



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Abigail Anderson
Director of Research and
Accountability

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To: Linus J. Guillory, Jr., Ph.D., Chief Schools Officer
From: Abigail Anderson
RE: Doctoral Research Proposal, Francisco Vicente
Date: August 7, 2020

Francisco Vicente, assistant principal at the Abraham Lincoln Elementary school, is enrolled in a doctoral program at UMass Lowell. A requirement of the program is to complete a dissertation-in-practice research study. Mr. Vicente's objective of his research is to systematically identify, describe, and consider the practices of the Abraham Lincoln Elementary school Adjustment Program and its efficacy in supporting the provisions of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with Emotional Impairment. The focus of his dissertation is to identify practices that staff perceive as effective and ineffective, as well as professional development and resource need.

Mr. Vicente proposes to invite 19 elementary staff members for Abraham Lincoln Elementary school, who work with EI students participating in the substantially separate special education program, where 13 will be recruited to participate in participant interviews and focus groups. Mr. Vicente will examine qualitative interviews with staff who agree to participate, participant demographic survey data, and targeted IEP review. Staff participation is voluntary and Mr. Vicente will not participate in the evaluation process for staff in which he has a supervisory relationship with for the 2020-21 school year.

This research will help to describe school practice and to identify potential malleable factors that could be addressed in future practice activities. Overall study findings will be shared with the Superintendent of Schools, Chief Schools Officer, and the Director of Special Education for the school district.

The work conforms with Policy LC. I recommend approval by the school committee.



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Lincoln Elementary School
300 Chelmsford Street
Lowell, MA, 01851
Phone: 978-937-2846*

**Mrs. Ginger Coleman
Principal**

**Mr. Francisco C. Vicente
Assistant Principal**

**Tel: (978) 937-2846
Fax: (978) 937-2855**

To: Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Schools, and Member of the Lowell School Committee

From: Francisco C. Vicente, Assistant Principal of the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School

Date: August 7, 2020

Subject: Executive Memo for Dissertation Request per Lowell School Committee Policy

Mr. Superintendent and Members of the School Committee:

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the UMASS Lowell program for Educational Leadership. The purpose of this practitioner-based Ed.D. program is to prepare PK-12 educators to be leaders who address problems of teaching and learning in their local contexts. Now in the final year of the program, I am ready to undertake my dissertation-in-practice research study.

As the student-researcher, I am reaching out to you for institutional support to carry out my dissertation-in-practice within the Lowell Public Schools. Below I have included information that addresses all the points outlined in Lowell Public Schools' policy on Relations about Education Research and Service Centers.

1. Objectives of Research: The purpose of my research study is to systematically identify, describe, and consider the practices of the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School Adjustment Program and its efficacy in supporting the provisions of Pree and Appropriate Public Education (PAPE) for students with Emotional Impairment. The study will identify the barriers and facilitators to PAPE for staff working with this specialized population of students with the long-term objective of building capacity for practitioners and supporting best practices. My dissertation focuses on identifying practices that staff perceive as effective and ineffective, as well as professional development and resource needs.

2. Impact of Research: Schools are tasked with the challenge of finding proactive measures to support students academically, socially, and behaviorally as members of their school community. This study will help to provide data for school leaders regarding the legal provisions of educating students with disabilities, employing research-based practices to support their long-term success, and supporting staff efforts to use research-based practices.

3. Privacy: Pseudonyms will be used in all data collected (staff interviews, IEP reviews, staff focus group) to protect the confidentiality of participants and the school. Only the student researcher will have access to the data which will be stored on a password protected computer. The Dissertation Chair will only have access to de-identified data. Consent will be obtained for all participants including the staff and parents/guardians of students whose IEP will be reviewed. Student assent will be requested when parent/guardian consent is obtained. Staff

will be given the opportunity to opt out of the project at any time. Parents will be asked to provide written consent and given the opportunity to opt out of participation.

4. Scope of Research: The Conceptual Framework of this study focuses on four primary topics: 1) The Impact of Emotional Impairment, 2) Service Delivery Models, 3) Research Based Practices and the Research to Practice Gap, 4) IBP Development. The findings of this study will contribute to the professional growth of school leaders and teachers at Abraham Lincoln and LPS by providing seminal data about current instructional practices for students with Emotional Impairment, and research-based recommendations for improving school practice that are informed by local data.

5. Interruption of Instructional Time: No instruction will be interrupted in this study. All data collection will take place at a time and location convenient to staff participants outside of their instructional duties (e.g., this project will not interrupt typical school practice/day to day practice).

6. Faculty Member Approval: The Principal Investigator of this study is Dr. John McKenna, my dissertation chair; John oversees my dissertation study through the use of check in meetings. Dr. McKenna will not be involved in data collection, but he will assist with the analysis of de-identified data and the creation of research-based recommendations to improve school practice (e.g., chapter five of the dissertation in practice). I have passed my dissertation proposal defense and completed the IRB review process at UMASS Lowell. According to UML IRB, my study does not meet their institutional definition of human subject research (see letter from UML IRB). At this time, I intend to complete the research activities described in my dissertation proposal, presented during my proposal defense, and submitted to UML IRB (which determined the project did not meet their definition of human subject research). As a result, UML IRB will not be providing oversight of this project. Additionally, Principal Ginger Coleman has provided me with permission to complete the study at the Lincoln School and will oversee the formal evaluation of participating staff for the 2020-2021 school year.

Enclosed is a letter from my dissertation chair, Dr. John McKenna, outlining his role and support of this research study. I am also including a copy of the letter I received from the UMASS Lowell IRB board and my plan of study. I thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Respectfully,

fir,

Francisco. C. Vicente, M.Ed.
Assistant Principal
Abraham Lincoln Elementary School



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7/29/2020

John William McKenna
Curriculum and Instructions
61 Wilder St
9789344666
John_McKenna@uml.edu

Dear John William McKenna, PhD:

On 7/29/2020 the IRB has determined that the proposed activity is not regulated research as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations:

Type of review:	Initial
Title:	Educating Students with Emotional Impairment A Qualitative Investigation of the Facilitators and Barriers to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
Principal investigator:	John William McKenna, PhD
IRB number:	20-110
IND or IND number, if any:	N/A
HHS grant title and ID, if any:	N/A
Documents reviewed:	HRP-200, HRP-504, Interview Consent, Focus Group Consent, Consent for Zoom Interviews, Consent for Zoom Focus group, Parent Consent, Assent, Demographic survey, IEP Coding Sheet, Recruitment email, Confidentiality Agreement for Transcription

IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are human subject research in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at directly at 978-934-4134 or Emily.Sousa@uml.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Sousa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "E".

Emily Sousa, MA, CIM, CIP
IRB Manager

8/5/2020

Mail - Vicente, Frank - Outlook

From: Sousa, Emily <Emily_Sousa@uml.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2020 11:06 AM
To: McKenna, John W <John_McKenna@uml.edu>
Cc: Vicente, Francisco C <Francisco_Vicente@student.uml.edu>; Sousa, Emily <Emily_Sousa@uml.edu>
Subject: IRB Determination Memo 20-110-MCK

Hi John,

The IRB has reviewed the materials provided and determined that the proposed activities do not meet the regulatory definition of human subject's research (HSR) and does not require IRB oversight. The IRB does request that the study be conducted ethically, e.g., consent, voluntary nature, etc. **HOWEVER, please do not reference the IRB or IRB approval in any of the materials** since it is not required. If you have any questions about this determination please let me know, thank you.

Emily

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LOW.&.L I 

Emily Sousa, MA, CIP, CIM
IRB Manager

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

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Learning with Purpose

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

August 6, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

It is a pleasure to serve as the Dissertation Committee Chair for Assistant Principal Vicente. Mr. Vicente is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education's Educational Leadership Ed.D. program. With his Dissertation Committee, Mr. Vicente has developed a plan of inquiry that is likely to be of great benefit to the students and staff at Abraham Lincoln, and is likely to provide "lessons learned" for school practice in the district. As Mr. Vicente's Chair, I will assist with the analysis of de-identified qualitative data (staff interviews, IEP review, staff focus group), assist with the further development of a focus group protocol, and provide feedback and guidance during the development of his final dissertation chapter, which consists of making research based recommendations that are based on dissertation findings (e.g., local data). In my role, I will not interact directly with school staff, parents/guardians, and students. I will not have access to student records. UML IRB is not providing oversight because Mr. Vicente's dissertation in practice does not meet the organization's definition of human subject research (please see letter from UML IRB that Mr. Vicente included with his project materials).

Frank and I have worked very closely on his dissertation proposal, which he not only successfully defended but it is now being used as a model for future cohorts of doctoral students. One thing that struck me from the beginning of this process is that Mr. Vicente is incredibly passionate about the success of his students and staff. Promoting student and staff success is a theme that runs strongly through his dissertation in practice. The next step is to implement his plan of inquiry with those who consent to participate so that he can make even more informed decisions about how to support students and staff (e.g., recommendations that are based on local qualitative data and evidence from relevant peer reviewed research).

Respectfully,

— — tJ μt_-----

John William McKenna Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Moderate Disabilities

College of Education

University of Massachusetts Lowell

John_mckenna@uml.edu

Faculty Profile: <https://www.uml.edu/education/faculty-staff/faculty/mckenna-john->

lliam..aspx

Francisco C. Vicente 7.30.20 HRP-504 Investigator Study Plan

1. TITLE

Educating Students with Emotional Impairment
A Qualitative Investigation of the Facilitators and Barriers to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

2. EXTERNAL IRB REVIEW HISTORY*

N/A

3. PRIOR APPROVALS:

N/A

CONFLICT OF INTEREST (COI):

None

BIOHAZARDOUS AGENTS:

N/A

RADIATION:

N/A

4. BACKGROUND*

Across the United States, schools face significant challenges achieving Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) mandates for students with Emotional Impairment (EI; U.S Department of Education, 2019; McKenna, Solis, Brigham, & Adamson, 2019). EI students have very specific and specialized academic, social/emotional, and behavioral needs, and these needs are likely to vary by student (Gresham, 2015). Coupled with the challenge of meeting those unique needs are inconsistencies in the knowledge base of stakeholders with respect to special education policies and procedures. School systems lack a clear model of instruction to support EI students and measure their progress in all domains of their disability. Teams lack common understanding and a shared vision of the goals of special education, how best to service their students, and how to plan for their future. Students with EI are the most likely of all special education subgroups to be placed in more restrictive settings (Maggin, 2011) despite research suggesting that the environmental, academic, and behavioral needs of the students may not be adequately addressed in these settings (McKenna & Ciullo, 2016; Levy & Vaughn, 2002). Compounding this issue, students have insufficient access to research based instructional, behavioral, and assessment methodology for educators to consistently and successfully achieve FAPE mandates. As a result, research suggests that as few as 40% of students with EI will graduate high school from our public-school system (Thurlow, 2002). The provision of FAPE comes with the understanding that a student's education will confer appropriate benefit (McKenna, Adamson, Solis, 2019). To achieve this for students with EI, schools must be prepared to meet their universal needs.

5. OBJECTIVES*

The following research question will guide this sequential qualitative investigation:
What are the facilitators and barriers to achieving FAPE mandates for students with Emotional Impairment educated in dedicated settings at Buchanan Elementary School?

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6. STUDY OUTCOMES*

The primary objective is to identify facilitators and barriers to FAPE mandates for students with EI in dedicated settings at an urban elementary school in a Northeastern state through a data collection process that will include staff interviews, a review of student IEPs, and a staff focus group. Data collected will be used to describe school practice and to identify potential malleable factors that could be addressed in future practice activities (e.g., responsibilities associated with typical school practice/typical professional responsibilities as a practitioner). This dissertation study does not involve making changes to typical school practice. This dissertation study only involves identifying and describing current school practice. This dissertation study will not be rewritten and submitted for possible publication in a peer reviewed journal.

7. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA*

Members of the school staff who work with EI students participating in the substantially separate special education program for increased social emotional and behavioral supports will be recruited for this investigation. Participants will be recruited from the school in which the second researcher (Doctoral Candidate) is employed as an Assistant Principal. A purposeful sampling procedure will be used to identify and select participants salient to this dissertation study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Specifically, study participants will meet the following selection criteria: *Teacher and/or staff who provide instruction and/or support to at least one student with EI who is placed in the substantially separate special education program for increased social emotional and behavioral supports, or are members of an IEP team for at least one student with EI in the substantially separate special education program for increased social emotional and behavioral supports.*

Based on the given criteria, criteria, interview participants will include:

- Two Special Education Teachers from the substantially separate classrooms
- Two Paraprofessionals from the substantially separate classrooms
- One Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) from the substantially separate classrooms support Staff
- One Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) from the substantially separate classrooms support Staff
- One General Education Teacher at each grade level that supports students with EI who participate in the substantially separate classroom, in an inclusive setting for a portion of their school day.
- School Psychologist

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- One School Administrator

All study participants must self-report English as their primary language.

8. VULNERABLE POPULATIONS*

This study focuses on students with EI who receive special education services. The sole source of student level data being collected is a record review [specifically, the Individualized Education Program (IBP) document] which will be limited to demographic information and information on IBP goals.

9. SETTING

Participants will be recruited from an urban elementary school in a Northeastern state that the Doctoral Candidate is employed at as an Assistant Principal. The school includes a substantially separate program for special education students identified in need of increased social emotional and behavioral support.

A community advisory board will not be involved in this project.

10. RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The Doctoral Candidate will recruit participants, obtain informed consent of participants, conduct interviews, audio record each interview that has consent to record, transcribe interviews, code interview transcripts, analyze transcripts for emerging themes, and develop project permanent products (manuscripts, presentation proposals, sharing general recommendations with district/local education agency stakeholders).

Dr. John McKenna, Dissertation Committee Chair will assist with coding interview transcripts, analyze transcripts for emerging themes, outliers, and disconfirming themes, and assist with the development of project permanent products [completed dissertation].

Both the Doctoral Candidate and Dr. McKenna have completed the necessary CITI training.

11. STUDY TIMELINES*

Participant interviews will be approximately 60 minutes in duration, depending on participant responses to interview questions. The Focus Group will be also be approximately 60 minutes in duration, depending on participant responses to interview questions. IBP reviews will be completed in the month of November, 2020. The following timeline will be used in this project:

<i>September</i>	<i>Recruiting will be completed/or study participants and participation consents will be issued and collected for the study.</i>
<i>October - November</i>	<i>Stakeholder Interviews, transcriptions, and coding will be completed</i>
<i>November</i>	<i>IEP Reviews and coding sheet will be completed and analyzed</i>

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December

Focus Group will be completed and analyzed

January -April

Study analysis will be completed and narrative drafted.

12. NUMBER OF SUBJECTS*

For this project, 19 staff members meet selection criteria (based on participant self-report), approximately 13 of whom will be recruited for interviews and the focus group.

13 . PROCEDURES INVOLVED*

Participant Demographic Survey. This document will facilitate the collection information on individual participants that will be implemented into a demographic table. The researcher will do frequency counts for the number of persons in each professional position who participate. This information will be used to calculate a percentage of participants who serve in each professional position who were included in the participant sample. The survey will compare and contrast responses from stakeholders who hold different professional positions and have different levels of experience working with EI students, and have different levels of experience working in dedicated classrooms and supporting inclusion.

Interviews. All interviews will be audio or video recorded, dependent upon interview method employed. Interviews may be completed over Zoom in the event of a continuation of remote learning for the school year. Each interview will be transcribed by the Doctoral Candidate or a transcription service. In the event the participant does not consent to a recording, the researcher will take descriptive field notes. When taking field notes, the researcher will read the notes back to the interviewee to make certain that the notes are representative of participant responses. This will occur after each interviewee response so that descriptive field notes are confirmed before the researcher moves on to the next interview question. In this manner, confirmation of field notes serves as a first level member check (see Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Upon completion of all stakeholder interviews, two transcripts will be randomly selected and independently read by the Doctoral Candidate and dissertation Chair to create an initial set of codes with operational definitions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each researcher will create their own initial set of codes with operational definitions. Specifically, each researcher will assign names/units of meaning to participant quotes and then categorize assigned names/units of meaning. Each category will then be assigned a name and provided an initial working definition. The researchers will then discuss both initial sets of codes and operational definitions to achieve consensus and develop a master set of codes with operational definitions.

The dissertation candidate will then read and code all transcripts using the master set of codes to identify relevant themes and outliers. Specifically, participant quotes will be assigned a unit of meaning that aligns with at least one of the master codes. In instances in which participant quotes are representative of more than one code, a secondary code will be assigned. This analysis will be entered into an excel spreadsheet which will include representative quotes and corresponding codes. Participant number and professional position will be entered into the Excel sheet to assist with data analysis (i.e., to identify trends in participant responses).

Upon the completion of transcript coding, interview quotes will be collated according to primary codes and then secondary codes to assist with theme identification. The total number of participants who reported information consistent with each theme will be reported (e.g., primary or secondary code), as well as the percentage of all participants who reported information consistent with each identified theme. Interview coding will be compared and contrasted to

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identify emerging themes from noted patterns in the answers provided. Upon the identification of relevant themes, the researcher and dissertation chair will re-read each transcript to identify potential disconfirming evidence and address two potential concerns regarding the analysis of qualitative data. The first concern is the anchoring heuristic tendency, which is the tendency for persons to maintain beliefs that are based on initial perceptions or interpretations (Lelienfeld et al., 2020). The second potential concern is belief perseverance which is the tendency for beliefs to remain unchanged despite exposure to disconfirming or contradictory information and evidence.

Prior to each interview, participants will be reminded of the purpose of this project and the purpose of obtaining interview data (e.g., the research questions). A structured interview protocol will be used with each participant. Participants will be permitted to refrain from answering any question that they do not want to answer. Participants may also ask clarifying questions at any time. Also, the interviewer may ask follow up questions to elicit more detailed responses or to address areas of confusion or responses in need of clarification. Each participant will be informed of this prior to the start of the interview. Specifically, participants will be told of this after they are reminded of the purpose of the project and the interview.

In the event that staff participants would like to maintain their anonymity, staff can respond to the interview questions using an electronic survey. Staff would receive a link to an electronic survey [Qualtrics] which included the consent script, demographic questions, and interview questions. Survey responses will be collected in a way that participant anonymity is preserved, for example, survey respondents may omit providing demographic information (e.g., refrain from answering demographic questions of their choosing).

The following interview protocol will be used with consenting teacher participants:

*Adapted from Vaughn, Moody, & Schumm (1998).

1. Tell me about how students with EI in the Adjustment Program perform academically, behaviorally, and socially, and how their disability affects their performance?
2. Tell me how instructional content, skills and methods are differentiated for students with EI served in the Adjustment Program?
 - a. How about in general education classrooms?
3. Tell me about the specialized supports and services provided to students with EI who are served in the Adjustment Program?
 - a. Academic supports and services?
 - b. Behavioral supports and services?
 - c. Social skills supports and services?
 - d. How are these students supported outside the Adjustment Program classroom?
4. Tell me about the collaboration that goes on at your school for planning and delivering/supporting instruction for students with EI in and out of the Adjustment Program?
 - a. Who participates?
 - b. Tell me about a time when collaboration worked very well.
 - c. Tell me about a time when collaboration was challenging.

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5. Tell me about professional learning you've participated in for working with your EI students.
6. How do you determine if the instructional and behavior support practices in use with your EI students are successful?
7. What materials (e.g. curriculum, interventions, behavioral supports) are used when providing instruction to students with EI?
 - a. In the adjustment classroom.
 - b. In general education classrooms.
8. How does your school team determine the amount of inclusive instruction your EI students receive?
9. Does your school have a progress monitoring tool for collection of annual social emotional, behavioral, and social competency progress? What is it and how is it used?
10. How are IBPs developed for students with EI who are educated at least part of the day in the Adjustment Program?
11. Is there anything else about teaching and supporting the students with EI who are placed in the Adjustment Program that you have not already told me that you think is important for me to know.

Targeted IEP Review. The investigator will review 7 IBPs of students with EI who participate in the substantially separate special education program for students identified in need of increased social emotional and behavioral support to determine how their disability adversely affects their school performance. An electronic copy of each IBP [EasyIBP, the district electronic IBP database] for those students with consent will be obtained. Each IBP will be read by the Doctoral Candidate. The Doctoral Candidate will log into EasyIBP on a password protected computer in a locked office. The Doctoral Candidate will calculate the number and percentage of student IBPs that have current performance information, a statement of how the disability adversely effects school performance, at least one academic IBP goal, at least one behavioral IBP goal, and at least one social skills/social emotional IBP goal. The Doctoral Candidate will consider characteristics of IBP goals, determining if the goals are measurable and observable; common errors in IBP goal development will be noted. The Doctoral Candidate will calculate the number and percentage of IBPs that have current academic, behavioral, and social skills/social emotional performance data (e.g., current level of performance). De-identified IBP data will be entered into the IBP Review Form.

Focus Group. The Focus group is going to be used to confirm identified themes from stakeholder interview (e.g., perform level 2 member checks), ask questions to clarify and extend identified themes, and discuss and explore findings from the targeted IBP review. Focus groups will be audio or video recorded, dependent upon interview method employed, and transcribed by the Doctoral Candidate or a transcription service. The focus group may take place over Zoom in the event that remote learning continues to be the instructional model implemented. In the event

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that all participants do not consent to recording, the researcher will take descriptive field notes. When taking field notes, the researcher will read the notes back to the participant to make certain that the notes are representative of participant responses. This will occur after each participant response so that descriptive field notes are confirmed before the researcher moves on to the next focus group question. In this manner, confirmation of field notes serves as a first level member check (see Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Upon completion of the focus group, two transcripts will be randomly selected and independently read by the doctoral candidate and dissertation Chair to create an initial set of codes with operational definitions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each researcher will create their own initial set of codes with operational definitions. The researchers will then discuss the codes and operational definitions to achieve consensus and develop a master set of codes with operational definitions. The researcher will then read and code all transcripts using the master set of codes to identify relevant themes and outliers. Specifically, participant quotes will be assigned a unit of meaning that aligns with at least one of the master codes. In instances in which participant quotes are representative of more than one code, a secondary code will be assigned. This analysis will be entered into an excel spreadsheet which will include representative quotes and corresponding codes.

Upon the completion of transcript coding, focus group quotes will be collated according to codes to assist with theme identification. The total number of participants who reported information consistent with each theme will be reported, as well as the percentage of all participants who reported information consistent with each identified theme. Focus group coding will be compared and contrasted to identify emerging themes from noted patterns in the answers provided. Upon the identification of relevant themes, the researcher and dissertation chair will re-read each transcript to identify potential disconfirming evidence and address two potential concerns noted earlier in the interview process that apply to analysis of qualitative data here. The anchoring heuristic tendency is the tendency for persons to maintain beliefs based on initial perceptions (Lelienfeld et al., 2020). Belief perseverance is the tendency for beliefs to remain unchanged despite exposure to disconfirming or contradictory information and evidence.

Focus Group questions will include:

1. To what degree do you agree with the following statement: Theme #1
2. To what degree do you agree with the following statement: Theme #2
3. To what degree do you agree with the following statement: Theme #3
4. Clarifying question #1
5. Clarifying question #2
6. Clarifying question #3
7. Tell me about how IEPs are developed for students with EI who are served in the Adjustment Program
8. To what degree do you believe that students with EI who are served in the Adjustment Program receive appropriate benefit from instruction and services?
 - a. What do you need so that these students receive appropriate benefit?
 - b. What do you see as the strengths of the program?

14. RECRUITMENT METHODS*

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Staff who meet criteria will be sent an email to their school email address by the Doctoral Candidate that includes a project summary. Email addresses are publicly available information (e.g., posted on District websites). The Doctoral Candidate also has access to these emails in his role as an Assistant Principal.

15. CONSENT PROCESS*

Staff Consent

The Doctoral Candidate will send the staff recruitment email to participants that meet selection criteria. Staff that meet selection criteria and who have interest will then contact the investigator in person or by email to express interest. A phone call or in person meeting will then be scheduled with each staff member with interest to discuss the project, answer any questions, and obtain informed consent. In this investigation, oral consent will be obtained from each participant, either in person or via a phone call. Upon obtaining oral consent, interviews will either be conducted or scheduled at a day/time that is convenient for the participant. All participants will be read a consent script prior to participation in interviews and the focus group.

Parent Consent

The Doctoral Candidate will call all parent/guardians of students with EI who are serviced in the Adjustment Program. The Doctoral Candidate will introduce the study and its purpose. The parent/guardian will be informed that student participation will consist of an IEP review completed by the Doctoral Candidate. The parent/guardian and/or student will not participate in the IEP review, this consent is for use of information from the student IEP in the data collection process of this study. The parent/guardian consent form will seek permission to request student assent from their child. The parent/guardian will be informed that the phone call will be followed up by a consent form to be sent home for their signature confirming participation, and returned to the Doctoral Candidate. The Doctoral Candidate will meet with any parent who requests an in-person meeting to discuss this study and consent process.

Student Assent

Upon receipt of consent from the student's parent/guardian, the Doctoral Candidate will meet with students who meet participation criteria to introduce the student and its purpose. The Doctoral Candidate will read the Student Assent Form to the student. The student will be given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. The primary language of all student participants is English. All assent documents will be stored in a file in a locked office for the duration of this study.

16. PROCESS TO DOCUMENT CONSENT IN WRITING

In this investigation, we will document consent in writing for parent/guardian participants. The Doctoral Candidate is the Assistant Principal of the school who has supervisory responsibilities of some staff participants. Interview data will not be used for evaluation purposes; the school district has a completely separate procedure for staff evaluation and the Doctoral Candidate will be removed from the evaluator process for study participants for the 2020-2021 school year.

17. WITHDRAWAL OF SUBJECTS WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT*

N/A

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18. SHARING OF RESEARCH RESULTS WITH SUBJECTS*

In the focus group, second level member checks will be completed by sharing themes and asking participants the degree to which they agree with the themes and/or if they have any additional comments about the themes.

Overall study findings will be shared with the Superintendent of Schools, Chief Schools Officer, and the Director of Special Education for the school district. The investigator will schedule time to discuss the findings of the report with these stated members of the school district's central administration, and answer any questions. Research findings will be presented in a general way [general themes] to ensure that individual participants and district employees cannot be identified.

19. RISKS TO SUBJECTS*

With any type of research there is always a risk for stress or disclosure. The investigator has supervisory responsibilities for some of the participants. Risk for conflict of interest will be mitigated with the following provisions:

- The Doctoral Candidate will not participate in the evaluation process for study participants for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Student IEPs are available at all times to all staff who work with students in the Adjustment Program, including the Doctoral Candidate as a member of the school administration.
- Study participant will have the option to complete the interview through an anonymous survey.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.
- The dissertation chair will only view de-identified data

20. POTENTIAL DIRECT BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS*

Participants will not experience any direct benefits from participation. However, the results of this study will inform professional practice for programming of students with EI serviced in dedicated settings by highlighting facilitators and barriers to achieving FAPE mandates for students with EI in the Adjustment Program.

21. DATA AND SPECIMEN ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT*

Participant Demographic Survey. This document will facilitate the collection information on individual participants that will be implemented into a demographic table. The researcher will do frequency counts for the number of persons in each professional position who participate. This information will be used to calculate a percentage of participants who serve in each professional position who were included in the participant sample. The survey will compare and contrast responses from stakeholders who hold different professional positions and have different levels of experience working with EI students, and have different levels of experience working in dedicated classrooms and supporting inclusion.

Interviews. All interviews will be audio or video recorded, dependent upon interview method employed. Each interview will be transcribed by the doctoral candidate. In the event the participant does not consent to a recording, the researcher will take descriptive field notes. When taking field notes, the researcher will read the notes back to the interviewee to make certain that

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the notes are representative of participant responses. This will occur after each interviewee response so that descriptive field notes are confirmed before the researcher moves on to the next interview question. In this manner, confirmation of field notes serves as a first level member check (see Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Upon completion of all stakeholder interviews, two transcripts will be randomly selected and independently read by the doctoral candidate and dissertation Chair to create an initial set of codes with operational definitions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each researcher will create their own initial set of codes with operational definitions. Specifically, each researcher will assign names/units of meaning to participant quotes and then categorize assigned names/units of meaning. Each category will then be assigned a name and provided an initial working definition. The researchers will then discuss both initial sets of codes and operational definitions to achieve consensus and develop a master set of codes with operational definitions.

The dissertation candidate will then read and code all transcripts using the master set of codes to identify relevant themes and outliers. Specifically, participant quotes will be assigned a unit of meaning that aligns with at least one of the master codes. In instances in which participant quotes are representative of more than one code, a secondary code will be assigned. This analysis will be entered into an excel spreadsheet which will include representative quotes and corresponding codes. Participant number and professional position will be entered into the Excel sheet to assist with data analysis (i.e., to identify trends in participant responses).

Upon the completion of transcript coding, interview quotes will be collated according to primary codes and then secondary codes to assist with theme identification. The total number of participants who reported information consistent with each theme will be reported (e.g., primary or secondary code), as well as the percentage of all participants who reported information consistent with each identified theme. Interview coding will be compared and contrasted to identify emerging themes from noted patterns in the answers provided. Upon the identification of relevant themes, the researcher and dissertation chair will re-read each transcript to identify potential disconfirming evidence and address two potential concerns regarding the analysis of qualitative data. The first concern is the anchoring heuristic tendency, which is the tendency for persons to maintain beliefs that are based on initial perceptions or interpretations (Lelienfeld et al., 2020). The second potential concern is belief perseverance which is the tendency for beliefs to remain unchanged despite exposure to disconfirming or contradictory information and evidence.

Targeted IEP Review. The researcher will calculate the number and percentage of student IBPs that have a statement of how the disability adversely effects school performance, has at least one academic IBP goal, at least one behavioral IBP goal, and at least one social skills/social emotional IBP goal. The researcher will determine if the IBP goals are measurable and observable, common errors in IBP goal development will be noted. The researcher will calculate the number and percentage of IBPs that have current academic, behavioral, and social skills/social emotional performance data (e.g., current level of performance).

Focus Group. The Focus group is going to be used to confirm identified themes from stakeholder interview (e.g., perform level 2 member checks), ask questions to clarify and extend identified themes, and discuss and explore findings from the targeted IBP review. Focus groups will be audio or video recorded, dependent upon interview method employed, and transcribed. In the event participant does not consent to recording, the researcher will take descriptive field notes. When taking field notes, the researcher will read the notes back to the participant to make certain that the notes are representative of participant responses. This will occur after each

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participant response so that descriptive field notes are confirmed before the researcher moves on to the next focus group question. In this manner, confirmation of field notes serves as a first level member check (see Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Upon completion of the focus group, two transcripts will be randomly selected and independently read by the doctoral candidate and dissertation Chair to create an initial set of codes with operational definitions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each researcher will create their own initial set of codes with operational definitions. The researchers will then discuss the codes and operational definitions to achieve consensus and develop a master set of codes with operational definitions. The researcher will then read and code all transcripts using the master set of codes to identify relevant themes and outliers. Specifically, participant quotes will be assigned a unit of meaning that aligns with at least one of the master codes. In instances in which participant quotes are representative of more than one code, a secondary code will be assigned. This analysis will be entered into an excel spreadsheet which will include representative quotes and corresponding codes.

Upon the completion of transcript coding, focus group quotes will be collated according to codes to assist with theme identification. The total number of participants who reported information consistent with each theme will be reported, as well as the percentage of all participants who reported information consistent with each identified theme. Focus group coding will be compared and contrasted to identify emerging themes from noted patterns in the answers provided. Upon the identification of relevant themes, the researcher and dissertation chair will re-read each transcript to identify potential disconfirming evidence and address two potential concerns noted earlier in the interview process that apply to analysis of qualitative data here. The anchoring heuristic tendency is the tendency for persons to maintain beliefs based on initial perceptions (Lelienfeld et al., 2020). Belief perseverance is the tendency for beliefs to remain unchanged despite exposure to disconfirming or contradictory information and evidence.

Table 5
Strategy/or Analyzing Data

Data Collection Strategy	Analysis
Participant Demographic Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequency counts, calculate percentage of participants from each professional position
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• audio recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes into an excel spreadsheet.
IBP Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calculate number and percentage of goals in identified areas and current performance information.
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audio recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes into an excel spreadsheet.

22. PROVISIONS TO MONITOR THE DATA TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF SUBJECTS*

Participant demographic surveys will be completed anonymously with all results stored on a password protected computer. Interviews will be performed in a private location and at a time and place that is convenient for participants. Interviews will be conducted in person or via video

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conference software. Interview recordings will be stored on a password protected computer that is located in a locked office. Recordings will be deleted from recording devices immediately upon transfer to the password protected computer. Interview transcripts will also be stored on the password protected computer. Each participant will be assigned a number, which will be used for identification purposes. A master key file will be stored on the password protected computer. When performing level I member checks, interview transcripts will be shared via email with participants, using their preferred email address. IBP documents will be de-identified for privacy and stored in a locked office. Data collected from IBPs will be stored on a password protected computer. The focus group will be conducted in a private location at a time and place that is convenient for all participants. The focus group will be conducted in person or via video conference software. The focus group recording will be stored on a password protected computer that is located in a locked office. The recording will be deleted from the recording device immediately upon transfer to the password protected computer. The focus group transcript will also be stored on the password protected computer. A master key file will be stored on the password protected computer.

23. DATA AND SPECIMEN BANKING*

N/A

24. CONFIDENTIALITY

Data will consist of demographic surveys, audio recordings of interviews and interview transcripts, coding sheets for IBP reviews, and audio recordings of the focus group and focus group transcript. Audio recordings and interview/focus group transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer, located in a locked office. Each participant will be assigned a number, which will be used for identification purposes. This code will be linked to their name. This information will be stored in a master key file, which will also be stored in the password protected computer, located in a locked office.

Each interview and the focus group will be audio recorded by the researcher, who will then bring the audio recording to the password protected computer for transfer and storage. Upon transfer, the original recording will be deleted. Laptops and thumb drives will be used to assist with recording and transfer. Only research team members who have active IRB training and IRB permission will have access to project data. The only member of the research team who will be present for interviews, the focus group, and will read student IBPS is the Doctoral Candidate. The dissertation chair will only be assisting with the analysis of de-identified data.

25. PROVISIONS TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY INTERESTS OF SUBJECTS

Interviews and the focus group will be performed at a time and location that is convenient and comfortable for participants. Information collected during interviews will be limited to information that is necessary to conduct the research. When transcribing interviews and reporting findings, false names will be used to replace the use of real names, when they are reported during interviews.

Participants will be told that they can skip any question they would like not to answer.

26. COMPENSATION FOR RESEARCH-RELATED INJURY

No compensation will be provided.

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27. ECONOMIC BURDEN TO SUBJECTS

Subjects are not expected to experience any economic burden.

28. COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH*

NIA

29. MULTI-SITE RESEARCH*

NIA

30. RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

NIA

31. DRUGS OR DEVICES

NIA



Superintendent Signature Approval Request Form

General Information

Department: _____

Prepared by: Francisco C. Vicente

Date: 8/7/20

Brief description of request:

I am requesting approval from the Lowell Public Schools to complete my research study during the 2020 – 2021 school year, for my doctoral degree in the UMASS Lowell Educational Leadership Program. The title of my study is Educating Students With Emotional Impairment: A Qualitative Investigation of the Facilitators and Barriers to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

The Principal Investigator of this study is Dr. John McKenna, my dissertation chair; John will oversee my dissertation study with regular check in meetings and assist with the analysis of de-identified data and the creation of research-based recommendations to improve school practice. I have completed the IRB review process at UMASS Lowell, they have determined that my study does not meet their institutional definition of human subject research and therefore does not require their oversight. I intend to complete the research activities as described in my Investigator Study Plan. Additionally, Principal Ginger Coleman has provided me with permission to complete the study at the Lincoln School and will oversee the formal evaluation of participating staff for the 2020-2021 school year.

Enclosed is a letter from my dissertation chair, Dr. John McKenna, outlining his role and support of this research study, a copy of my UML IRB response letter, and a copy of my Investigator Study Plan which was submitted to UML for the IRB review process.

Thank you for your consideration,

Francisco C. Vicente
Assistant Principal
Abraham Lincoln Elementary School
UML Doctoral Candidate – Educational Leadership Program

Supervisor: Principal Ginger Coleman

Signature: Mrs. Ginger Coleman

Cabinet Member: Linus Guillory

Signature: [Signature]

Finance Review (if needed): Yes No

Comments: _____

Finance Signature: _____

Superintendent Signature Approval Request Form

IT Review (if needed): Yes No

Comments:

IT Signature: _____

For questions or concerns please call 978-674-4324 or email us at mpalazzo@lowell.k12.ma.us