Shaheen, N. (2020). The Five Elements of Technology Accessibility Policy Enactment in K-12: A Grounded Theory. (Doctoral Dissertation, Towson University)

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Over 12 million disabled students attend public K-12 schools in the United States (U.S.) (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). But, in 2019—when technology is an increasingly integral component of teaching and learning—many disabled students do not have full and equal access to K-12 learning environments because the technologies used therein are inaccessible to them, despite legal requirements for equal access (Perez & Ali, 2010). This constructivist grounded theory study used a policy enactment theoretical framework to understand how five diverse Local Education Agencies (LEAs) enacted technology accessibility policy and made meaning of their experience. The resulting grounded theory explains that technology accessibility policy enactment was an evolutionary process through which participating LEAs translated abstract policy ideas into increasingly contextualized local practices—ways of performing technology accessibility that were congruent with their unique context—in order to more closely approximate their policy ideal of 100% accessibility. The messy, ongoing process was composed of five elements: becoming aware, strategizing, learning, practicing, and iterating. Embedded in the evolution of the technology accessibility work was another evolution in the LEAs' meaning making about (a) their purpose for enacting the policy and (b) their experience engaging with the process.

Though LEAs found enacting technology accessibility to be a difficult, overwhelming, frustrating, and time-consuming endeavor, they felt technology accessibility was worth the effort because addressing the issue was imperative to their mission to provide equal education for all.

This dissertation argues that additional research and practice is essential to continue integrating technology accessibility into everyday K-12 practice, thereby decreasing the frequency with which disabled students are excluded from technology-enhanced education. Specific recommendations about how the field can move forward are offered, including: (a) creating resources designed for laypeople that address the K-12 context; (b) offering loose frameworks that explain how LEAs could enact the policy, coupled with detailed examples of how others have previously engaged in the work; (c) incorporating technology accessibility into LEA technology procurement processes; and (d) conducting additional research to understand the technology accessibility policy enactment process at different times and in different places.