had while participating in school clubs varied across the cases. Only one student received appropriate personal supports by her peers that appeared to

enhance her club involvement. Students with SD were also rarely monitored or supervised by adults during their participation in school club activities. In all cases, students appeared to lack important leisure and social skills necessary for active participation. At no time were students provided any type of instruction to advance skills. Finally, the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents were rather ambiguous and infrequently discussed among stakeholders.

From this investigation, it is evident that extracurricular school clubs have the potential to serve as a context where students with SD can connect with their fellow peers and become contributing members of their school communities. School clubs might also provide an additional outlet for students to practice, master, and generalize skills as findings from this study highlighted multiple missed opportunities for skill improvement. Since school clubs are primarily social in nature, the chance for students to expand their social networks and create new peer partnerships appear to be quite possible. For students to participate to the maximum extent possible in school clubs, more needs to be learned about how to best structure this environment, support student participation, and increase stakeholder as well as peer involvement.

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Tables

Table 1

Description of Students With Disabilities, School and Club Settings

Student	Age/Grade	High school setting	School club description	School club sponsor and club members
David	17/ Junior	Rural/small community 324 students 14 athletic teams/ limited clubs	The Mighty Hawks—a pep club open to all high school students Meetings do not occur on a regular basis Activities include being in the student section at school sporting events No membership dues required	Club sponsor for 10 years; sponsor developed the club with a colleague Club members: Over 60 David is the only student with a disability in the club
Nicole	13/ Freshman	Rural/small community 400 students 10 athletic teams/ 12 clubs	Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Club—focuses on family Meetings occur once a month in the sponsor’s classroom (i.e., family and consumer science classroom/kitchen) Activities include teacher luncheon, parties, fundraisers, conventions, and field trips Membership Dues: \$20	Club sponsor for 2 years; has experience assisting the former FCCLA sponsor Club members: 30 plus Nicole and two other students with learning disabilities participate in the club
Tiffany	14/ Freshman	Rural/small community 600 students 27 athletic teams/ 19 Clubs	Key Club—focuses on providing service to school and community Meetings occur once a month in the sponsor’s classroom (i.e., computer lab) Activities include in-school service and community activities Membership dues: \$12	Club sponsor for 1 year; has a lengthy membership in Kiwanis—a national service group Club members: 35 plus Tiffany and another student with a severe disability participate in the club

Table 2*Data Collection Timeline*

Dates	Activity
08/24/15 – 08/30/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sent recruitment emails to the special education teachers ▪ Conducted screening interviews with special education teachers
08/31/15— 09/13/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued the screening interviews with the special education teachers ▪ Sent emails to building principals to seek approval for conducting research ▪ Selected a focal student ▪ Conducted informal observations of focal students ▪ Sent recruitment emails to the club sponsors ▪ Distributed and collected consent forms from parents of focal students, club sponsors, special education teachers, and adults in club meetings ▪ Distributed (and collected) waiver of consent letters for participating club members and their parents
09/14/15— 11/27/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducted document reviews for (a) the school club information form and, (b) the IEP document ▪ Conducted initial interviews with special education teachers and club sponsors ▪ Sent interview recordings to the transcriptionist ▪ Conducted observations of focal students participating in school club activities ▪ Sent interview summaries to the special education teachers and club sponsors for feedback
11/28/15 – 03/22/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducted follow-up interviews with the special education teachers and club sponsors ▪ Conducted a one-time interview with the parents of focal students ▪ Continued to conduct observations of focal students' participating in school club activities ▪ Sent interview recordings to transcriptionist ▪ Continued to send interview summaries to the special education teachers, club sponsors, and parents for feedback

Table 3*Cross-Case Findings for Motivating Factors: Themes and Salient Quotes*

Theme	David	Nicole	Tiffany
Who you know matters	The special education teacher: <i>“He has a sibling that’s in Mighty Hawks. So that could have influenced his choice [to participate] as well.”</i>	The special education teacher: <i>“Her friends are in FCCLA...and we kind of knew that it would be good for her to be with them.”</i>	The special education teacher: <i>“Her peer Rae had asked about Tiffany joining [Key Club]...I mean it has been helpful that Tiffany does know some of the key club members already, especially Rae.”</i>
What you know matters	David’s mother: <i>“He identifies with sport fandom because that’s what we do all the time as a family.”</i>	Nicole’s mother: <i>“I always have my kids in the kitchen showing them how to cook, showing them measurements . . . I think FCCLA drew her [in] because that is what we do all the time [at home] . . . cooking, home stuff, cleaning, self-care.”</i>	Tiffany’s father: <i>“She is a greeter at church too she likes helping and her outgoing personality...she’s so outgoing.”</i>
Finding a niche	The club sponsor: <i>“I think he really supports our team and it’s an outlet for his immense energy...I think he considers himself a hawk and he wears his crimson and black [school colors] and he’s proud of that I think.”</i>	The club sponsor: <i>“This is her [Nicole’s] club. This is where she comes on Wednesdays once a month...she doesn’t want to miss anything because she is having so much fun.”</i>	Tiffany’s mother: <i>She is just all excited and has to tell you about what they [at Key Club] are going to be doing...she gets so excited about it.”</i>

Table 4*Cross-Case Findings for Participation: Themes, Examples, and Salient Quotes*

Theme	David	Nicole	Tiffany
Going with the flow	<p>Context – At a football game, David is positioned beside his fellow pep club members who are standing shoulder to shoulder in a single line.</p> <p>Club members begin to chant a cheer and perform accompanying hand motions. David mumbles a few words and then he pauses. David does not attempt to perform the hand motions.</p> <p>David appears uncertain about the words and motions; he becomes silent as he watches his peers participate. No peers offer David any guidance.</p>	<p>Nicole's mother: <i>"I get emails a lot of the time about all the stuff that she [Nicole] has signed up to do [for the club]. I don't even know if she knows all the stuff that she is signing up to do, but that's okay because I like to keep her involved."</i></p>	<p>The club sponsor: <i>"I don't have any experience with children with disabilities...I am not sure how to handle [them]."</i></p>
Social obstacles: On the outside looking in	<p>The club sponsor: <i>"That's probably been the biggest issue...when we have any of those lower kids involved [in club activities], is the social issues. We certainly don't want to deter him [David] from coming to an activity but, you know, you just don't come up to people and put your arms around 'em when you don't know them very well."</i></p>	<p>The special education teacher: <i>"Yes, and I hate – I am afraid that some of the upper classmen [in the club] who haven't had experience with her [Nicole] yet, I am afraid that might be a barrier because that's just the unknown. Like they're afraid to approach her or ask her questions."</i></p>	<p>Context - Tiffany is waiting for the club meeting to begin and starts a conversation with a male peer seated to her left.</p> <p>Tiffany: <i>"How are you?"</i></p> <p>Peer: <i>"Good, how are you Tiffany?"</i></p> <p>Tiffany: <i>"Good. The car broke down and they took it to the car doctor."</i></p> <p>Peer: <i>"Oh they took it to the car doctor, I get it."</i></p> <p>The conversation abruptly ends.</p>

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

Theme	David	Nicole	Tiffany
Supports provided: Too much, too little, just right	The special education teacher: <i>"He [David] is like look at me, look at my hair, look at this. It's not so much about the team as it is about him. And sometimes [he's] a little extreme you know the hair and all that at the last game. He really went over the top...but no, there's no one like designated to 'let's reel him in' cause you know, [so] he doesn't get into trouble."</i>	Context - The club sponsor and Nicole are selling raffle tickets at a basketball game: Club Sponsor: <i>"Nicole, you are going to be my money holder. When people walk in you are going to take the money from them."</i> Nicole gives no response. Moments later the club sponsor begins taking money from customers. Female Passerby: <i>"You should let her [Nicole] do it."</i> Club sponsor: <i>"You're probably right, I'm being bossy. Am I bossy Nicole?"</i> Nicole does not respond, she continues to stare at the floor.	The special education teacher: <i>"They [key club members] do a really good job of just not letting her [Tiffany] stand there and watch, and they do a really good job of getting her involved and actually doing things."</i>
Safety in numbers	The club sponsor: <i>"Truthfully next year I can see maybe being a little bit more concerning, he's [David's] getting bigger physically and he's so rambunctious. He just wants to growl and jump and everything. And particularly people that don't know him...most of the time he's out on that south end and it's kind of a crowded area. It's not a perfect world."</i>	The club sponsor: <i>"I mean I am not sure I will talk to the aide if she is wanting to help with the cutting tasks and stuff like that, just as a safety hazard. If I don't feel like any student is going to be ok, I will just say like okay maybe you should be over here with the rolls, you could be kneading the rolls right now or mixing."</i>	Tiffany's mother: <i>"The only thing I would say about recreation is she [Tiffany] has to be supervised. Her personality could very easily be persuaded to go with anybody, even if she didn't know them, they're her friends."</i>

Figures

<div>← CONSTRUCTS →</div>					
INTERVIEWS	Data Source	MOTIVATING FACTORS	PARTICIPATION		Rapport Building/ Background Info
			Engagement	Opportunities	
	Special Education Teacher Interview #1	#3, #4,	#5, #6, #7, #8	#9, #10	#1, #2, #11
	Special Education Teacher Interview #2	#2	#3, #4, #5, #6	#7, #8	#1, #9
	Club Sponsor Interview #1	#5, #6	#8, #9, #10, #11	#12, #13	#1, #2, #4, #3*, #7*, #14
	Club Sponsor Interview #2	#3	#4, #5, #6, #7	#8, #9	#1, #2, #10
DOCUMENTS	Parent Interview	#2, #3,	#5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10	#11, #12	#1, #4, #13
	School Club Information Form	Mission/ description statement and Goals of the school club	Types of activities offered		Name of school club, Sponsor ID #, Sources, Location of meetings, Time and date of club meetings, Membership eligibility, and Additional information
	IEP Document Review Form		Age; Primary disability; Meets eligibility for Illinois Alternate Assessment; Summary of PLAAFP; List of IEP goals and benchmarks; and Accommodations/support needs.		Student ID, Date of IEP document, and Date of review by researcher
OBSERVATION	School Club Observation Protocol	I. General Information	II. Engagement	III. Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name/setting of club• Student ID #• Date of observation• Start/end time of obs.

Note. * = Club specific questions.

Figure 1. Construct and data source alignment matrix.

Appendix A

Special Education Teacher Email

Hi,

The purpose of this email is to tell you about a research project that I am conducting with Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Clubs are defined as being student-based organizations tied to academic, social, hobby, or special interest; requiring regularly scheduled meetings that are facilitated by a club sponsor; and having membership that is open to all students. You are receiving this email because we are interested in learning more about you and your experience including students in clubs, and determining if you might qualify as a potential participant for this study. If you are selected as a participant, you will be asked to participate in two one-hour interviews and to assist us in obtaining permission for one of your students to participate in the study by sending a letter home to the student's parent(s). All participating teachers will be provided a \$50 gift card at the conclusion of the project.

To participate in this project, you must: (a) be a certified special education teacher; (b) have a minimum of one year of teaching experience working with students with severe disabilities; (c) be working in an integrated middle or high school public school setting; and (d) have at least one student on your caseload with a severe disability that is currently participating in a club. A student with a severe disability is defined as having a severe to profound intellectual disability who meets the eligibility criteria for taking the Illinois State Alternate Assessment (IAA).

If you believe that you meet the criteria for participation in this project, and you are interested in participating, please email me at apence2@illinois.edu as soon as possible. In this email, provide your contact information (i.e., name, telephone number) and a time/date that would be the most convenient for you to complete a 5-10 minute telephone screening interview. During this brief interview, you will be given information about the project's goals and the process for becoming a participant.

Thank you,



Alicia Pence, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Special Education,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Appendix B

Special Education Teacher Screening Interview Script

Hi. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. This conversation will be brief and last approximately five to 10 minutes. The purpose of our talk is to discuss the goals of the research project, review a list of criteria for participation, and explain what you will be asked to do as a research participant if you are invited to participate in the study. At the end of our conversation, I will let you know if you have met all of the necessary requirements for participation. I would like to thank you for considering participation in this project, and ask if you have any questions before we begin?

As you might recall from my previous email, the purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. This study will consist of two separate interviews with a special education teacher and club sponsor; a one-time interview with the parents of a student with a severe disability; and three observations of the student participating in club activities. With parent permission, we will also review the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Next, I would like to ensure that you meet all of the requirements needed for participation in this project. Do you have any questions before I begin?

- (1) What type of teaching certification do you have?
- (2) For purposes of this study, a student with a severe disability is defined as having a severe to profound intellectual disability who meets the eligibility criteria for taking the Illinois State Alternate Assessment (IAA). How many students do you have on your caseload this year that have a severe disability according to this definition?
- (3) How many years of teaching experience do you have working with students with severe disabilities?
- (4) What type (e.g., integrated, special, public) of school do you work in currently?
- (5) School clubs are defined as being student-based organizations tied to academic, social, hobby, or special interest; requiring regularly scheduled meetings that are facilitated by a club sponsor; and having membership that is open to all students. How many students do you have on your current caseload that have a severe disability and participate in at least one extracurricular school club?

(The researcher informs the teacher if he/she has met all of the criteria).

For teachers **not** meeting the criteria: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I sincerely appreciate your interest in this research project. Based on our conversation, you do not meet the necessary requirements to participate (*the researcher clarifies which criterion(s) were not met*). Do you have any questions for me?

For teachers meeting the criteria: Thank you, based on our conversation, you have met all of the necessary requirements for participation in this research project. Are you still interested in participating in this project?

For teachers *not* interested in participating: Thank you for your time today and I sincerely appreciate your willingness to speak with me. May I ask why you aren't interested in participating? Do you have any questions for me before we go?

For teachers still interested in participating: Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Before I can invite you to participate in the study, I must contact your school principal to obtain his/her approval for conducting research at your school site. Please go ahead and inform your principal about your interest in the study. Once I receive your principal's response, I will follow-up with you through email to let you know his decision. If your principal gives his approval, we will work together to select students with severe disabilities who are involved in a school club for this study. Several students with severe disabilities might need to be considered in order to find willing parents and club sponsors. Because more than one student may qualify, we will work together to select students with SD who are involved in a club for the study. In the event that more than one parent/student/club sponsor choose to participate in the study from your school, the student with the most significant disability will be selected. Once we have the parents and the club sponsor's consent, I will confirm your participation in the study and also get your consent. Do you have any questions?

Next, I would like to speak with you about your responsibilities as a potential research participant. We ask that you agree to participate in two one-hour interviews. One initial interview will be conducted at the beginning of the project and one follow-up interview will be conducted at the conclusion. As a participant, you will also be asked to send a letter home to the parents of the focal student to obtain their consent for their child's participation in the study. As an incentive for your participation, you will receive a \$50 gift card at the end of the project. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Appendix C

Script for Principal

Hi, my name is Alicia Pence and I am conducting a research project with Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. Approval for this study has been obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The purpose of our conversation today is to ask for your permission to conduct this study at your school site. I have recently been in contact with (special education teacher's name) and she was eager about the possibility of being a research participant for this project. If you agree to allow this study to be conducted at your school, I will work with (name of special education teacher) to select students with severe disabilities who are involved in a school club for this study. She will send a letter home to all of these students' parents to get their consent for the child to participate in the study as well as extend an invitation for the parents to participate. In addition, the club sponsor of the extracurricular school club in which the students participate, will also be sent an invitation to participate. In the event that more than one parent/student/club sponsor choose to participate in the study from your school, the student with the most significant disability will be selected.

To tell you a little more about the research project, we will be conducting (a) a review of the focal student's Individualized Education Program (contingent upon consent received from his/her parents); (b) two separate interviews with the special education teacher and club sponsor held before or after school; and (c) three observations of the focal student participating in club activities. Due to the nature of this project, club members and other adults present during club activities might occasionally appear in notes taken during observations. With this in mind, the club sponsor will be asked to send two information letters home for both the club members and their parents. These letters will contain information about the goals of the study and provide club members and their parents with the option to deny permission for the club member to be included in any data gathered. Please be aware that no data will be collected without the written consent from adults (i.e., special education teacher, club sponsor, parents, adults assisting with club activities), and oral assent from the student with a disability. All data collected for this study will be kept in a secure file, only accessible to project personnel. Data will also be coded to remove any identifiable information of participants.

We are very excited about the possibility of using your school site to learn about the involvement of students with disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Do you have any questions for me? Please let me know your decision regarding conducting research at your school.

Thank you,



Alicia Pence, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Special Education,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Appendix D

Parent Consent—Student With a Disability

You and your child are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Alicia Pence and Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. You and your child's participation in this study are critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in club activities. At the end of this letter, you will have the option to agree to allow you and your child to participate in this research study.

The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. **Regarding your child, as a participant in this study:**

- We will review a copy of your child's current Individualized Education Program (IEP) document to obtain information about his/her disability, educational background, goals, and support needs.
- Your child will be observed participating in the same school club on three separate occasions. These observations will last the entire duration of each club meeting (about 45-60 minutes).

Regarding you, as a participant in this study:

- You will be asked to participate in a one-time interview. This interview is estimated to last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will occur in a private location of your choosing (e.g., empty office in the school building, your home). During this interview, you will be asked to discuss your beliefs and experiences regarding your child's participation in the school club.
- Read a summary of the interview and confirm its accuracy.
- If you agree to participate in this study by completing an interview, you will receive a \$25 gift card at the conclusion of the research project.

Notes from IEP reviews, observations, and interviews will be kept on a secure computer server that is password-protected and only accessible to project personnel. With your permission, your interview will be audio-recorded and audio files will be transcribed. Audio files will be erased at the conclusion of the study. To protect the confidentiality of you and your child, notes will be coded with a number to remove any identifiable information, and you and your child's name will not be used.

There are no anticipated risks to this project greater than what you and your child would encounter in normal life. We anticipate that the results of this study might lead to improvements in how other schools structure extracurricular school clubs to promote increased involvement of students with severe disabilities. The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, a journal article, and conference presentations. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will be substituted for any identifying information to secure and maintain both your and your child's identity.

You are your child's participation in this project is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw both your participation and your child's participation in this project, at any time, for any reason without penalty. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this research project. If your child does not wish to participate in this project, at any time, he or she will be allowed to stop. Your choice to participate or not will have no impact on your child's membership in the school club and will not affect his or her grades at school. Your child's school principal, special education teacher, and school club sponsor are aware of this research project and have agreed to allow the project to be conducted.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Alicia Pence by telephone at 217-621-1592 or by email at apence2@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pence, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Stacy Dymond, Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Regarding my son/daughter's participation in the study:

- ☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to allow the project researchers to review my son/daughter's current IEP document.
- ☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to allow my son/daughter to be observed participating in the school club on three separate occasions.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in the research project described above.

Print your child's name

Your Signature Date

Regarding my own participation in the study:

- ☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to participate in a one-time interview.
- ☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to read a summary of the interview to confirm the accuracy of this document.
- ☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to have each interview audio recorded for the purpose of transcription.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above.

Signature Date

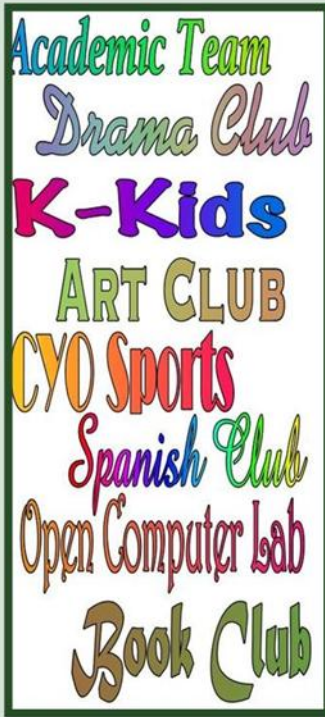
Please return this completed form to your child's special education teacher as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Appendix E

Parents of the Student With a Disability Flyer

YOU ARE INVITED... to be a part of a research project about extracurricular school clubs!



Title of the Project: School-Based Extracurricular Activity Participation of Students with Severe Disabilities

Purpose of the Project: We are Dr. Stacy Dymond and Ms. Alicia Pence from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We invite you to participate in an exciting project about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. From this project, we hope to gain a better understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in school club activities.

What Your Child Will Do:

- Be observed participating in club activities three separate times

What You'll Do:

- Participate in a one-time interview and read a summary of the interview at a later date
- Allow us to review your child's IEP document

What You'll Get:

- \$25 gift card at the end of the project

Interested?

Contact: Alicia Pence,
apence2@illinois.edu, 217-621-1592
to find out more information

Ready to Sign Up??

Read and sign the attached form. Be sure to return the signed form to your child's special education teacher.



Appendix F

Club Sponsor Email

Hi,

My name is Alicia Pence and I am conducting a research project with Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. You are receiving this email because we have recently selected one of the students from a club you sponsor (name of school club) to serve as the focal student for the research study. We are also excited to learn more about you and your experience including students in club activities and would like to invite you to participate in this project. Your participation is critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with disabilities participate in club activities.

The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in two one-hour interviews. During these interviews, you will be asked to discuss your beliefs and experiences regarding the participation of the focal student in (name of school club). As part of the project, the focal student will be observed participating in club activities on three separate occasions. In addition, we ask that you be willing to send two letters home to club members of the club and their parents two weeks prior to the start of the study. For your involvement in the study, you will receive a \$50 gift card at the conclusion of the project. Your choice to participate is completely voluntary and will not have an impact on your job status.

At your earliest convenience, please respond to this email to let me know if you are interested in participating in this study. If you would prefer, I am also available to meet with you in person or for a telephone conversation to discuss the project in greater detail and to answer any questions that you might have. If you are interested in becoming a research participant, you will be asked to sign a consent form at a later date.

Thank you,



Alicia Pence, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Special Education,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Appendix G

Club Sponsor Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Alicia Pence and Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Your participation in this study is critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in club activities.

The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. **As a participant in this study, you will be asked to:**

- Participate in two separate interviews. It is estimated that each interview should last approximately 60 minutes. The first interview will be conducted prior to observing the focal student with a disability participating in club activities. The second interview will occur at the conclusion of the project. During these interviews, you will be asked to discuss your beliefs and experiences regarding the focal student's participation in an extracurricular school club. Interviews will be audio-recorded with your permission and will take place in a private location at your school site.
- Send two letters home with each club member at least two weeks before the start of the study. Both letters will contain information about the goals of the study and provide club members and their parents with the opportunity to deny permission for students to be included in notes recorded during observations.
- If possible, notify the researcher through email, by telephone, or in person about any adults who will be present on each day that an observation is conducted.
- Be observed on three separate occasions during club activities in which the focal student participates. Due to the nature of this project, you, club members, and other adults present during club activities might occasionally appear in electronic notes taken during observations.
- Read a summary of both interviews to confirm their accuracy.

Audio files will be transcribed, coded to remove individuals' names, and erased at the completion of the study. Any notes from observations will also be coded to remove any identifying information. Audio files and notes will be kept on a secure computer server that is password-protected and will only be accessible to the project personnel.

There are no anticipated risks to this project greater than what you would encounter in normal life. We anticipate that the results of this study might lead to improvements in how other schools structure extracurricular school clubs to promote increased involvement of students with severe disabilities. The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, a journal article, and conference presentations. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will be substituted for any identifying information to secure and maintain your identity.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. Your choice to participate or not will have no impact on your job or your status at school or with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You are

also free to refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive a \$50 gift card at the conclusion of the research project.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Alicia Pence by telephone at 217-621-1592 or by email at apence2@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pence, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Stacy Dymond, Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to participate in two separate interviews; send two letters home for club members and their parents; if possible, notify the researcher about any adults that will present on each day that an observation is conducted; be observed during club meetings on three separate occasions; and read a summary of interviews to confirm the accuracy of these documents.

☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to have each interview audio recorded for the purpose of transcription.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have also been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Appendix H

Special Education Teacher Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Alicia Pence and Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Your participation in this study is critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in club activities.

The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. **As a participant in this study, you will be asked to:**

- Participate in two separate interviews. It is estimated that each interview should last approximately 60 minutes. The first interview will be conducted prior to observing the focal student with a severe disability participating in club activities. The second interview will occur at the conclusion of the project. During these interviews, you will be asked to discuss your beliefs and experiences regarding the focal student's participation in an extracurricular school club. Interviews will be audio-recorded with your permission and will take place in a private location at your school site.
- Send letters home to the parents of students with severe disabilities to get their consent for their child to participate in the study as well to invite the parents to participate.
- Provide the researcher with a copy of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) (upon parental consent).
- Be observed (if you are present) on three separate occasions during club activities in which your student participates. Due to the nature of this project, you, club members, and other adults present during club activities might occasionally appear in electronic notes taken during observations.
- Read summaries of both interviews and a draft of the case study report to confirm the accuracy of these documents.

Audio files will be transcribed, coded to remove individuals' names, and erased at the completion of the study. Written notes from the IEP review and electronic notes from observations will also be coded to remove any identifying information. Audio files and electronic notes will be kept on a secure computer server that is password-protected. Written notes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. These documents will only be accessible to project personnel.

There are no anticipated risks to this project greater than what you would encounter in normal life. We anticipate that the results of this study might lead to improvements in how other schools structure extracurricular school clubs to promote increased involvement of students with severe disabilities. The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, a journal article, and conference presentations. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will be substituted for any identifying information to secure and maintain your identity.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. Your choice to participate or not will have no impact on your job or your status at school or with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You are

also free to refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive a \$50 gift card at the conclusion of the research project.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Alicia Pence by telephone at 217-621-1592 or by email at apence2@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pence, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Stacy Dymond, Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to participate in two separate interviews; send a consent form to and collect it from the focal student's parent; provide the researcher with a copy of the focal student's IEP for review (upon parental consent); be observed during club activities; and read a summary of both interviews as well as a draft of the case study report to confirm the accuracy of these documents.

☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to have each interview audio recorded for the purpose of transcription.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have also been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Appendix I

Club Member Information Letter

Dear Student,

As part of your involvement in your school club, Alicia Pence and Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign will be conducting a research project to learn about extracurricular school clubs. In particular, the purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Your participation in this study is critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in club activities. This research project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. During this project, we will be observing and taking notes during three of your club meetings. These observations will last the entirety of the club meetings. You may also be observed and included in these notes while you participate in club activities. Typical participation in your school club includes all of the regular routines and activities that you do each time your club meets. For example, this might include a routine such as reviewing club minutes from the previous meeting or activities like working with a partner to come up with ideas for a future project or working alone to complete a project. Any notes taken during our visits to your club meetings will be kept in a secure location, on a computer server that is password-protected. Neither your name nor any identifying information about you will be recorded. The only individuals who will see these notes are the persons in charge of this study.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. This means that you can make the decision to participate in the project or not to participate in the project. At any time, you can stop participating in the project and you do not have to give a reason for wanting to stop. It is also okay to not want to participate in this project. Regardless of your decision about whether or not you choose to participate in the project, your decision will not affect your grades at school or your membership in the school club.

- **If you would like to participate in this project, you do not have to do anything else.**
- **If you decide to NOT participate in this project, you will need to put your name, signature, and date in the space provided below, and give this form to your club sponsor or Alicia Pence. It's also okay to tell your club sponsor or Alicia Pence in person that you do not want to participate in this project.**

If you have any questions about this form or the research project, please contact Alicia Pence in person, by telephone at 217-621-1592, or by email at apence2@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pence, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Stacy Dymond, Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

*ONLY WRITE YOUR NAME, SIGNATURE, & DATE IF YOU **DO NOT** WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.

Print Your Name: _____

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Appendix J

Club Member—Parent Information Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As part of your child's involvement in (name of school club), Alicia Pence and Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign will be conducting a research study to learn about extracurricular school clubs. In particular, the purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Your child's participation in this study is critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in club activities. This research project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. During this project, we will be observing and taking notes during three of your child's club meetings. These observations will last the entirety of the club meetings. Your child may be observed and included in these notes while he/she participates in club activities. Typical participation in the school club includes all of the regular routines and activities that your child does each time the club meets. For example, this might include a routine such as reviewing club minutes from the previous meeting or activities like working with a partner to come up with ideas for a future project or working alone to complete a project. Neither your child's name nor any identifying information about your child will be recorded. Any notes from observations will be kept on a secure computer server that is password-protected and only accessible to project personnel.

There are no anticipated risks to this project greater than what your child would encounter in normal life. We anticipate that the results of this study might lead to improvements in how other schools structure extracurricular school clubs to promote increased involvement of students. The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, a journal article, and conference presentations. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will be substituted for any identifying information to secure and maintain your child's identity. Your child's participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. Your choice to have your child participate or not will have no impact on your child's status at school, as a club member in the club, or grades. Your child's principal and club sponsor are both aware of this project and have agreed to allow the project to be conducted. Please note that a similar letter to the one you are receiving is enclosed in this envelope for your child. Your child may also self-select out of the study.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research project, please keep this information letter for your records. However, if you **DO NOT** want your child to participate in this research project, please provide your child's name and your signature in the space provided below. You may return this form to the school office or give it to the club sponsor. If you prefer, you may also contact the club sponsor and/or the lead researcher Alicia Pence by telephone at 217-621-1592 or by email at apence2@illinois.edu.

Please don't hesitate to contact Alicia if you have any questions about this research project.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pence, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Stacy Dymond, Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

***ONLY FILL OUT THIS INFORMATION IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY.**

Print Your Child's Name

Parent's Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Appendix K

Adult Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Alicia Pence and Professor Stacy Dymond from the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this research project is to learn about the involvement of students with severe disabilities in extracurricular school clubs. Your participation in this study is critical for gaining a greater understanding about how students with severe disabilities participate in club activities.

The project will take place between September 2015 and December 2015. **As a participant in this study, you will be asked to:**

- Be observed on three separate occasions during club activities in which the focal student participates. Due to the nature of this project, you, club members, and other adults present during club activities might occasionally appear in electronic notes taken during observations.

Any electronic notes collected during observations will be stored on a secure computer server that is password protected. Notes will only be accessible to project personnel. To protect the confidentiality of your information, all participants will be assigned a code. This code will be used in place of your name for any information recorded about you. There are no anticipated risks to this project greater than what you would encounter in normal life. We anticipate that the results of this study might lead to improvements in how other schools structure extracurricular school clubs to promote increased involvement of students with severe disabilities. The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, a journal article, and conference presentations. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will be substituted for any identifying information to secure and maintain your identity.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. Your choice to participate or not will have no impact on your status at school or with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Alicia Pence by telephone at 217-621-1592 or by email at apence2@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pence, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Stacy Dymond, Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

☐ Yes or ☐ No I agree to be observed, on three separate occasions, during school club meetings.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have also been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Appendix L

Special Education Teacher Initial Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of our conversation is so that I can learn more about your student's involvement in school clubs. May I audio record this conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Tell me about your past experiences including students with severe disabilities in school clubs.

Probe: In what clubs have your students participated?

2. How would you describe your role in including your students in clubs?

Probe: What are your responsibilities?

Now, I would like to focus our talk specifically about (student's name) and his involvement in [name of club].

3. Tell me about how (name of student) got involved in this club.

Probe: What were the sequence of events that led to (name of student) joining this particular club?

4. What is the reason for the student being included in this particular club?

Probes: Were any of the reasons related to (a) the student's hobbies or personal interests, (b) the parents' priorities, (c) the time at which the club meets, (d) you as the special education teacher, (e) the club sponsor, (f) friendships with club members, or (g) anything else?

5. Tell me about the types of activities that (student's name) does while participating in this club.

Probe: In what club activities is (student's name) able to actively participate, either independently or partially?

Probe: How were these activities identified?

Probe: Who identified these activities?

Probe: How are these activities the same/different than his peers?

Probes: What types of materials does (student's name) use? How do these materials compare (i.e., same/different) to the materials that his peers use?

6. What types of supports does (name of student) receive to participate in club activities?

Probe: Who supports (student's name)?

Probe: What types of support do they provide?

Probe: Besides people, what other types of supports (e.g., accommodations, modifications, AT) does (name of student) receive?

7. How effective are the supports (name of student) receives in helping him/her participate in the club?

Probe: What makes you believe these supports work or don't work well for him?

8. How would you describe the overall quality of (name of student)'s participation in the club?

Probe: How would you describe his overall engagement in club activities?

Probe: How did you determine the overall quality of his participation?

I'm also interested in the types of learning opportunities that are present in the school club.

9. What do you hope (student's name) gets out of participating in club activities?

Probe: Is there something you hope he will learn or experience?

10. In your opinion, what types of opportunities would help (name of student) to benefit in the manner that you hope for?

Probe: How do activities need to be structured to make him successful?

Probes: Who should help to create these opportunities? How should they help?

11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (student's name) involvement in the school club?

Appendix M

Special Education Teacher Follow-Up Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'm excited to talk with you again about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club and learn how things have been going. Is it okay with you if I audio record our conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. To begin, tell me about how (name of student)'s participation in the school club has been going so far and since we last spoke.
Probe: How often did (name of student) participate in club meetings?
Probe: Which club activities do you think (name of student) enjoyed the most/least?

Next, let's talk about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club.

2. Thinking about our interview from earlier this year, you told me that (name of student) was involved in this club because . . . (*The researcher reiterates information from the first interview transcript related to item #4*). Why do or don't you believe this is still accurate?
Probe: (If the participant's reasons have changed) How has your reason for including (name of student) changed? What has caused this change?
3. How has (name of student)'s level or type of involvement in club activities changed since the start of the school year?
Probe: How have there been changes to any of the activities?
Probe: How have relationships with club members/adults changed?
Probe: Tell me about any changes with the types of supports received?
4. Thinking back over the semester, how would you describe the overall quality of (name of student)'s participation in the club?
Probe: How would you describe his overall engagement in club activities?
Probe: Tell me how you determined the overall quality of his participation?
5. What helped the student become actively engaged in club meetings?
Probes: Tell me about (a) things the club sponsor or club members did, (b) materials used, (c) types of activities, (d) structure of activities, and (e) supports provided?
6. What interfered with the student being actively engaged in club meetings (or as active as he could have been)?
Probes: Tell me about (a) things the club sponsor or club members did, (b) materials used, (c) types of activities, (d) structure of activities, and (e) supports provided?

While you're still reflecting on (name of student)'s participation, I would like to ask a few questions related to the types of learning opportunities present in the club.

7. Reflecting on our conversation earlier this year, you said that you had hoped that (student's name) would . . . (*The researcher reiterates information from the first interview transcript related to item #9*). Do you believe this happened?
Probe: What did he gain or learn from the experience?
8. In your opinion, what types of opportunities helped (name of student) to benefit in the manner that you had hoped for?
Probe: How were activities structured to help him be successful?
Probes: Who helped to create these opportunities? How did they help?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club?

Appendix N

Club Sponsor Initial Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. The purpose of our conversation is so that I can learn more about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club that you sponsor. May I audio record this conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Tell me about your background as a club sponsor.
Probe: What clubs have you sponsored in the past?
Probe: What motivates you to sponsor these clubs?
Probe: Have any of these clubs included students with disabilities?
Probe: How did you feel about including students with disabilities?
2. Tell me about your past experiences including students with severe disabilities in classes and school clubs.
Probe: Do you have students with significant disabilities in any of the classes that you teach?
Probe: How are these students typically supported in your classroom/club setting?
Probe: What is your comfort level in supporting students with significant disabilities?

Now, I would like to ask you specific questions about the school club that you sponsor in which (student's name) participates.

3. What can you tell me about this club?
Probe: What is the mission?
Probe: How many students participate (with and without disabilities)?
Probe: How frequently do you meet?
Probe: How do other adults (e.g., teachers, aides, community members) assist you?
Probe: How are students grouped for activities?
Probe: Why do you sponsor this particular club?
4. How would you describe your role as club sponsor?
Probe: What are your responsibilities?

Now, I would like to focus our talk specifically about (student's name) and his involvement in [name of club].

5. Tell me about how (name of student) got involved in this club.
Probe: What were the sequence of events that led to (name of student) joining this particular club?
6. What is the reason for the student being included in this particular club?
Probes: Were any of the reasons related to (a) the student's hobbies or personal interests, (b) the parents' priorities, (c) the time at which the club meets, (d) the special education

teacher, (e) you being the club sponsor, (f) friendships with club members, or (g) anything else?

Probe: Are there any other reasons you can think of for why the student is included in this particular club?

7. How is instruction provided during club meetings?

Probe: What types of skills do you teach?

Probe: Do you use instructional objectives?

Probes: What types of materials do you use? Are they different for students with disabilities?

8. Tell me about the types of activities that (student's name) does while participating in this club.

Probe: In what club activities is (student's name) able to actively participate, either independently or partially?

Probe: How were these activities identified?

Probe: Who identified these activities?

Probe: How are these activities the same/different than his peers?

Probes: What types of materials does (student's name) use? How do these materials compare (i.e., same/different) to the materials that his peers use?

9. What types of supports does (name of student) receive to participate in club activities?

Probe: Who supports (student's name)?

Probe: What types of support do they provide?

Probe: Besides people, what other types of supports (e.g., accommodations, modifications, AT) does (name of student) receive?

10. How effective are the supports (name of student) receives in helping him/her participate in the club?

Probe: What makes you believe these supports work or don't work well for him?

11. How would you describe the overall quality of (name of student)'s participation in the club?

Probe: How would you describe his overall engagement in club activities?

Probe: How did you determine the overall quality of his participation?

I'm also interested in the types of learning opportunities that are present in the school club.

12. What do you hope (student's name) gets out of participating in club activities?

Probe: Is there something you hope they will learn or experience?

13. In your opinion, what types of opportunities would help (name of student) to benefit in the manner that you hope for?

Probe: How do activities need to be structured to make him successful?

Probes: Who should help to create these opportunities? How should they help?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (student's name) involvement in the school club?

Appendix O

Club Sponsor Follow-Up Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'm excited to talk with you again about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club and learn how things have been going. Is it okay with you if I audio record our conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. To begin, tell me about how (name of student)'s participation in the school club has been going so far and since we last spoke.
Probe: How often did (name of student) participate in club meetings?
Probe: Which club activities have (name of student) enjoyed the most/least?
2. Has your role as club sponsor changed? If so, how?
Probe: How have your responsibilities changed?
Probe: How has your comfort level in providing supports increased/decreased?

Next, let's talk about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club.

3. Thinking about our interview from earlier this year, you told me that (name of student) was involved in this club because . . . (*The researcher reiterates information from the first interview transcript related to item #4*). Why do or don't you believe this is still accurate?
Probe: (If the participant's reasons have changed) How has your reason for including (name of student) changed? What has caused this change?
4. How has (name of student)'s level or type of involvement in club activities changed since the start of the school year?
Probe: How have there been changes to any of the activities?
Probe: How have relationships with club members/adults changed?
Probe: Tell me about any changes with the types of supports received?
5. Thinking back over the semester, how would you describe the overall quality of (name of student)'s participation in the club?
Probe: How would you describe his overall engagement in club activities?
Probe: Tell me how you determined the overall quality of his participation?
6. What helped the student become actively engaged in club meetings?
Probes: Tell me about (a) things you or club members did, (b) materials used, (c) types of activities, (d) structure of activities, and (e) supports provided?
7. What interfered with the student being actively engaged in club meetings (or as active as he could have been)?
Probes: Tell me about (a) things you or club members did, (b) materials used, (c) types of activities, (d) structure of activities, and (e) supports provided?

While you're still reflecting on (name of student)'s participation, I would like to ask a few questions related to the types of learning opportunities present in the club.

8. Reflecting on our conversation earlier this year, you said that you had hoped that (student's name) would . . . (*The researcher reiterates information from the first interview transcript related to item #9*). Do you believe this happened?
Probe: What did he gain or learn from the experience?
9. In your opinion, what types of opportunities helped (name of student) to benefit in the manner that you had hoped for?
Probe: How were activities structured to help him be successful?
Probes: Who helped to create these opportunities? How did they help?
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (name of student)'s involvement in the school club?

Appendix P

Parent Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I'm excited to learn more about (name of student)'s involvement in (name of school club). May I audio record this conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Tell me about the types of extracurricular activities that (name of student) has participated in the past.

Now, I would like to focus our talk specifically about (student's name) and his involvement in [name of club].

2. Tell me about how (name of student) got involved in this club.
Probe: What were the sequence of events that led to (name of student) joining this particular club?
3. What is the reason your child is included in this particular club?
Probes: Were any of the reasons related to (a) the student's hobbies or personal interests, (b) your priorities, (c) the time at which the club meets, (d) the special education teacher, (e) the club sponsor, (f) friendships with club members, or (g) anything else?
Probe: Are there any other reasons you can think of for why the student is included in this particular club?
4. Who is responsible for coordinating your child's participation in the school club?
Probe: Who provides transportation (if needed)?
Probe: How do the special education teacher and club sponsor keep you informed about school club activities?
Probe: How do you communicate and how often does this communication take place?

I would also like to know more about your child's participation in the school club. You may or may not be able to answer these questions so just let me know if you are not sure.

5. Tell me about the types of activities that (student's name) does while participating in this club.
Probe: In what club activities is (student's name) able to actively participate, either independently or partially?
Probe: What types of activities does he do?
Probe: How were these activities identified?
Probe: Who identified these activities?
Probe: How are these activities the same/different than his peers?
Probes: What types of materials does (student's name) use? How do these materials compare (i.e., same/different) to the materials that his peers use?
6. What types of supports does (name of student) receive to participate in club activities?
Probe: Who supports (student's name)?

Probe: What types of support do they provide?

Probe: How would you describe the quality of these supports?

Probe: Besides people, what other types of supports (e.g., accommodations, modifications, AT) does (name of student) receive?

7. How effective are the supports (name of student) receives in helping him participate in the club?

Probe: What makes you believe these supports work or don't work well for him?

8. How would you describe the overall quality of (name of student)'s participation in the club?

9. What has helped your child become actively engaged in club meetings?

Probes: Tell me about (a) things the club sponsor or club members did, (b) materials used, (c) types of activities, (d) structure of activities, and (e) supports provided?

10. What interfered with your child being actively engaged in club meetings (or as active as he could have been)?

Probes: Tell me about (a) things the club sponsor or club members did, (b) materials used, (c) types of activities, (d) structure of activities, and (e) supports provided?

I'm also interested in the types of learning opportunities that are present in the school club.

11. What do you hope (student's name) got out of participating in club activities? Do you believe this happened?

Probe: What did he gain or learn from the experience?

12. In your opinion, what types of opportunities helped (name of student) to benefit in the manner that you had hoped for?

Probe: How were activities structured to help him be successful?

Probes: Who helped to create these opportunities? How did they help?

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about (name of student)'s involvement in the club?

Appendix Q
School Club Observation Protocol

A. General Information

Time/Date Observation: _____

Number of Individuals Present: _____

Description of Setting: _____

Visual Diagram of Room/Activity Lay-Out:

B. Running Field Notes

Description of Activity #1:

Description of Activity #2:

Description of Activity #3:

C. Summary and Reflection

Overall Summary: _____

Personal Reflection: _____

Appendix R

IEP Document Review Form

Student ID #: _____

Age: _____

Primary Disability: _____

Secondary Disability: _____

Meets Eligibility for Illinois Alternate Assessment: *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐

Summary of Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance:

List of IEP Goals/Benchmarks:

Accommodations/Support Needs:

Appendix S

School Club Information Form

Name of School Club: _____

Club Sponsor ID #: _____

Sources (*circle sources used to gather information*)

School Website, Student Handbook, School Club Brochure, School Club Meeting Minutes,
Other: _____

School Club Information

Location of Club Meetings: _____

Time/Date of Club Meetings: _____

Are all students eligible to become a member of this club? *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐

Mission/Description Statement: _____

Goal(s) of the School Club: _____

Types of Activities Offered: _____

Additional Information: _____

Appendix T

Contact Summary Sheet

Contact Date: _____
Approx. Time: _____ Today's Date: _____
Location: _____
Contact Type: _____ Written By: _____

*Description: Provide a brief description of event, and people.
Use 5—10 words to describe qualities of the experience.*

What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?

Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had for this contact.

Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this contact?

What did you take away from the experience? Any surprises?

What new questions do you have (when considering your next contact with this site)?

Please suggest codes that you could use for this field-observation