

1-1-2009

General and special educators' attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom

Tracie Davis
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2008

ABSTRACT

General and Special Educators' Attitudes toward Students with Severe Disabilities
Included in the Regular Education Classroom

by

Tracie Davis

M.A., Reading, King's College 2003
B.S., Education, King's College 2000

Dissertation Proposal Submitted in Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

Walden University
April 2009

ABSTRACT

Federal legislation mandates the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom. This integration is often met with resistance from the educators. The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in the general education classroom. The research problem addressed the attitudes of educators who are implementing inclusion practices for students with severe disabilities. These attitudes are an integral part of successful inclusion practices. The theoretical basis for inclusion can be found in Wolfensberger's normalization principle and his examination of social role valorization which support placing a person with a disability into "normal" social roles which can develop self-confidence and a sense of belonging. This quantitative research survey questioned if teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities varied by severity of student disability, type of teacher, and length of teaching experience with students with severe disabilities. Teachers (n=113) completed an adapted version of the Physical Educators' Attitudes Toward Individuals with Disabilities- III (PEATID-III). The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, a Wilcoxon test, and the Mann-Whitney test. Results indicated that teachers displayed a significant difference in attitude based on the severity of disability showing a need for varied training. As indicated by the results, no significant difference in attitude existed between special education and regular education teachers. Experience with students with severe disabilities was not considered a determinant of attitude. This research contributes to the societal integrity by stressing the national impact of inclusion on teachers. The results of this study can be used by school districts to develop adequate preparation of all teachers in order to instill a proper attitude for teaching individuals with disabilities.

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this doctoral work to my two beautiful children, Paige and Sean. I hope all of my hard work and time shows you both that you can do anything. Next, to my wonderful and supportive husband, Jason, who often tells me, "If it was easy, everyone would do it," and "Suck it up!" Your love and support got me through this journey and has earned you an honorary degree. Finally, to my wonderful parents, Cathy and George, who supported me emotionally and financially. Mom, the trips and hotel rooms were a large part of me finishing. You do not know how much I really needed you through this expedition. Also, thanks for listening to me, even if I did not make sense. Dad you always let me know how proud you were; thanks for being my constant cheerleader. You all believed I could earn my degree and without that I would have never done it. Thank you and I love you!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my mentor and committee chair, Dr. Joseph Nolan. Thank you for putting up with me and believing in me. Keep watching those birds! Also, to my committee member, Dr. Gil Cleeton, thank you for your stat knowledge and all of your prompt responses. In addition, my last committee member, Dr. Douglas Eicher, thank you for all of your help and the one-on-one attention.

I would also like to acknowledge the superintendents and the teachers who participated in this study. Thank you to those superintendents who supported me and answered my calls. Teachers, I thank you for your time; I know how precious it is. Thank you to all of my friends who supported me through this journey and believed in me. Tamer, just asking how it was going was enough. Heather, you were there in the beginning to read over things and remind me I can do it.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge all of the teachers and professors who inspired me without even knowing it. One particular person I would like to acknowledge is Dr. Nicholas Holodick. You are the reason I am a special education teacher, thank you for supporting me and giving me a chance when I needed it most.

Last but not least, my family, thank you for supporting me through this unyielding journey. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me every step of the way.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), a student with a disability is required to be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and be provided a free and appropriate public education. Much of the debate over LRE practices has been centered on the increasing number of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The educational principle of inclusion maintains that all students with disabilities should be included with their nondisabled peers as much as possible (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Furthermore, the goal for a student with a disability is to be able to function in society's situations and to construct knowledge in a social setting. Individuals learn in an environment that is similar to that of a social setting and one that is situated in social practices. As described by Lave and Wenger (1991), this type of learning is known as *legitimate peripheral participation*. Additionally, the *normalization principle* examines a person fitting into society in the most normal way possible by means of establishing or maintaining behaviors and characteristics that are culturally normal. Every child with a disability deserves to be included with their nondisabled peers in order to feel as if they fit in with their peers (Wolfensberger, 1972). Examining normalization further, Wolfensberger examined *social role valorization*, which examined how a person of little value needs to be placed into roles of value. To assure that social role valorization is accomplished, the people who work with devalued individuals need to help them attain socially acceptable roles (Race, 2003). In addition, *attribution theory* created by Weiner (1974) shows

concern with how individuals interpret events and how these events relate to their thinking and behavior. This theory can be used to generate predictions concerning teachers' attitudes toward the students with disabilities included in the regular classroom (Weiner, 1974).

When placing students with disabilities into the regular classroom, the attitudes of the educators need to be considered. The positive and negative attitudes of teachers can affect the learning of the students in the classroom (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007; Dedrick, Marfo, & Harris, 2007; McNally, Cole, & Waugh, 2001; Smith, 2008).

Research has revealed some cases in which teachers are not content when working with a student with a disability and does not see the benefit of inclusion (Hammond & Ingalis, 2003; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). On the other hand, teachers who have training and experience have higher confidence when working with students with special needs in the regular classroom. Providing training on inclusion practices to regular education teachers can improve the classroom experience for students with disabilities (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, & Liebert, 2006; Smith, 2008).

Regular classroom teachers have mixed attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. McNally et al. (2001) examined regular education classroom teachers' attitudes toward extra class support for students with disabilities. Based on the teachers' responses, there was no difference in the level of curriculum support for students with disabilities. Showing no difference in the level of support for students with disabilities compared to nondisabled students indicated that the students with disabilities in this study did not need extensive adaptations to be successful. Furthermore, the teachers felt that extra effort was not required to accommodate for the

students with special needs. The researchers found that teachers held more positive attitudes when provided professional development and training on inclusive practices. Negative attitudes were observed in teachers that were not properly prepared to work with students with disabilities that needed extensive support. Additionally, further research found that teachers who had more experiences with inclusion and those who were trained in a college-based system had higher positive attitudes toward implementing program requirements when compared with teachers who did not have college training after they graduated. In all, the more positive an attitude a teacher had, the more comfortable they were working with students with disabilities. This positive attitude can lead to a more positive learning environment. If teachers are not comfortable working with students with disabilities in their classroom, it may be hard for them to adapt and make the student feel like part of the classroom (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Bruden, 2000; Campbell, Gilmore, Cuskelly, 2003; Shade & Roger, 2001; Torff, Sessions, & Byrnes, 2005).

Along with attitude differences, research has shown that students with special needs tend to receive higher ratings of concern and rejection from teachers when compared to their concern and rejection toward students without disabilities. The support that students with disabilities require can have influences on teachers' attitudes. Students with disabilities require different levels of support from specially designed instruction. Extra support can come from a special education teacher or a teacher associate in the classroom with the students. Most teachers have a higher positive view on included students if there is extra support is provided by an assistant or a special education teacher is in the classroom (Cook et al., 2007; Cook, 2004). Additional researchers examined

(Weisel & Tur-Kaspa, 2002) a positive outlook in regular education teachers when few modifications are needed to help a student succeed. If a disability were more severe, more support was necessary, which caused negativity in teachers. Also in this research, teachers who had less contact with students with disabilities had greater positive viewpoints on inclusion than teachers who do have contact with students with disabilities in their class. Overall, the attitudes teachers have about the inclusion of students with disabilities plays a role in how an inclusion program will run. Research is missing how the severity of a student's disability may influence the attitude of the educator working with that student. Knowing where the attitudes of educators draw from can help in implementing enhanced inclusive practices (Weisel & Tur-Kaspa, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with severe disabilities in the general education classroom and determine how certain variables might influence those attitudes. The researcher specifically sorted general educators from special educators to determine if their attitudes differ. Data was collected through an Internet survey in an attempt to answer these questions:

1. Do the attitudes of special and general education teachers concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities differ based on the student's disability?
2. Do the attitudes concerning inclusion of students with severe disabilities differ between special educators and general educators?
3. Do the attitudes of classroom teachers differ based on the number of years of experience they have working with students with severe disabilities?

The study was designed to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers attitudes will show a significant difference based on the severity of the disability.

Null Hypothesis 1: Teachers attitudes will show no significant difference based on the severity of the disability.

Hypothesis 2: Special education teachers will have significantly more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities when compared with general education teachers.

Null Hypothesis 2: Special education teachers will show no significant difference in attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom when compared with general education teachers.

Hypothesis 3: Teachers who have more classroom experience involving students with severe disabilities will show a significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

Null Hypothesis 3: Teachers who have more classroom experience involving students with severe disabilities will show no significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

With the growing emphasis on inclusion in the classroom, researchers have made extra effort to understand the attitudes of teachers toward this practice (Cook, 2004; Cook, 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Swick & Hooks, 2005). However, there has been little research concerning their attitudes toward inclusion of students with severe disabilities and the difference in attitudes between special educators and general classroom teachers. This study filled in those gaps by researching

the attitudes of special and general education teachers toward students with severe disabilities included in the general education classroom. Further, it supplemented existing research on the correlation of years of experience working with severe disabilities and teacher attitude. Prior research examines experience in terms of experience with working with students with disabilities (Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Kristensen, Omagor-Loican, Onen, & Okot, 2005; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005). Also, missing from the research is specifically how many years of experience teachers have with students with disabilities and that correlation with their attitudes.

Statement of the Problem

The problematic conditions that lead to this study were the improper inclusion practices that influence teachers' attitudes. Specifically, this problem begins with the attitudes of the regular and special education teachers who are implementing the services for students with severe disabilities. These educators are the ones responsible for proper implementation of inclusion practices and influencing the learning of all students. If the attitudes of these educators are negative it can lead to poor inclusion practices. There are many possible factors contributing to poor teacher attitudes, among which are the level of experience that teachers have with inclusion and the severity of the disability. This study contributes to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by examining the attitudes of general and special educators when working with the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in the regular education classroom. In addition, this study specifically examined the impact of teacher experience on working with students severe disabilities (Avramidis et al., 2000; Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Cook et al., 2007). Correspondingly, teachers lack the experience and do not have confidence in their skills

to work with students with disabilities. Further, a negative attitudes and lack of confidence is more prevalent among teachers working with students with severe disabilities. Schools are responsible for making accommodations for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Many educators believe that resources, support, training, and experience can help this situation. Even with support, some teachers still have negative attitudes about including students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. This negative attitude can be detrimental to all students in the classroom (Dedrick et al., 2007; McNally et al., 2001; Smith, 2008).

Rationale for the Study

Meeting the needs of students with disabilities begins with an educational plan, support, and services that need to be provided under the law. According to IDEIA (2004) all students who qualify for special education services must be provided a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Additionally, the services provided to a student with a disability, no matter how severe, needs to begin in the regular education classroom (IDEIA, 2004). The attitudes of the teachers working with these students are essential to their learning and achievement. Positive attitudes change lead to positive learning experiences. Teachers' perspectives of the inclusion of students with disabilities vary and are an issue of vital concern. Some teachers have an optimistic viewpoint on inclusion and want it to be successful for all students. It is the negative perspectives that need to be examined to uncover where the doubt lies. Furthermore, teachers are at the center of educational reform. In order to change teachers' attitudes, there is a need to understand where their positive and negative perceptions are formed.

Significance of the Study

A study on teachers' attitudes toward students with severe disabilities who are included in the general education setting is important for several reasons. Much of the current and past research examined students who have disabilities. Typically, some of the students with disabilities studied are included in the regular education classroom because they can complete class work with little or no additional support. This idea was known as mainstreaming and is what many teachers expect from students with disabilities in the regular classroom. The concept of mainstreaming was to bring students with disabilities out of isolation. They would be mainstreamed for certain classes, such as music or art, based on their abilities (Avramidis et al., 2000; Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Koutrouba, Vamvakari, & Steliou, 2006; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001).

However, very few studies examined students with severe disabilities. Much of the research done has not examined the specific type of disability, but instead aggregated all disabled students into one homogenous group. The current study expanded on previous research to examine specifically students with severe disabilities. Moreover, this study will also expand on previous research by understanding how educators feel about students with disabilities. Understanding how educators feel about students with severe disabilities can help in structuring educational settings for students with disabilities. Teachers' emotions and feelings can be an indication of what support is lacking in the classroom. Teachers may be in need of more training possibility on specific types of adaptations and modifications that students with disabilities need in the classroom. Finally, this study will expand on previous research by comparing the attitudes of special and regular educators can add to the research field because most of the studies do not assess

the attitudes of special educators (Ammah & Hodge, 2005; Cook et al., 2007; Dedrick et al., 2007; Handler, 2003; Kuester, 2000). Proper inclusion of all students with disabilities, especially those who are severely disabled, is largely successful based on the enthusiasm and feelings of those who are implementing the services and instruction (Ammah & Hodge, 2005; Cook et al., 2007; Dedrick et al., 2007; Handler, 2003; Kuester, 2000; McNally et al., 2001; Sindelar et al., 2006; Smith, 2008; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Wolpert, 2001).

Definitions of Terms

Attitude: A mental position with regard to a fact or state; a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state (Merriam-Webster, 2008).

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Special education and related services have to be given at public expense, under public supervision, and without charge. The education provided must meet standards of the state and have an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school that are provided in compliance with individualized educational programs (IDEIA, 2004).

Inclusion: Students with disabilities receiving services in the general education classroom under the instruction and direction of the regular education teacher (Wolfe & Hall, 2003).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): “To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such

that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (IDEIA, 2004, p. 31).

Special Education: The use of specially designed instruction, free to the parents, to help in meeting the needs of a child with a disability that includes instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals or institutions, and other settings and also instruction in physical education (IDEIA, 2004).

Students with Severe Disabilities: The student would be significantly sub average in intellectual functioning. They would have an IQ score below 50 on standardized tests. They may or may not be able to verbally communicate. There is little socialization or interaction. They are totally dependent on others for self-care (Rizzo, 1993).

Assumptions and Limitations

The first assumption is that the teachers that participated in this study provided honest and accurate responses to the survey questions. The second assumption is the use of the survey will provide adequate information to examine the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers in regards to students with severe disabilities included in the general education classroom. Also, this survey was limited to school districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania. There were participants from rural and urban areas, but ultimately the results cannot be generalized to all teachers. Additionally, the survey has the potential for weaknesses due to possible misunderstanding of questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The study will examine general and special educators’ attitudes toward students with severe disabilities. The research will specifically examine if severity of the disability shows a significant difference in attitude. The study will also inspect if being a special

education or general education teacher has a significant difference in attitude towards students with severe disabilities. Finally, the years of teaching experience with students with severe disabilities will be investigated for a significant difference. The study did not examine find it relevant to examine the participants age, sex or gender. Furthermore, the researcher chose to include all teachers in the study. It was found not directly relevant to included just those who were currently working in an inclusion setting.

Summary

The inclusion of students with severe disabilities into the general education classroom is not just the law; it is a way to help a student with a disability feel that they are part of society. Proper services, training, and support need to be provided to both special and general educators so they can have positive experiences and perceptions of inclusion. With the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom, negative attitudes of the educators working with the students can be detrimental to the academic and social outcomes of all students. This quantitative study attempted to examine the attitudes of both general and special educators in relation to students with severe disabilities. The researcher questioned if attitudes differ between special and general educators, if experience with students with severe disabilities changes attitudes, and if the severity of the disability affects attitudes. The answers to these questions can bring insight to the implementation of inclusion. The subsequent chapter reviews the theory and the literature to support this study. Chapter 3 gives the methodology of the study and specifically how the study will be carried out. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and any pertinent tables and figures. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents a brief summary of the data analysis and the researcher's interpretations of the

findings. The researcher shares conclusions and recommendations, and implications for future practice and research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, special education law and its relation to inclusion will be discussed, along with teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and the benefits and disadvantages of inclusion. Additionally, the ways in which students with disabilities are identified, their individual education plans, and a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and the least restrictive environment (LRE) will be reviewed. Finally, different viewpoints on the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion of students with disabilities will be examined.

First, the identification and IEPs for students with disabilities will be discussed, followed by an explanation of a FAPE and LRE. The definition of inclusion will be explained and various models and factors related to the successful implementation of inclusion will be reviewed. A discussion on the benefits of inclusion mentioned in the literature and research studies will follow. In an effort to present an unbiased argument of the literature, the perspectives of opposition to inclusion and any disadvantages discovered in the literature will be shared. These oppositions will be followed by a review of the literature on socialization and students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of inclusion. Finally, teacher attitudes toward inclusive education will be covered. Implications for future research will be discussed based on the review of literature.

The literature review was conducted using online access to the Walden University Library, King's College Library, and Wilkes-Barre public libraries. These online libraries provided access to various sources, such as the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), Sage online journals, Academic Search Premier, ProQuest, and dissertations.

Any articles that could not be found through these sources were received through Indiana University document delivery system. The articles were retrieved from EBSCO Host and the databases searched were ERIC, Academic Search Premier, and Educational Research Complete. The following search terms were used: ability, access to education, regular and special education relationship, administration attitudes, attitudes, attitudes toward disabilities, beliefs, cognitive disabilities, developmental delays, disabilities, disability identification, education, educational attitudes, inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive school, learning disabilities, mainstreaming, mental retardation, mild disabilities, normalization, school attitudes, severe disabilities, severity (of disability), special education, special needs students, social integration, teacher attitude, and teacher behavior. Additionally, references were drawn from the reference sections of other research articles. When books were found online, they were purchased through different websites.

Introduction

The idea of inclusion is that people with disabilities should fit into society in the most normal way possible by means of exposing them to behaviors and characteristics that are culturally normal. Inclusion allows individuals with disabilities to have the opportunity to establish and maintain culturally normal behaviors and characteristics. Every individual with a disability ought to be included with their same-age peers in order to feel normal (Wolfensberger, 1972). Although mere participation in society can result in the feeling of normalization in individuals, Wolfensberger took the concept a step further by examining social role valorization. He concluded that a person who is perceived to be of little value needs to be placed into roles of value. This placement

allows an individual with a disability to be included in normal social roles that can enhance these roles. For example, a student with a disability can be given a classroom job or a part of a cooperative group working on a project (Race, 2003). Along the same lines, legitimate peripheral participation described by Lave and Wenger (1991), examines learning that is situated in an environment similar to that of a social setting and social practices. The goal for a student with a disability, from the perspective of legitimate peripheral participation, is to be able to function in society's situations and to construct knowledge in a social setting within a classroom. Individuals learn in an environment that is similar to that of a social setting and one that is situated in social practices. Both social role valorization and legitimate peripheral participation can work together in helping a person with a disability fit into society in a "normal" way (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972). Finally, the attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how these events relate to their thinking and behavior. This theory can be used to generate predictions concerning teachers' attitudes toward the students with disabilities included in the regular classroom. For example, predictions can be generated about special education teachers having a higher positive attitude toward students with disabilities in the regular education classroom (Weiner, 1974).

This theoretical base relates to the attitudes of the educators that are including students with severe disabilities into their classroom. Past research suggests that teachers have mixed emotions about inclusion. Some of these emotions derive from having experience and not having experience with students with disabilities (Forlin, 2001; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Leatherman & Niemeier, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Weisel & Tur-Kaspa, 2002). Training, time, effort,

collaboration, and a carefully managed work load were found by Kavale and Forness, (2000) to be needed to allow a classroom teacher to successfully include a student with a disability. These factors also helped in improving teachers perceptions of students with disabilities. Without these factors, teachers seem to feel that students with disabilities can best have their needs met in separate classes and even separate schools. In order to change and create positive attitudes, there is a need to specifically determine what affects teachers' attitudes have toward students with disabilities (Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Kristensen, Omagor-Loican, Onen, & Okot, 2005; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005; Torff et al., 2005; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Hammond & Ingalis, 2003; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2001).

Inclusion

One of the most controversial topics in public education is the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom. Inclusion is an initiative that has been moving in different directions for years. Research has found that opinions about inclusion are often misguided (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Kwapy, 2004; Woodrum & Lombardi, 2000). In some cases, a subjective interpretation of IDEIA (2004) as it relates to inclusion can influence whether one favors or rejects the concept. Research suggests that misinterpretation of the law regarding students with disabilities is a large problem that can produce over or under use of services (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006; Fitch, 2003; Kwapy, 2004; Woodrum & Lombardi, 2000). Schools have shown positive and negative results of inclusion implementation. A large part of having a successful inclusion program is having proper planning, constant support, and training. Without an excellent support system for implementing inclusion, it is set up for failure. Teachers

need to know what is expected of them when working in the classroom. Students with disabilities need to feel as if they belong in the classroom and this acceptance can happen if teachers know how to help each student (Kavale & Forness, 2000).

The inclusion of students with disabilities has shown to be beneficial to their socialization with peers. When students are integrated into a regular classroom, they can feel acceptance from their peers. This integration allows a student with disabilities to have more opportunities to interact with their nondisabled peers. Every child needs to feel as if they are a part of a community. For students with disabilities, this can happen by placing them in the regular classroom (Cosbey & Johnston, 2006; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Talmor et al., 2005; Wall, 2002).

However, some research suggests there can be negative aspects to inclusion. A student with special needs may not receive the proper academic support they need in a regular classroom to succeed. A separate classroom tailored to meet the needs of a student with a disability also can help improve and develop a student's social and academic skills (Cosbey & Johnston, 2006; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, & Eloff, 2003; Fitch, 2003; Idol, 2006; Talmor et al., 2005; Wall, 2002). In addition, a student with a disability can feel as if they belong in a separate classroom with other students with disabilities. This separate classroom allows students with disabilities to interact with children that are similar. Students with special needs tend to attract to each other because of their commonalities. Finding this security in a separate classroom does not exist in a regular education classroom (Chadsey & Han, 2005; Fitch, 2003).

Identification

Before the inclusion of a child happens, the identification of a child who is thought to have a disability develops out of a recommendation of a school official, a teacher, or a parent. After a recommendation is made, the public agency, in most cases the school district, must gain informed consent from the parent or the legal guardian to determine whether a disability exists. Once consent is gained a full evaluation must be completed. During this assessment a variety of tools and strategies will need to be used to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child. Some of this information will come from the parent and any educator that works with the child. The assessment of the child will be done with the use of valid tests that measures the relevant cognitive and behavioral factors, along with physical or developmental factors. In addition, the assessment will be done using several forms of testing (IDEIA, 2004).

Subsequently, after the assessment, regardless of whether a child is found to have a disability, an evaluation report is written. Then, a meeting is held to explain to the parent or guardian all of the testing that was completed with the child. The report will review all relevant academic, developmental, and behavioral factors. If a child is found to be non-exceptional, nothing further is done. In turn, if a child is found to be exceptional, an IEP or Individualized Educational Program will be developed. It is important to point out that a student cannot be identified as having a disability due to lack of instruction in the classroom. Identification with a disability needs to begin after all options and supports have been exhausted (IDEIA, 2004).

IEP, Supports, and Services

An IEP is a written statement for each student that is determined to have a disability. The IEP covers the child's current present educational levels and how these levels affect the student's progress in the general education curriculum. An IEP also covers state and local assessment accommodations and any modifications or adaptations needed in the classroom. A major component of an IEP is a section reviewing goals and objectives. This section is where the needs of the student are addressed and the steps necessary to achieve in academics or in behavior are explained. For example, a student can be monitored for reading fluency based on their independent reading level. Each child with a disability has his or her own IEP.

Depending on the needs of the student, the IEP states the placement of the child. Placement is based on the amount of hours a student receives special education services in relation to the school day. Also placement is based on the educational needs of the student. Special education services can be provided in a supportive environment for individuals with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autistic characteristics, life skills deficits, deaf and hearing impairments, blind and visual impairments, or multiple disabilities.

Once the type of service is determined, a student with a disability is then given an appropriate level of support. This level of support is based on how many hours from the school week need to be devoted to special education for that particular student. The number of hours the child receives special education services outside the regular classroom is divided by the number of hours the child is in school per week. A student who needs to receive special education for 1% to 22% of the school week is considered to

have itinerant support; 23% to 80% is considered supplemental support; and 80% to 100% is considered full-time support. For instance, a child who receives learning support services only for reading may be considered to have itinerant learning support, while one who receives all academic instruction in a special education classroom may be viewed as having full-time learning support. The type of support is based on the hours of services, while the type of service depends upon the disability and/or the need of the child (Handler, 2003; IDEIA, 2004). Trends have shown a greater percentage of students being placed in the regular education setting. This would place a majority of the students having itinerant or supplemental support (Handler, 2003).

FAPE and LRE

Under IDEIA (2004), all students who are identified as having a disability and is in need of special education and related services must be provided a free and appropriate public education. Special education services are provided to an individual at public expense and under public supervision and direction. Also, the individual must be placed in an appropriate grade level in a school within the state where they reside. Lastly, this law requires that all students with a disability be provided with an IEP that meets certain legal specifications. The intent of this law is to ensure that each child with a disability receives a fair and proper educational placement.

Additionally, students receiving special education services require a placement that is in the least restrictive environment, or LRE. The least restrictive environment for a student with a disability is for them to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are nondisabled. A requirement under LRE examines the extent to which an individual with a disability should be included in a public school and in a

classroom with their nondisabled peers. This requirement scrutinizes special classes, separate schools, or removal of students with disabilities from a regular education environment. This exclusion only occurs if the severity of the disability is one in which a proper education in a regular class with support and services cannot be achieved (IDEIA, 2004). Some interpret this section of the law to mean that the inclusion of all students with disabilities in regular education is a primary goal when placing a child with a disability into special education. The wording can make it seem as if the law is very inflexible regarding the requirement for LRE and placement of a child with a disability. With the use of proper modifications, adaptations, aids, and services, any or all individuals with disabilities could be educated in the regular education classroom. Basically, an educator has to show how the severity or nature of the child's disability cannot be supported in the regular education classroom with proper services. Placement of a student with a disability can cause conflict over proper placement (Ammah & Hodge, 2005; Cook et al., 2007; Cook, 2001; Dedrick et al., 2007; Handler, 2003; IDEIA, 2004; Kuester, 2000; McNally et al., 2001; Smith, 2008; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Woodrum & Lombardi, 2000).

Inclusion Defined

“Though inclusion often is related to students with disabilities and in many cases is applied to where students sit, it is much more than that” (Friend & Pope, 2005, p. 57). The inclusion of a student with a disability in a regular education classroom is often a misinterpreted concept. Inclusion seems to be an overused word with many different subjective explanations to go along with it. Inclusion needs to move away from being viewed as a placement and start being viewed as a place, a classroom setting, where all

children learn. Every child learns in unique ways and it is the job of the educator to include all children in the learning process. All teachers need to start viewing all students as “their” students. In many cases, students with disabilities are viewed as belonging to the special education teacher. A student may be sent from a regular education classroom setting to the special education teacher so that the special education teacher can take care of “his” or “her” student. Students need to stop being thought of as “mine” or “yours” and start being identified as “ours” (Friend & Pope, 2005; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972; Woodrum & Lombardi, 2000).

The view of inclusion should be the integrating of a student with a disability into a regular education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. The placement process must include the commitment to educate a student in the building and classroom he or she would attend if he or she did not have a disability. In addition, inclusion involves bringing in the support and services needed to help that child succeed into the regular classroom. The question is when is enough done for a child with a disability? A large part of defining inclusion comes down to the interpretation of it. No matter which words are used to explain what inclusion means, or how similar those words are in each instance, different people often perceive the meaning of inclusion differently (Detres, 2005; Nussbaum, 2002).

Placement of a child into an inclusion setting can have several meanings. Many educators consider inclusion as an all or nothing proposition. In some schools, all students with disabilities are placed in a regular education setting, regardless of their needs or the severity of their disability. The phrase “maximum extent appropriate” is the crux of the problem and this, again, comes down to interpretation. Some schools or

parents may want more or less inclusion (Avramidis et al., 2000; Biddle, 2006; Detres, 2005; Nussbaum, 2002). It appears that the guidelines set up by IDEIA (2004) are not explicit enough to create a standard procedure for inclusion from one school to another. Instead of being black and white, there is much gray area. Some schools include all, some include for certain subjects based on grade levels, and others do not include at all unless the child can work independently. Education is complex and changes on a daily basis. Overall, there is no single answer that is always right when it comes to inclusion and each scenario varies based on the individual needs of the student (Avramidis et al., 2000; Biddle, 2006; Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004; IDEIA, 2004; Kemp & Carter, 2002; Kwapy, 2004; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Monsen & Frederickson, 2004; Swick & Hooks, 2005).

Much of the legislation on inclusion speaks about the need for integration and the fact that inclusion must be done, rather than the specifics of implementation. A study done by Nussbaum (2002) reviewed the components of a partial inclusion program for students with severe learning disabilities called The Family Model. This model had the students with disabilities in a special education classroom for the subjects of math and language arts. These students were included in the regular education classroom with support from a teacher or an associate for the subjects of social studies and science. Overall, with the use of this model, all staff felt that inclusion improved motivation and socialization in the students with disabilities. This research showed that for an inclusion program to be successful there needs to be direct instruction, administrative support, good collaborative relationships, and a commitment to inclusion. A commitment to inclusion is vital to have a working model. The teachers need to focus on the students' strengths and

work on their weaknesses. There are some instances where some subjects, such as science or social studies, may be easier to adapt and modify. Therefore the inclusion in these classes is beneficial to students with special needs (Nussbaum, 2002).

Inspecting inclusion programs further, Burstein et al. (2004) observed two districts over a three-year period that had several different versions of an inclusive setting in their schools. As the first district prepared for the change to inclusion, there were teams of general and special educators from across the entire district that met to examine implementation of full inclusion as an option for all students. They determined that services would need to be more collaborative, professional development would need to be ongoing, and the IEP development system would need to be reviewed. In the second school district, teams from each school met separately to establish individual goals for each site. Although each school implemented inclusion, how they chose to do so varied widely. In all, the first district wanted a district wide plan, while the second district wanted separate school plans.

The disparate strategies applied by the school district in this second study illustrated how different the approaches to inclusive education can be. In some schools, special education services were brought into the regular classroom and students with disabilities were placed only in the general education setting. In several other schools, the special education class was completely removed and resource specialists were set up according to grade levels. Furthermore, one middle school placed all students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. The general educators planned and carried out the lessons, while the special educators provided support for students with and without disabilities. Also, some of the schools in this study only modified their special

education services. They continued to have separate educational settings for students with disabilities, but they increased the opportunities for student with disabilities to be included with their peers. Yet another school merely moved the classroom where students with severe disabilities were educated. Instead of the class being in a separate wing of the school, the class was integrated among the general education classrooms. Finally, some schools in this study expanded their services to allow for inclusion of students with severe disabilities. Students with severe disabilities who were previously in a separate educational site were supported in the general education classroom with a specialist or a one-on-one assistant. Overall, the services in most of these schools were brought into the general education classroom to support all students. This study shows how differently one school district integrated students with special needs into the regular education classroom (Burstein et al., 2004).

Pros and Cons of an Inclusive Setting

A commitment to inclusion involves including the whole educational community and even the social community in the process of creating an inviting learning environment for all children. A key facet of designing an inclusive program is investigating the benefits for the child with a disability. Every child has individual needs that have to try to be met in the regular education classroom as much as possible. The dedication involved in putting in place a program to include all students is enormous and a determination has to be made on whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages (Hodson, Baddeley, Laycock, & Williams, 2005; Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000). As examined by Wolfensberger (1972), normalization of an individual with a disability can only happen when they are placed in a standard setting. Segregation of a person will

only lead to more isolation of that individual. Ultimately, every person, including individuals with disabilities, need to experience normal situations in all aspects of their lives (Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Research has shown the benefits and disadvantages of inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Designing a program is difficult and there is not a one-size-fits-all method. As discussed by Zigmond (2001), including all students does not mean treating them all the same. Special education needs to stop being generalized and become individualized for all students. Being as “normal” as possible should be the goal of all education and that of its educators. Education is preparing future generations to discover, reinvent, and revive society (Wolfensberger, 1972; Zigmond, 2001).

Socialization and Classroom Services

The benefit of inclusion that is most common is the socialization a child with a disability receives in a regular education classroom. Research completed by Kemp and Carter (2002) reported on the social skills and social standing of students with moderate learning difficulties who were in an inclusive preschool. To measure whether the preschool experience had any impact on the subsequent development on these students, the researchers evaluated how the students with disabilities fared in their mainstream classes for periods of 18 months to five years. Their social skills were measured on the playground, through interviews with other students, and a rating scale from their teachers, principals, and parents. An initial finding on socialization was that the children with disabilities appeared to be more isolated and they spent less time with their average-achieving peers. It was pointed out that even though there was isolation, the students with

disabilities were interacting with their average peers at least half of the time and the separations were not due to rejection (Kemp & Carter, 2002).

In Kemp and Carter's (2002) study, students with disabilities received fairly high ratings from their peers. In addition, the parents of the students with learning difficulties rated their children as having better social skills than it was reported by the principals and teachers. According to the teachers, the children with disabilities had higher adult interactions and self-help skills than they did social skills and interactions with peers. Overall, this study suggests that students with intellectual difficulties have lower socialization acceptance than that of their peers. The positive finding in this research was that the peers had positive nominations for students with disabilities. It has to be noted that although there may not be many friendships between the two groups, there was acceptance among the children. This acceptance is highly important and is a starting point for high-quality inclusion (Kemp and Carter, 2002).

The peer interactions found by Kemp and Carter (2002), are similar to the findings of Pavri and Luftig (2000) that students with disabilities only felt lonely when they were not around their peers. Additionally, the researchers found that students with disabilities who were being taught in an inclusive classroom experience loneliness from their peers before and after school. This loneliness was attributed to the fact that the students reported that they did not have many friends to be with before and after school. These students reported that the loneliness was not due to rejection, but the lack of peer interactions and the boredom that results from not being interactive. This need for peer interaction shows the need for integration. Also, none of the students made reference to their academics as being difficult. The regular classroom showed students with

disabilities working harder on academic topics. Additionally, the researchers showed that students with disabilities in this study learned coping strategies while included in the regular classroom. These students showed no sign of the learned helplessness that some students with disabilities exhibit. The students with learning difficulties reported that they do not avoid situations. In turn, they use the strategies given to them by their teachers to take action in social and academic situations. This research observed how inclusion helped students with disabilities socially and academically (Pavri & Luftig, 2000).

Socialization is large part of every child's development and it begins with their peers in school. Along with social skills, are friendships that play a major role in the life of children. These interactions can be best met in normal social situations. Although acceptance of disabilities can be positive at times, there are also negative aspects to socialization in inclusion. (Chadsey & Han, 2005; Cosbey & Johnston, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972). Children with disabilities are faced with limitations in making friends due to their developmental differences. In some cases, children with disabilities face the ridicule of their peers. It can be observed that a child with a disability will interact less with their average-achieving peers and more with other students who have disabilities. These interactions can be due to the fact that a child will feel more accepted by children who are like them. The more negative interactions with peers can lead to a negative position on their self-perception. All of these negative peer interactions can be due to the lack of interactions with and knowledge of students with disabilities (Nikolarazi et al. 2005; Saenz, 2003).

When children with disabilities are segregated from their peers due to their lower cognitive abilities, they only have time to interact with other children who have

disabilities. With the use of inclusion in a school, the quantity of social interactions among all of the children can increase. For that reason, an inclusion program must educate children about differences and disabilities. To accept children with disabilities, their peers need to understand why a child with a disability is different. It may be beneficial for a school to explore making children aware of individuals with special needs. There are ways to incorporate diversity teaching into the curriculum and there are teaching strategies that help promote positive peer interactions. One of the strategies that can be useful is cooperative learning. This type of grouping in lessons allows for student interaction, improvement in students' self-esteem, and allows all students to use their strengths. The segregation of students with disabilities does not foster diversity (Nikolarazi et al, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Race, 2003).

Likewise, the use of differentiated instruction can promote the learning of all children in an inclusion setting. Differentiation can occur in the content of materials, in the process used for the lesson, in the outcomes of what the students complete, and in the overall environment. Content can be modified, through the use of different reading materials, spelling lists, reading buddies, and small groups. Activities can be differentiated using a tier system in which all students are working at their level and at their pace while still learning on the same topic. Additionally, an important part of differentiation and a well-developed inclusive setting is implementing different ways to measure students' success. All students learn in dissimilar ways, and this learning should be measured differently. For example, different rubrics can be developed to measure the students on the same assignment. Differentiation is at the heart of adapting and modifying classroom activities and curriculum (Campbell et al., 2003; Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, &

Vadasy, 2003; Nikolarazi et al, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Race, 2003; Tomlinson, 2000; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Another program called school-wide positive behavior support is a systematic approach in helping to support the academic and social behavior for students with significant disabilities who are integrated. This idea requires a collaborative and a team-based approach to school programs. These collaborative approaches help not only students with disabilities feel included, they help all students. Moreover, this program establishes a vision for inclusion, provides resources for support, has well-trained teams, and has support for the teams to help solve problems and make decisions (Freeman et al., 2006).

Socialization of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom is something that is important and can be accomplished. All students need to develop friendships in some way. Students with disabilities that are in segregated settings, feel loneliness and exclusion. The use of collaboration and differentiation of instruction can help students with special needs be included and help foster social skills (Campbell et al., 2003; Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, & Vadasy, 2003; Kemp and Carter, 2002; Nikolarazi et al, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pavri & Luftig, 2000; Race, 2003; Tomlinson, 2000; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Emotions of Inclusion

In a regular classroom, children with disabilities are automatically different from others and are trapped with the label they are given. On the other hand, when children are integrated, they become members of the inclusion classroom community and labels may not be present. The beliefs of an inclusive setting differ greatly from the traditional

classroom beliefs. In an inclusive classroom, diversity is expected and valued. Communal qualities supersede socially constructed classes of race, gender, and disability. Every individual in the classroom contributes positively to the classroom climate, learning outcomes, and community quality. Labels are not publicly spoken about; in fact, they are viewed as unnecessary, given that they place people in groups because they are different from the norm (Fitch, 2003).

Individuals with disabilities need to have a sense of belonging. As viewed by the principle of normalization, a person can only feel normal and accepted when they are with others that are considered “normal” and are in a “normal” environment. An inclusive environment provides the opportunity for every child, disabled or not, to be an active member of the school environment and use all of their intelligence to contribute to their surroundings. Being in an inclusive environment can be beneficial to everyone because all are appreciated (Fitch 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991 Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Research examined how children with developmental disabilities are viewed and made sense of their experiences in inclusive and segregated environments. The constant movement in and out of settings can have a great affect on a student. The best way to find out how a child feels is to go to the source. The author of one study took a qualitative approach and used observation and semi-structured interviews to collect information on how the students with disabilities felt about themselves. In the study, students avoided the label of mental retardation. Mental retardation was the label of the participants, but it appeared as if they had never spoken about it or its meaning with anyone, parent or teacher.

Along with the inclusion classrooms, the segregated classrooms in this study were viewed as a temporary placement. The students viewed the special education room as a safe place where they could get extra help that was necessary. All too often a child with a disability becomes attached to their label and only enjoys being in a separate room. Having the students in this study primarily in the regular education classroom can negate the attachment to a separate class. Being separated is all some students know and they feel safe being among those who understand where their difficulties lie. Many students feel intimidated when they are included in a regular classroom after they have experienced a separate learning support setting for so long. It seems that the general education classroom provided little room for adaptability and flexibility. The special education classroom was a place to escape ridicule and humiliation because of their difficulties and differences (Beckman, 2001).

Further research in this study showed the discrepancy in how competent the students felt about themselves in the inclusive and segregated environments. Included students with disabilities had a high degree of confidence in their academic abilities and felt like they belonged. In turn, the segregated students with disabilities identified more closely with their label and felt competent only in the special education classroom. On the other hand, as some of the segregated students were moved into an inclusive setting from the segregated setting their views on other students with disabilities changed. In the inclusive environment, they felt competent in their abilities and thought of the students in the special education classroom as less cooperative and less capable (Beckman, 2001). A student with special needs often becomes comfortable in a separate class. A change in the way a traditional room is run can change the emotions and feelings of competency among

children who felt misplaced (Beckman, 2001; Fitch, 2003; Jameson, McDonnell, Johnson, Reisen, & Polychronis, 2007).

Additionally, research done on the attitudes of children toward students with special needs in Greece and in the United States showed how accepting students were of individuals with special needs. Both of these educational systems follow similar special education programs that showed education moving from less segregation to more integration. The study also showed that children in the U.S. were more familiar with students with disabilities due to media and books. An important finding in the study was that children who were in an inclusive setting were more accepting of students with disabilities than the children who were in a segregated school setting.

In both settings, the students could identify and had an understanding of disabilities. In turn, some students saw difficulties in dealing with students who had disabilities. In some cases, a child with a disability had a tough time fitting into the social aspect of a school setting due to their immaturity. Unlike some of the other children, those who came from inclusive settings were able to offer suggestions on how to play with and interact with a student who has a disability. Knowing how to interact with students with disabilities shows that the children in the inclusive setting were taught in some way about disabilities. Education on disabilities is an important thing that needs to be done when working on an inclusive program. Children need to understand differences and disabilities and learn how to interact with others who are different.

Moreover, the children in this study appeared to sympathize with and be willing to help a peer who had a disability. Many of the students in the study spoke of their positive interactions with and reactions to children with special needs. On the other hand,

it appeared that the children in this study were too reluctant to say anything that was negative. The comments of some of the children implied that they would be embarrassed to be negative in the interview. It appeared that the teachers and the parents had great influence on how the children felt. These findings suggest the importance of promoting awareness to disperse any uncertainties and invalid information about students with disabilities. The study also concluded that the students in the younger grade levels were more accepting of individuals with disabilities. This acceptance is something that can help foster an inclusive classroom (Nikolarazi et al., 2005).

Parent and Teacher Responsiveness

Along with peer acceptance, it is important to examine the perceptions of teachers and parents. The feelings of these individuals toward children with disabilities and inclusion have an impact on the success of an inclusion program. The purpose of a study done by Kniveton (2004) was to examine how parents and teachers felt about the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes. More specifically this research investigated the age in which children should be included, the type of difficulty observed by parents, the difficulty that needs to be addressed first in an inclusion setting, and where resources should be allocated first. Starting with age, it is unclear at what age it is appropriate to begin including students. In this study, children ranging from 5- to 11-years-old demonstrated the most benefit from inclusion. This research determined that younger ages appear to be more appropriate for inclusion.

Additionally, in this research, children were observed from different aspects, to measure the overall impact of inclusion. One part of the study focused on the behavioral results. Parents ranked their children's behavior high among their objections to inclusion.

However, behavior was not observed as a problem that precluded their child's inclusion in regular classes. This study demonstrated an unwillingness to place a child with a disability in an inclusive class due to behavioral problems. All too often it is observed that children become a part of special education and become segregated from the norm due to inadequate behaviors (Kniveton, 2004).

On the other hand, it has been examined that behaviors in some cases improve when a child with a disability is included in a regular classroom. Behavior may be contributed to the anxiety of being in a classroom with their peers or their need to feel normal. One place for a child with a disability to be is among others who behave in a customary way. Being in a regular education setting can provide the normalization a child with behavioral problems need. The general education class can also contribute to providing a child with a disability a view into proper behaviors (Fitch, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972).

In addition to behavior problems, physical problems are an issue for children with disabilities. It has been observed that addressing these physical problems is a top priority for successful inclusion, but the allocation of funding is not a high priority. According to research, physical differences were not negative and could contribute to providing a good experience for all children in an inclusive classroom. Overall, the study by Kniveton (2004) showed that even adults look at children differently based upon their physical characteristics. In addition, the allocation of funds appeared very different depending on the needs. Children who were not viewed as a high priority for inclusion, were children in need of the most resources. It appears that this study has uncovered some common challenges of inclusion: a lack of resources and an unwillingness to put forth the effort.

Including students with disabilities requires proper funding and extra effort to help those with disabilities (Kniveton, 2004).

As investigated in other research, Swick and Hooks (2005) agree with Wolfensberger (1972) that parents want their child to receive the best education in as normal of a setting as possible. In the research by Swick and Hooks (2005), children with disabilities had experiences in several educational settings and the parents had received support from an organization that helps families of children with special needs. It was discovered that each parent in this study was highly involved in their child's education and they felt that inclusion in the regular education classroom was the best place for their children (Swick & Hooks, 2005).

Each parent in this research (Swick & Hooks, 2005) wanted their child to be as normal as possible as viewed by Wolfensberger (1972). The parents in Swick and Hooks (2005) research felt that the segregated settings their children were previously in were too limiting for their children academically and did not provide the socialization that was needed. In general, it is important that parents are involved in their child's education and have an understanding of the placement of their child. Collaboration between teachers and parents can help ensure any educational placement is successful. The beliefs reported in this study provided support for inclusive education (Swick & Hooks, 2005).

While parents often feel that inclusion is important because their child deserves to be treated as normally as possible, inclusion also has shown to improve the behavior and academic achievement of the child. One study by Rogers & Thiery (2003) completed over a 12-week period examined whether children with learning disabilities would benefit more from an inclusive or resource setting. For the first six weeks, the children

were placed in a resource setting and received reading instruction in this setting. After the six weeks, the students were then integrated into the regular education classroom for reading. In each setting the students received the same reading instruction to keep consistency. In this study, three of the five students performed better in the inclusive setting. In turn, two other students actually decreased in performance in the inclusion setting.

Overall, the students generally showed a reduction of performance on their final reading level when a standardized test was used in the inclusion class. In the study, it appeared that the standardized reading test did not jibe with the way the children were being taught. There was information needed to answer questions that was not yet taught and the questions were worded in different ways that confused the students. In contrast, when teacher-made tests were used instead, the results indicated that all of the students improved their reading in the inclusive setting. The students with disabilities actually outperformed their nondisabled peers. Additionally, the children with special needs chose to read more difficult books when in the inclusive setting and their behavior was observed to be much better. It appears that an inclusive setting challenges students with disabilities and they rise to that challenge. The benefit of the instruction in the regular education classroom gives the impression of great success. This research also demonstrates the benefit of using alternate assessments in an inclusive setting to measure the improvement of students with disabilities (Rogers & Thiery, 2003).

An inclusive environment can provide teachers with the opportunity to collaborate and provide the finest social and academic results for all students. Hunt, Soto, Maier, and Doering (2003) conducted an empirical study that investigated collaboration. The study

involved three students with severe disabilities and three students that were academically at risk. The practices used in the study were regularly scheduled team meetings, modifications and support to increase engagement in instructional activities, accountability systems, and changes to ineffective modifications or strategies. The findings suggested that these practices were beneficial in increasing students' social and academic involvement in the general education classroom. Students with disabilities showed progress in self-confidence, forcefulness, and social interaction with peers, as well as development in reading, writing, and math (Hunt et al., 2003).

Moreover, collaboration can develop cooperative learning which is an important element of an inclusive program. Cooperative learning is when students work together in small groups to help each other complete assignments or projects. A study by Jenkins et al. (2003), found that the three most frequently named benefits of cooperative learning are an increase in self-esteem, a safe learning environment, and higher success on classroom tasks. The study also found that cooperative learning allowed students with disabilities to participate in classroom discussions. As the students begin to develop a sense of belonging, they are more likely to increase their involvement in classroom activities and this involvement may result in further learning opportunities (Jenkins et al., 2003).

In cooperative situations, activities should be socially constructed and teachers should not use "cookie-cutter" approaches. Learning relies greatly on the students in the classroom. Collaboration, cooperation, and support are the common interactions in the classroom. Co-teaching in classrooms allows for the extra support students need (Keefe & Moore, 2004). In all, it appears there are many differences in implementing inclusion

and it is a matter of opinion of which is the most beneficial. The most shameful approach, however, seems to be segregation of children with disabilities (Fitch, 2003; Jameson et al., 2007; Zigmond, 2001). Educators should stop viewing inclusion of students with disabilities as an unpleasant task. If, instead, they start to view all education as “special”, then the system can evolve to include all students (Wolfensberger, 1972).

Research on Teacher Attitudes

At the forefront of any educational effort are teachers, administrators, and support staff. It appears that special education has been associated with problems and some feel that average achieving peers are losing more and more of their rights. It is true that a student with special needs does have many rights, and one must realize how hard some have fought to gain those rights. As an educator, one must look at all students as being more different than alike. With all of the new and constantly changing educational trends, there is an abundant amount of resources for children to use for learning. Teachers in an effective program recognize that they have to change their instructional strategies and implement a variety of modifications for all students (Cook, 2004; Cook, 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002).

All students should be provided a quality education in a regular classroom. Separation gives the impression of segregation and discrimination. A good teacher will educate their students drawing on the resources available and differentiating the instruction to help each one succeed (Huber, Rosenfeld, & Fiorello, 2001; Tomlinson, 2000). In many cases some teachers feel inadequate in their teaching abilities. Some teachers opt not to earn a special education degree because they do not want to teach students with special needs. Numerous educators feel they need a special education

degree to teach today's students with disabilities. It is important to examine the perceptions of teachers and parents. The feelings of these individuals toward children with disabilities and inclusion have a large impact on the success of an inclusion program. Research has demonstrated that teacher attitudes affect the successful implementation of inclusion (Cook, 2004; Cook, 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Swick & Hooks, 2005; Van Ruesen et al., 2001).

Furthermore, when in a classroom, teachers are faced with many difficulties when trying to educate a child with a disability. They might experience trouble adapting the curriculum, finding appropriate materials, and getting enough – or in some cases, any – training to help them develop the skills needed to educate students with disabilities. Contributing to their stress is the fact that they are held accountable for the learning of students with disabilities. It seems that all of these negative aspects of inclusion could be nullified with appropriate strategies. The complaints of these educators could stop if adequate support from the school districts existed. Praisner (2003) found that training, experience, and perceptions of placement affect attitudes of teachers. The administrators in this study who were responsible for supporting proper inclusion had positive attitudes and made decisions based on their training and their prior experience with and knowledge of disabilities. The difficulties faced with education students with disabilities could be help with positive attitudes (Praisner, 2003; Van Laarhoven et al., 2006).

Training is an important part of any job. Teachers are often expected to work with students with special needs, despite not being given any extra training on how to do so effectively. Children with special needs are being placed into the regular classroom and teachers are not sure why. The answer to the problem is not to push the students with

special needs into a regular education classroom merely so percentages change. When students are being forcefully placed, educators do not want to go the extra mile and put in the effort it takes to educate all students. Teachers may also not know how to help students with disabilities be successful in their class (Biddle, 2006; Engelbrecht et al., 2003; McNally et al., 2001).

On the other hand, research by McNally et al. (2001), showed a shocking result: Teachers did not show a need for different levels of curriculum support when working with students who had different levels of disabilities, ranging from mild to severe. Not showing a need for curriculum adaptations may suggest that the teachers did not use different materials for the student with disabilities. It suggests that they gave the students with disabilities the same work that the nondisabled students completed. The lack of different levels may be because they did not have the knowledge or skills to make proper adaptations.

A teachers' attitude is one of the most important factors in proper implementation of inclusive education. The current research on teachers' attitudes shows two sides toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Some teachers have positive point of views, while others explain their experiences as completely detrimental. Some of the negative attitudes stem from the lack of training and experience from working with students with disabilities. The research is lacking on specific types of disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities. Also, missing is years of experience with certain disabilities. Studies have covered experience with students with disabilities, but not the length of time (Forlin, 2001; Koutrouba et al., 2006;

Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

Attitudes of uncertainty were observed in teachers that were unfamiliar with particular disabilities or more severe disabilities, such as physical impairments or visual impairments (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002; Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Kniveton, 2004; Subban & Sharma, 2005). Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme (2002) designed a study to examine the facilitators and inhibitors of inclusion among students with disabilities and their parents. Three types of barriers were uncovered: physical environment, attitude, and physical limitations. The staff and teachers in this study had a lack of knowledge, training, and understanding regarding how to best work with the students with special needs. The teachers in a further investigation felt that the severity of the label should tailor the placement of the child. In some cases, teachers with less contact showed more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities. Other research indicated that, when teachers are prepared to work with students who have disabilities, positive attitudes can be observed about inclusion. These teachers also see the benefits of inclusion when they receive training and are familiar with certain disabilities (Weisel & Tur-Kaspa, 2002).

When educating a student with a disability in the regular education setting, many problems arise if teachers think of the effort as mainstreaming. This creates apprehension in some educators. Teachers need to realize that inclusion is not the same as the old mainstreaming concept. In some cases, teachers only feel comfortable with that idea. With mainstreaming, students with disabilities were included in the regular education classroom for specific classes based on their skill levels (Koutrouba et al., 2006; Kristensen et al., 2005).

Inclusion is a movement that is trying to help all schools meet the needs of all children with and without disabilities in a regular classroom. Educators need to realize that a student with a disability may be able to function in a regular classroom with proper adaptations and modifications. This is different from mainstreaming. It is sometimes difficult for a teacher to see a student doing the work differently than the rest of the group. Teachers need to realize that not every child will learn in the same way, disability or not. By adapting and changing the way lessons are taught, educators can help every child succeed in the classroom. Teaching to all children can help with the hesitation teachers feel (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Kristensen et al., 2005).

Research by Dupoux, Wolman, and Estrada (2005) showed that the more experience a teacher had greatly affected their approval of inclusion. An interesting aspect of this study also found that the more education teachers had, the better their attitude was toward integration. Although teacher attitudes, as measured in this study, generally were more favorable, it also turned up some negative aspects to inclusion. The authors showed that some teachers were more accepting of less severe disabilities in the students. This acceptance demonstrates a reluctance to accept all students. More experiences and added educational opportunities can help in fostering positive attitudes.

Further research (Talmor et al., 2005) examined the work environment of regular education school teachers who deal with students with special needs and looked at how environmental factors affected teacher burnout. Burnout is defined as being in a state of physical and mental fatigue. On the whole, the study found that the level of burnout was low, but the authors pointed out that the results may have been skewed by burned out teachers not sending back their questionnaires. The study correlated social,

psychological, and organizational factors to higher burnout rates. Interestingly, noise and adaptations were not related to a higher burnout rate. In examining psychological factors, the study showed that less-positive teachers experienced burnout. These teachers resisted inclusion of students with special needs, and when forced into it felt a greater burden. Overall, when teachers were required to include children with special needs, but weren't provided with the means to do so, they felt a greater sense of burnout. Providing proper instruction to students with disabilities is not an easy task. You would not go into a classroom without a lesson plan for the day or week. Therefore, a plan should be put in place so inclusion is successful (Talmor et al., 2005).

Inclusion appears to be leading to positive educational reform. The inclusion of students with disabilities requires teachers to adapt and change to meet the needs of all students. Research showed that teachers with advanced degrees and special education training have more positive views on education (Van Reusen et al., 2001). The positive attitudes of teachers can influence other teachers. Research showed that teachers who worked with a positive view of inclusion felt ready to include students with disabilities. Another factor that led to teachers having positive attitudes toward inclusion was having prior positive experiences working with students with disabilities. Positive experiences with inclusive education led to positive attitudes among the teachers. In all, positive attitudes can come from being prepared, being around positive people, and having positive experiences (Dupoux et al., 2005; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006).

Additionally, teachers felt that including students with disabilities into the regular education environment was beneficial for all students. Placing students with disabilities

in the regular classroom allows for academic and social growth. It also allows the students with special needs to be in a normal setting and helps to enhance their social roles (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Idol, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972). However, teachers have reported that including students with disabilities is only appropriate for some students and can negatively affect the nondisabled students in the classroom (Talmor et al., 2005). It is important to weigh the positive and negative aspects of an inclusive setting.

Lack of training, knowledge, and skills have the most impact in creating negative views toward inclusion. Many teachers are not given the proper training and resources to help make inclusion successful. Hence, without proper tools, the workload and time constraints create unnecessary stress and negative attitudes (Hammond & Ingalis, 2003; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Kristensen, et al, 2005; Talmor et al., 2005; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Van Reusen, et al, 2001). On top of that, it was found that inclusion of students with disabilities can have a negative impact on the classroom environment, instruction, and the quality of learning. Research has shown that some teachers feel that students with disabilities needed more support and take more time away from other students in the classroom. This workload can lead to higher burnout rates among teachers (Talmor, et al, 2005). Additionally, teachers who had negative experiences with inclusion had negative attitudes in general about the integration of students with disabilities into the general education classroom (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Hammond & Ingalis, 2003; Idol, 2006; Van Reusen, et al, 2001).

Much of the research in the field takes a broad investigation of students with disabilities and the attitudes of general education teachers. Lohrmann & Bambara (2006) studied beliefs that elementary school teachers had about the support and resources needed to successfully include students with disabilities in their general education classroom. Although the teachers did have experience working with inclusion, they did not feel prepared enough to work with the students in this study. The training to work with students with disabilities was not put into place. In addition, the teachers noted that their perceptions were influenced by what other teachers had said about the students. These apprehensions caused the teachers to question if inclusion would be successful. When reviewing attitude changes, it appeared that interpersonal support and collaboration helped decrease negative attitudes and make inclusion work (Engelbrecht et al., 2003; Forlin, 2001; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

Furthermore, research has shown that teachers with elementary and special education certification were more confident to handle inclusion. Additionally, teachers that had recent training showed a more positive position on inclusion. So training and specifically elementary and special education can be a starting place to help schools know what type of training to add to their in-service. These researcher's uncovered suggestions that inclusion is better implemented on elementary levels. Results indicate a need for inclusion on the elementary levels (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006).

Along with training comes the experience that teachers have with student with disabilities. This aspect of the research gives a mixed message. On the one hand, more

experience with inclusion and students with disabilities led to more positive attitudes. On the other hand, teachers with more experience have also exhibited higher stress levels and greater burnout rates. This burnout rate would indicate the need to examine the specific causes of negative attitudes related to experience. Perhaps knowing the years of experience teachers had with specific disabilities could uncover the cause of negative and positive attitudes (Cook, 2004; Cook, 2001; Engelbrecht et al., 2003; Talmor et al., 2005).

Following this line of investigation, teachers noted that school-wide, administrative, and faculty support was important to a successful inclusion program. These supports lead to positive attitudes of the educators. Teachers also felt that in-class support was necessary to balance students' needs. General education teachers had higher positive feelings about inclusion when the students were accompanied to the general education class by an associate or a special education teacher. This suggest the need for qualified and trained personnel in the classroom (Cook et al., 2007; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Praisner, 2003; Idol, 2006).

Additionally, there is an overwhelming need for positive attitudes of principals toward an inclusive program. Salisbury (2006) completed a study that examined the perspectives and experiences of eight school principles. The schools were chosen by their inclusion reform, types of disabilities among the students, and the willingness of the principals to participate. The schools in this study that showed stronger inclusion reform also had principals with a positive viewpoint on inclusion. In addition, the schools that had partial inclusion had stronger administrative support. This positive viewpoint showed that a partial inclusion program can be easier to implement. That said, the principles

reported problems with collaboration, support from parents, and time to develop an inclusive program. These problems are similar to what Daane and Latham (2001) and Carter and Hughes (2006) who found that teachers and administrators experienced a conflict of personalities, lack of planning time, and lack of class time. Positive inclusion needs support and time to develop lessons.

The administrators in the Salisbury (2006) study exhibited positive attitudes toward, and was committed to, inclusion used inclusive language, looked to others for collaboration, and had an attitude that showed they wanted to get it done. This research shows the importance of having a strong supportive administration. A positive principal can help create positive attitudes among educators working with the students with disabilities. Furthermore, the principals that looked at inclusion both as a reform and as compliance guided the development of programs in their schools. Lastly, it appeared that the amount of inclusion did not affect the progress of reform in the schools (Salisbury, 2006).

Following this further, Praisner (2003) also studied the attitudes of school principals toward inclusion. In this study, positive attitudes toward inclusion and special education, resulted in positive experiences, exposure, and training when working with students with disabilities. Principals in this study that had positive attitudes were more likely to place students into the general education classroom. These positive attitudes support the need for in-services and understanding of how special education services can be properly implemented. It was also observed that most principals agreed with inclusion so long as it was voluntary. When inclusion was mandatory, the attitudes of the principals were less favorable.

Further research delves into teacher attitude and, more specifically, how different disabilities affect that attitude. Teachers showed negative attitudes toward students with physical disabilities when the teachers lacked knowledge of the disability and didn't know how to help these students adapt to the regular classroom. Some teachers feel that the needs of students with physical disabilities could be best met in a separate educational setting. As with any disability, teachers felt they need to be adequately trained to work with the students to help them succeed in the regular classroom. Not having enough knowledge and skills to help students with special needs can create feelings of apprehension and negativity (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Cosbey & Johnston, 2006). Research shows that teachers' confidence increases when they are given time to collaborate with other teachers and have proper training on the disability. Concerns with placing students with physical disabilities in the general education classroom create unneeded trepidation and ultimately the failure of a program. This improper implementation comes back to not fostering learning and socialization of all students (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Cosbey & Johnston, 2006; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006; Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2003; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Singh & Sakaof, 2006; Race, 2003).

Wall (2002) investigated the influence that exposure had on teachers' perception of students with visual impairments. Most of the information that teachers in this study had on students with visual impairments came from their own informal reading. When examining student placement, respondents in this study felt that resource rooms, special classes, and special schools were better options for students with visual impairments. Similarly to other studies, teachers in this study also expressed concerns over not having

adequate skills to teach the students with visual impairments (Cook, 2001, Cook et al., 2007; Dupoux et al., 2005; Engstrom, 2003; Wall, 2002). Teachers also did not show much interest in educational assistants for students with vision impairments (Wall, 2002). Not having an interest in assistants is contrast to other research that showed teachers felt the need for assistance in the classroom (Cook et al., 2007; McNally et al., 2001). The teachers also reported that they did not need any professional development, but they felt they would need more help. The overall responses indicated positive, qualified, and negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with visual impairments. The teachers that had experiences with students with visual impairments held more positive attitudes toward them being included in the general education classroom. In turn, the teachers with little or no experiences held negative attitudes toward the students with disabilities (Wall, 2002). These findings are similar to other research that found the teachers who had experience working with students with disabilities held positive attitudes toward inclusion (Hammond & Ingalis, 2003; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Smith, 2008).

When analyzing students with severe disabilities, research has found more negative attitudes toward the inclusion of these students. It appears that teachers are more comfortable with the idea of mainstreaming, where a child is included based on his or her ability. Multiple studies have shown a consistent lack of experience among teachers in working with students that have severe disabilities. This showed the need for more training on specific disabilities and of severe disabilities (Agran et al., 2002; Cook et al., 2007; Cook, 2001; Kristensen et al., 2005; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Kuester, 2000).

Cook et al. (2007) found that teachers were more likely to nominate a student with a severe disability in areas of concern, indifference, and rejection than a student with a mild disability. In general, teachers showed less favorable attitudes toward students with severe disabilities and those with emotional disturbances. These findings can help to show where training and support is needed when trying to include an array of students with different disabilities into the regular classroom (Avramidis et al., 2000; Kuester, 2000).

Although these studies show higher negativity toward students with severe disabilities, Whitehurst (2006) studied a drama production over a two-year period involving six students with profound disabilities working alongside students without disabilities. This study wanted to find out how the students with disabilities felt throughout the experience. The results showed that only one of the six children had negative feelings. Educators that worked on the project were concerned about the limited attention span of the children with disabilities, their concepts of making friends, and their obsessions. The students with disabilities in this study did not make friends, but their peers treated them fairly when working with them. Overall, the positive experiences that the children with severe disabilities had outweighed the problems. The study also showed that children with disabilities share the same feelings of apprehension and issues with confidence as nondisabled peers.

Dedrick et al. (2007) found that changing the wording of descriptions for different disabilities listed in questionnaires had little effect on the outcome of their study. When exploring other variables, teacher's gender did play a role. Female teachers reported fewer negative effects of inclusion. More negative perceptions were found in relation to

students with mild and severe disabilities. These results show that the severity of the disability needs to be considered when examining teachers' attitudes toward inclusion.

Conclusion

When a child is identified as having a disability, they are required to have proper supports and services provided to them in school. It is the job of the student's team to make the proper decisions for educational placement and goals. Under the IDEIA (2004), all children with disabilities need to be given a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment possible. The interpretation of this legislation can have a big impact on how the inclusion of students is implemented.

It is the job of the educational system to prepare our children, disabled and nondisabled, to be fully functioning members of society. By excluding children with disabilities from the norm, we are denying them the standards of society. The inclusion of all children to the maximum extent appropriate is not only the law; it is what is needed to help them feel like they belong in our society (IDEIA, 2004; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972). "Inclusion is not a one-time achievement but rather a journey with a purpose" (Talmor et al., 2005, p. 228). Education is for all students and education can become easier when educators start viewing all students equally. Every child is unique and learns in different ways; knowing how children learn can be beneficial to students with disabilities (Race, 2003; Talmor et al., 2005; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Undoubtedly, there are many advantages and disadvantages to including students with disabilities in general education classroom. Some argue that a child with special needs may not fit in socially with their nondisabled peers. But socialization is one of the best benefits to an inclusive education. When children with disabilities are excluded, their

nondisabled peers do not have the experiences they otherwise would to learn acceptance. Students with disabilities that were included with nondisabled peers experienced approval. Furthermore, when interactions between disabled and nondisabled children increased, less ridicule was observed (Kemp & Carter, 2002; Kwapy, 2004; Saenz, 2003).

There is a great need for support to all involved with inclusion. One cannot just place a child with a disability into a regular education classroom without proper support and services. At times, ridicule and separation comes from a person not being familiar with a situation. The proper teaching and support can help make an inclusion setting successful (Engelbrecht et al., 2003; Fitch, 2003; Idol, 2006; Talmor et al., 2005; Wall, 2002). Teachers may feel that they do not have enough resources and lack the training to work with children with disabilities. When beginning to include children with special needs into the regular education setting, schools need to be aware of the support needed to accomplish the task. Extra resources may be required to help a child with a disability succeed in a regular education setting. Teachers need to work with other teachers, especially the special education teachers, to co-operate and help all children succeed. Therefore, constant support is needed for the students, teachers, and staff involved. Examining teachers' attitudes can show where the support is needed (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Dupoux et al., 2005; Forlin, 2001; Kristensen et al., 2005; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Talmor et al., 2005; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

In summary, teachers' positive and negative attitudes are the driving force for the education of all students. Teachers develop negative perceptions in some cases due to lack of experience, knowledge of disabilities, and training. Making those experiences

more meaningful and beneficial can help in creating a more positive attitude. Finding where the negative or positive attitudes stem can help school systems fix or implement proper inclusive services (Brandon & Ncube, 2006; Burstein et al., 2004; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Subban & Sharma, 2005; Forlin, 2001; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

Summary

Research showed that the special educator is often overlooked when examining teacher attitudes on inclusion. They are an important driving force and resource for inclusion. Knowing how the population of special educators thinks can help in creating educational plans for inclusion and can help uncover all teacher preconceptions. In addition, there is a need to determine if teacher attitude is affected by students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom. Prior research has shown changes in attitudes based on different disabilities, but not why the attitudes are different and if severity is a factor. The following research study examined the attitudes of special and general education teachers' attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education environment by examining severity of disability, type of teacher, and years of experience with severe disabilities. Uncovering attitudes can lead to a social change on how inclusion is implemented and what is needed to help educators build positive attitudes.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This quantitative study examined general education and special education teachers' attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom. This research aimed to measure the teachers' attitudes based on five types of disabilities and their years of experience with these disabilities. The study was confined to one geographic location in Northeast Pennsylvania. The participants responded to a series of questions based on different disabilities. The teachers responded to questions regarding specific disabilities such as emotional/behavioral disorders, specific learning disabilities, mild-moderate mental impairment, severe mental impairment, and other health impairments. They responded to each question on a 5-point Likert scale with response rating from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). This rating was done to see the differences in attitudes based on the severity of the disability.

Research Questions

1. Do the attitudes of special and general education teachers concerning inclusion of students with disabilities differ based on the student's disability?
2. Do the attitudes concerning inclusion of students with severe disabilities differ between special educators and general educators?
3. Do the attitudes of classroom teachers differ based on the number of years of experience they have working with students with severe disabilities?

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' attitudes will show a significant difference based on the severity of the disability

Null Hypothesis 1: Teachers attitudes will show no significant difference based on the severity of the disability.

Hypothesis 2: Special education teachers will show significantly more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities when compared with general education teachers.

Null Hypothesis 2: Special education teachers will show no significant difference in attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom when compared with general education teachers.

Hypothesis 3: Teachers with more experience with students with severe disabilities will show a significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

Null Hypothesis 3: Teachers with more experience with students with severe disabilities will show no significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

Research Design

The current study used a quantitative research survey design using cross-sectional methods. This design was selected because it is suspected that quantitative research will best help in examining the possible relationships between the dependent and independent variables. A quantitative study can measure the range in magnitudes of the attitudes of the participants. The dependent variable for this study is teacher attitude. The independent variables are the type of teacher, severity of the disability, and years of teaching experience.

Setting and Sample

The study consisted of a combined population of special education and regular education teachers from five different school districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Out of the five schools, three were urban and two were rural. One urban district has six different buildings, one for Kindergarten, first and second grades, third and fourth grades, fifth and sixth grades, seventh and eighth grades, and ninth through twelfth grades. A second urban school district has three elementary schools, Kindergarten through sixth grades, and one secondary building, seventh through twelfth grades. The last urban school district has one Kindergarten building, one primary building grades first and second, one intermediate building grades third through fifth, one middle school building grades sixth through eighth, and one high school building grades ninth through twelfth. One of the two rural schools has two elementary buildings grades Kindergarten through fifth, a middle school grades sixth through eighth, and one high school grades ninth through twelfth. Finally, the second rural school district consisted of two elementary buildings grades Kindergarten through sixth, one middle school with seventh and eighth grades, and one high school with grades ninth through twelfth. This sample was chosen to represent a majority of teachers and the different types of students they teach. To maximize a sample representative of the population, the entire teaching populations from the five school districts were sent an invitation to participate in the study. The teachers participated on a volunteer basis by returning the survey via e-mail. To ensure a higher return rate, the survey invitation included a statement telling the teachers that this survey was approved by their superintendent. The surveys were categorized based on

participants' years of teaching experience and whether they were a general or special educator.

Role of Researcher

The researcher is a special education teacher for upper elementary grade levels. The researcher has nine years of teaching experience who does not belong to any of the participating school districts. The examiner served various roles throughout the data collection process. The researcher had to gain permission from the cooperating college and school districts to complete the study. It was the responsibility of the researcher to obtain permission to adapt Dr. Rizzo's (1993) Physical Educators' Attitude toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities - Third Edition, (PEATID-III) for the survey. Once permission was gained, the researcher adapted the survey (Appendix C) and inputted the survey design onto Survey Monkey. Also the examiner had to open the survey, send out the invitations to participate in the study, and complete any follow up required. Once the survey was closed, it was the job of the research to analyze and filter the data. The researcher obtained permission to complete the research on teachers' attitudes toward students with special needs from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), #01-07-08-0305740, at Walden University (Appendix D). After permission was gained from IRB, the researcher gained permission from each school system's superintendent to conduct the survey. The teachers were invited to participate in the study through their school e-mail and were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary. In addition, the researchers made certain that their responses were completely anonymous and were not used as a teacher evaluation. The primary role of the researcher in this study

was to collect data and analyze the results. After data analysis was complete, the researcher shared the results with the participating school districts.

Instrumentation

The survey was designed based on Dr. Rizzo's (1993) Physical Educators' Attitude toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities-Third Edition, (PEATID-III). The participants answered six questions to so the researcher could determine their background. These questions examined how many years the teachers had been teaching, what grade level they taught, if they had a special education certification, if they had experience working with students with disabilities, how many years of teaching experience they had with particular disabilities, and if they had students with disabilities in their classroom. Then the teachers answered 12 questions to determine their attitude toward students with severe disabilities.

Written permission to modify this survey was given by Dr. Rizzo (Appendix E). A field study was completed on a smaller scale to obtain face validity. A study completed by Folsom-Meek and Rizzo (2002) was completed to assess the reliability and validity of the Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities III. There were 3,464 participants that were enrolled in an introductory adapted physical education class at 235 colleges and universities. The construct validity was acquired through the analysis with oblique rotation and an analysis of certain factors. These factors were the results of teaching students with disabilities in the regular classroom, the effects on students' academics, and the need for an increase in teacher preparation to work with students with disabilities in the regular classroom. An estimation through coefficient alpha was .88 for the total scale, and .71 or greater for each of the disability subscales

was found for the reliability. The wording of the current survey has been adapted by examining students with disabilities in the regular education classroom and not in physical education.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher first created an account on Survey Monkey. The survey questions were then placed into Survey Monkey using the web page design templates. After the researcher created the survey, the researcher input the e-mail addresses into Survey Monkey. Once the addresses were completed, a survey invitation was sent to each of the inputted e-mail addresses. This mass e-mail was sent to all potential participants asking for their participation in this study. After two weeks, the potential participants that had not yet returned the survey were sent a follow-up e-mail asking for their participation. After another two weeks, the survey was closed.

Data Analysis

The Survey Monkey website provided the researcher with an analysis of the return rate and of the responses to the individual questions. The return rate was calculated by dividing the number of surveys returned by the number of surveys sent and multiplying by 100. The results in this program were given through a response count and a response percentage. The researcher filtered responses based on certain questions in the survey. The number of members of the sample who did and did not return the survey was reported. Once the data was collected through Survey Monkey, it was analyzed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analysis was used to analyze each group comparison. A table showed the response to the demographic questions of the survey. The mean, median, and mode were used to measure central

tendency, and the range and standard deviation measured the variations of all of the respondents. An overall attitude score was taken from all of the survey questions.

For Hypothesis 1, a Wilcoxon test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in teachers' attitude based on the severity of the disability. In Hypothesis 2, a Mann-Whitney test was done to determine if there was a significant difference in the responses of general education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of severely disabled students compared to those of special education teachers. For Hypothesis 3, a Mann-Whitney test was completed to determine if the teachers with more experience with students with severe disabilities had significantly better attitudes than the teachers with less experience.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology of the quantitative research study, which attempted to examine the attitudes of general and special educators toward students with severe disabilities included in the general education classroom. The researcher analyzed the data to determine a teacher's positive or negative attitude based on the disability type, experience of the teacher, and the type of teacher. The information gained will have a direct impact on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. The following chapter discusses in depth the data analysis of the findings and results.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine how teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities vary by severity of student disability, type of teacher, and years of teaching experience. This chapter displays the results of the data analysis obtained from the survey utilized in the current study. The results of the demographic information from the survey (Appendix B) are displayed in Figures 1 through 6. Specific data were analyzed for each of the survey items for the projected hypotheses.

Participant Demographic Information

The findings in this section are based on the data collected from the survey. The survey consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of six demographic questions and the second part consisted of a set of 12 questions developed to examine the difference in teachers' attitude based on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. The second part of the survey was designed based on Dr. Rizzo's (1993) *Physical Educators' Attitude toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities-Third Edition*. A total of 780 surveys were sent out. From the 780, 244 were returned due to being undeliverable through the e-mail addresses given and 45 participants opted out of the survey. Of the 491 possible participants, 128 returned the survey for a response rate of 26%. Of the 128 surveys, 113 were fully completed. Out of the 113 fully completed surveys, 97 were from regular education teachers and 16 from were special education teachers. This lower return rate can possibly skew the results of the study. A higher return rate could have shown more significant results in this research. Those surveys not returned could be due to lack of time to complete the survey or to technical difficulties in using an e-mailed survey.

Participants for this study were selected from the e-mail lists obtained from each of the participating school districts. As stated in the informed consent letter (Appendix A), participation in the study was strictly voluntary and all responses were treated confidentially and anonymously. As demographics were being graphed, the teachers' names were not included, only the answers to the questions were visible. Figures 1 to 6 display the descriptive statics data regarding years of teaching experience, grade level taught, whether they teach special education, specific years of teaching experience with each of the five disabilities in the study, whether they presently have students with disabilities in their classroom, and what type of special education training they had received.

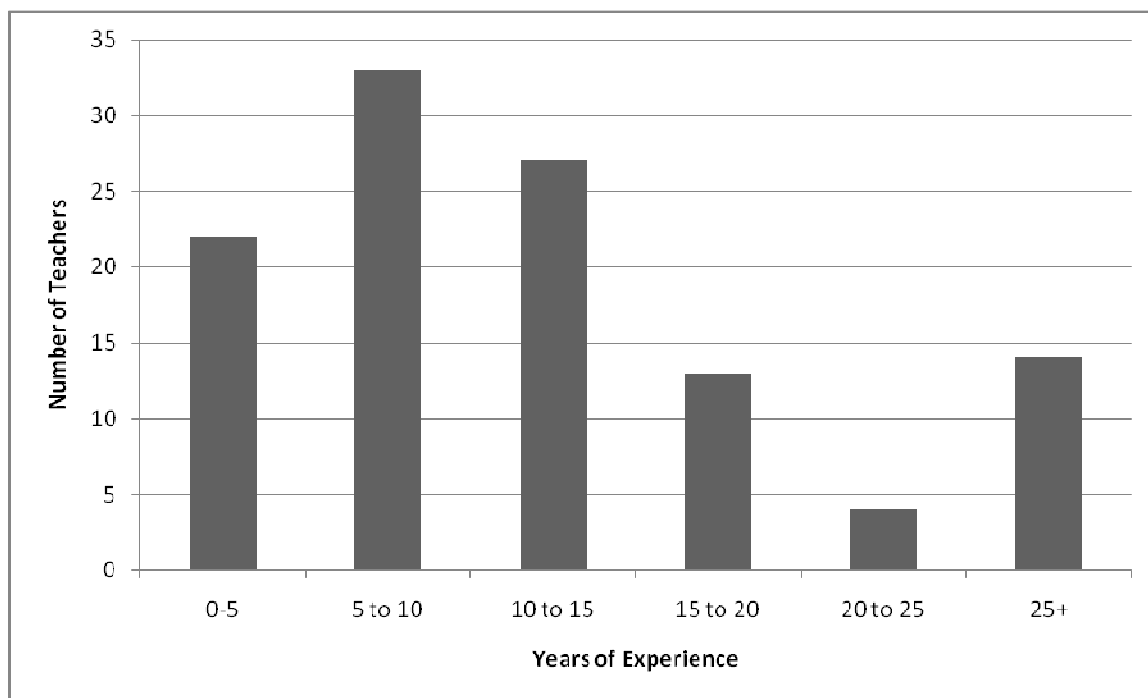


Figure 1. The results of number of years teaching.

Figure 1 display the years of teaching experience of the participants. The largest number of teachers had 5 to 10 years of teaching experience followed by 10 to 15 years

of experience. This shows that many of the participants did not have high years of experience.

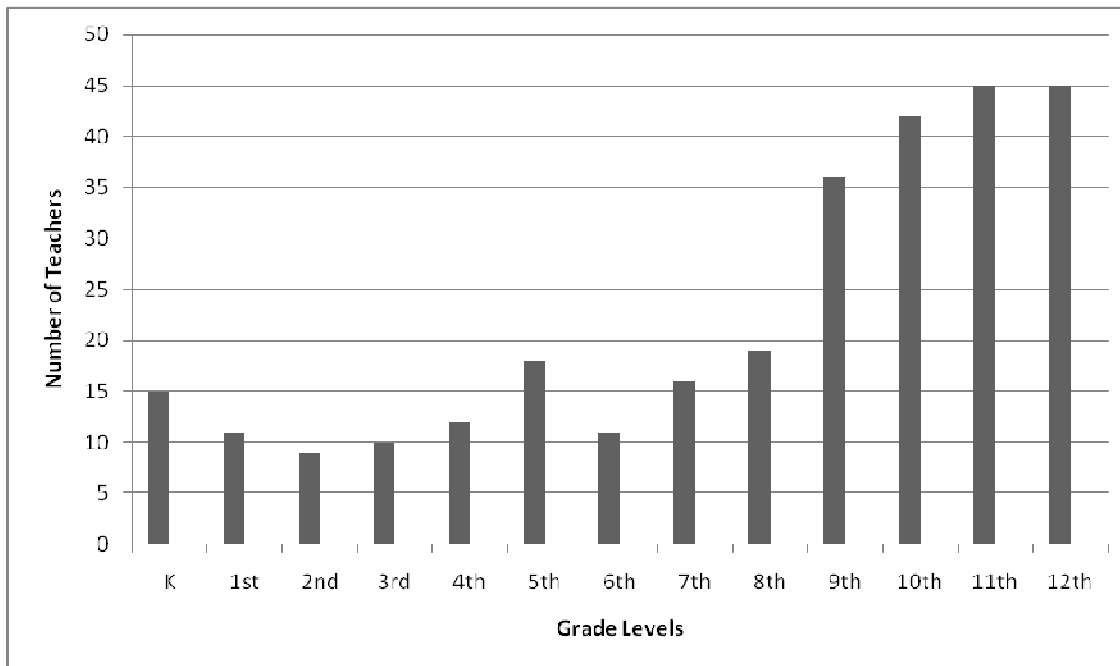


Figure 2. Results of demographics of grade levels taught by the participants.

Figure 2 examines the grade levels taught by each of the participants. It appears that a greater number of the participants were at the high school level. This could be due to the extra time that these teachers have, such as planning time. Many elementary teachers do not have planning periods.

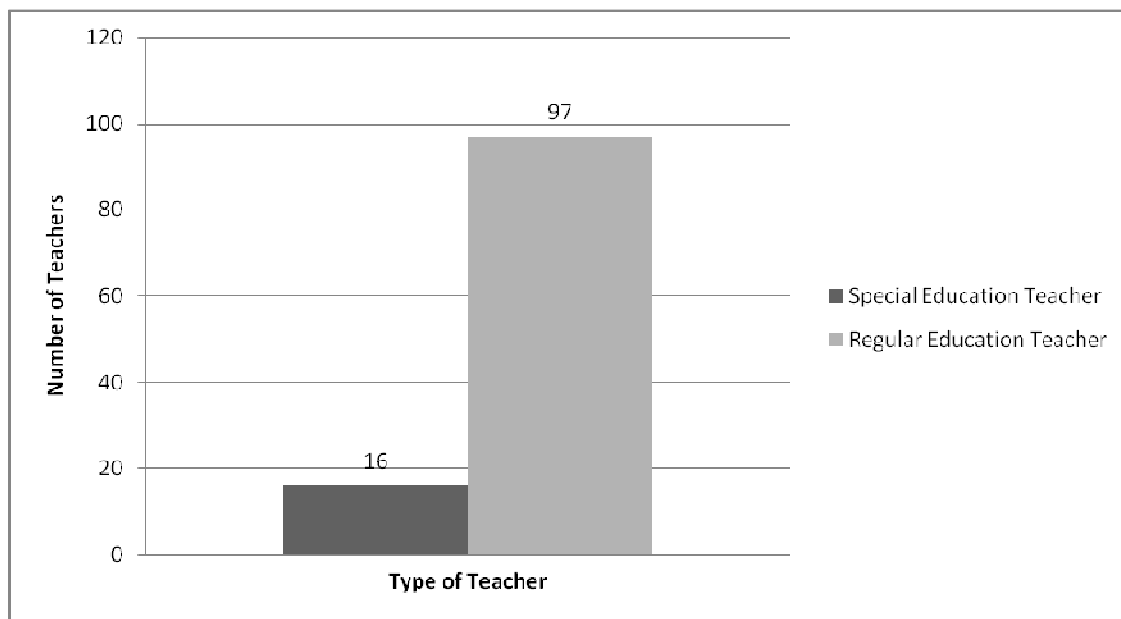


Figure 3. This shows the number of regular and special education teachers

Figure 3 above divides the participants into groups of regular and special education teachers. The gray shows that 97 of the teachers are regular education teachers and the black shows that 16 of the teachers surveyed were special education teachers.

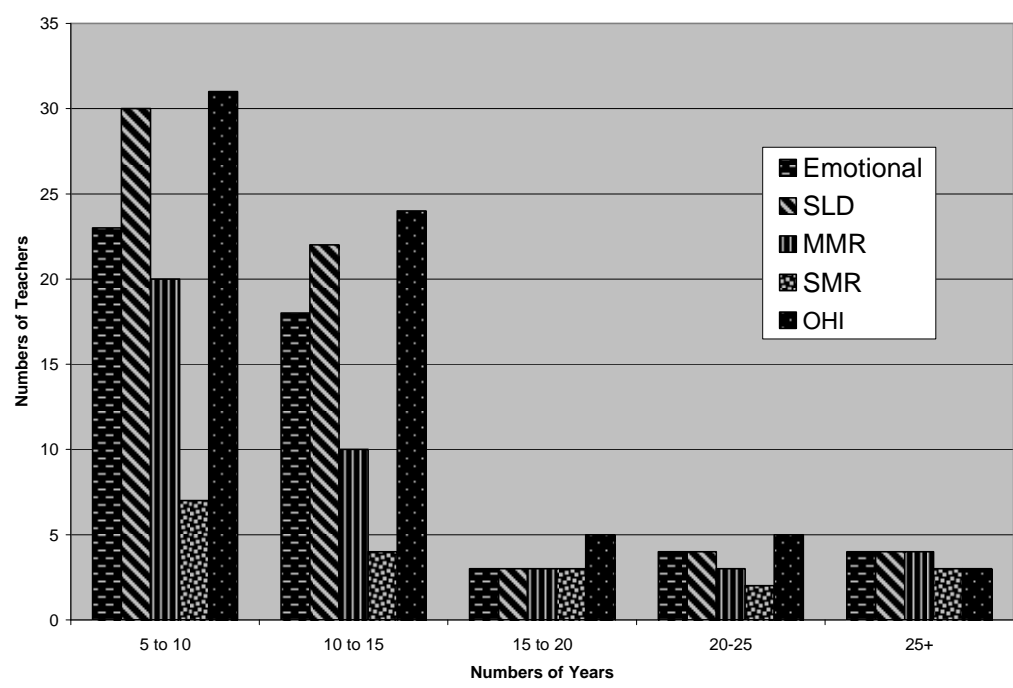


Figure 4. Years of teaching experience with each individual disability.
Figure 4 shows the years of teaching experience the participants had with each disability mentioned in the survey. When examining years of experience, a greater number of teachers 0 to 5 and 5 to 10 years have more experience with emotional/behavior, specific learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, and other health impairments when compared to students with severe mental retardation.

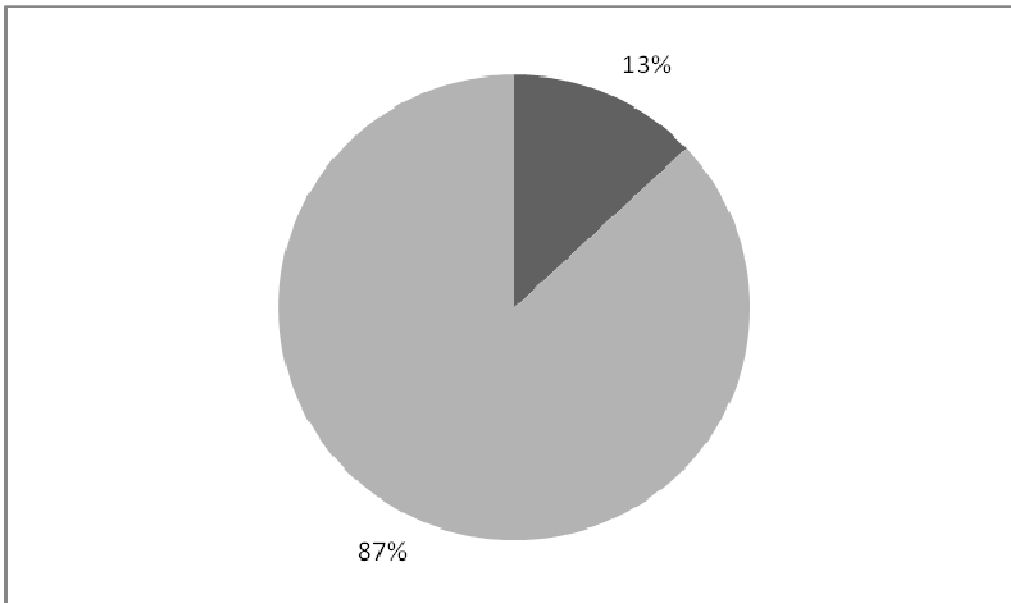


Figure 5. Shows the ratio of teachers that do and do not have students with disabilities currently in their classroom.

Figure 5 above shows whether teachers had students with disabilities in their classroom at the time of the survey. The majority of the teachers, shown in the lighter shading of the pie chart, had students with disabilities in their classrooms, as opposed to 13% of the participants who did not have students with disabilities in their classes.

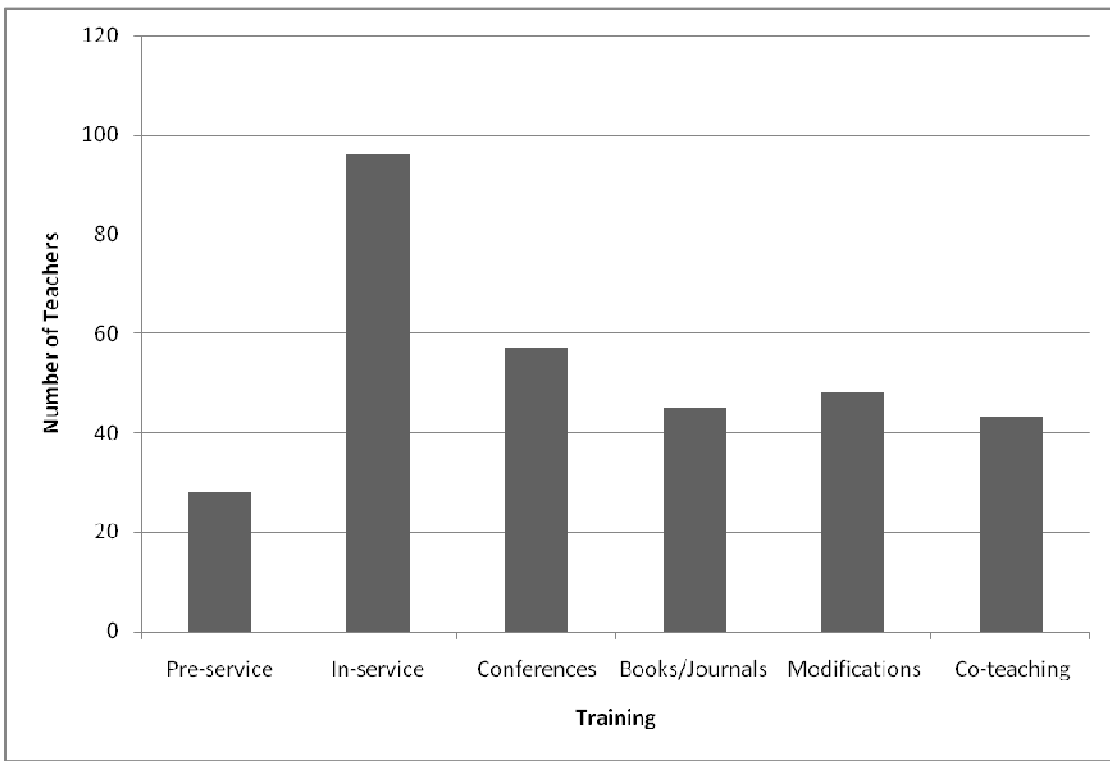


Figure 6. Shows the type of training received by the participants. As it appears in Figure 6 above, a majority of the participants received their special education training from their school district. This shows the need for quality in-service training for our educators. This may be the only training they receive.

Data Analysis for Survey Items

The data for this section was obtained by reviewing the responses to the attitude survey that was adapted from Dr. Rizzo's (1993) *Physical Educators' Attitude toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities-Third Edition*, (PEATID-III). The participants answered each of the 12 survey questions based on five separate disabilities (Appendix A). The questions were coded on a Likert scale as follows: 5 - Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Undecided, 2 - Disagree, 1 - Strongly Disagree. The responses were coded and then each of the participants' coded responses was separated based on each of the five disabilities. These were then input into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences or SPSS to determine the descriptive statistics (Table 1). The mean correlates with the Likert Scale coding the responses from 5 to 1; where higher scores indicated a more positive attitude and lower scores indicated a more negative attitude. The total number of valid responses for each question is specified. The surveys with blank items were unable to be documented and were not considered in the analysis. The maximum score of the survey was 60 and minimum score was 12. The responses were based on students with specific learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, and other health impairments show higher positive attitudes than students with emotional/behavior disorders and severe mental retardation.

*Table 1**Results of the descriptive statistics based on severity of disability*

Disability	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Emotional	38.74	11.32	128.19
SLD	42.50	10.97	120.36
MMR	40.27	11.12	123.57
SMR	37.25	11.69	136.56
OHI	41.51	10.79	116.36

Note: N = 113, Range = 48, Minimum = 12, Maximum = 60

Table 1 shows the results of the descriptive statistics of each of the attitudes of the participants based on each of the five disabilities. The maximum score for each survey was 60 with a minimum score being 12. Examining the mean of each of the disabilities, it appears that responses based on severe mental retardation (SMR) and emotional/behavior disorder (Emotional) showed the lowest overall scores. Specific learning disabilities (SLD), mild mental retardation (MMR), and other health impairments (OHI) have means in the 40s, showing a slightly higher score and therefore representing a more positive attitude.

Hypothesis 1

Teachers' attitudes will show a significant difference based on the severity of the disability.

A Wilcoxon test (see Table 2) was conducted to evaluate the attitude differences in educators by pairing severe mental retardation with: emotional/behavioral disorder,

specific learning disability, mild mental retardation, and other health impairments. The results indicated a significant difference for SMR and Emotional, $z = -2.024$, $p = .043$; SMR and SLD, $z = -7.353$, $p < .005$; SMR and MMR, $z = -5.579$, $p < .005$; SMR and OHI, $z = -6.458$, $p < .005$. The mean rank for SMR was 43.24 and the mean rank for Emotional was 34.39. The mean rank for SMR was 46.54 and the mean rank for SLD was 24.06. The mean rank for SMR was 35.95 and the mean rank for MMR was 21.27. The mean rank for SMR was 46.15 and the mean rank for OHI was 28.69. The teachers showed a significant difference in attitudes based on the severity of disability. The null hypothesis can be rejected.

Table 2

Wilcoxon test results to evaluate the difference in attitudes toward SMR to Emotional, SLD, MMR, and OHI.

	SMR-Emotional	SMR – SLD	SMR – MMR	SMR – OHI
Z	-2.024	-7.353	-5.579	-6.458
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	.000	.000	.000

Note. Severe mental retardation = SMR; emotional behavioral disorder = Emotional specific learning disability = SLD; mild mental retardation = MMR; and other health impairments = OHI.

Hypothesis 2

Special education teachers will have significantly more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities when compared with general education teachers.

Results shown in Table 3 were not in the expected direction and were not significant, $z = -.981$, $p = .321$. Regular education teachers had an average rank of 55.77, while Special Education teachers had an average rank of 64.44. There was not a significant difference between the attitude of the regular education and special education teachers' attitudes toward students with SMR. The null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Table 3

Mann-Whitney Test shows the attitudes of regular education and special education teachers toward students with severe disabilities.

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SMR_Sep	1.00	97	55.77	5410.00
	2.00	16	64.44	1031.00
	Total	113		
Test Statistics ^a		SMR_Sep		
Mann-Whitney U		657.000		
Wilcoxon W		5410.000		
Z		-.981		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.327		

Note. Grouping Variable: 1=Regular Education 2=Special Education

Hypothesis 3

Teachers with more experience with students with severe disabilities will show a significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

The results shown in Table 4 were not as expected, $z = -.326$, $p = .717$. The average rank of low years of experience was 18.84 and the average rank for high years of experience was 17.31. There was not a significant difference in attitude between high-experience and low-experience groups. The null hypothesis can be accepted.

Table 4

Results of the Mann-Whitney test to examine the difference in attitude based on experience.

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Experience	1.00	28	18.84	527.50
	2.00	8	17.31	138.50
	Total	36		
Test Statistics		Experience		
Mann-Whitney U		102.50		
Wilcoxon W		138.50		
Z		-.362		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed).		.717		

Note Grouping Variable: 1=low experience; 2=high experience.

Summary

This chapter presented significant statistical findings of the current study. It included information provided by the participants. Additionally, it displayed the relationship among the participants regarding their attitude toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom. The hypotheses were acknowledged, the statistical procedures were explained, and the data was presented and summarized. Moreover, descriptive statistics were used to analyze each item in the survey. A non-parametric two related sample, a Wilcoxon test was used for Hypothesis 1. A non-parametric two independent sample test, Mann-Whitney test was used for Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3. The results were presented in Tables 2 through 4.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This quantitative study was designed to determine teachers' attitudes when compared to severity of student disability, type of teacher, and length of teaching experience. The study analyzed their attitudes toward students with disabilities based on the questions presented in the survey. The participants' survey results were first separated by their individual responses to the survey questions based on each of the disabilities presented. Then using results from severe mental retardation, the surveys were separated into two subgroups based on low and high experience with students with disabilities. Level of experience was determined from the demographic section of the survey that asked how many years of experience the teachers had with each of the disabilities. Low experience included teachers with 0 to 5, 5 to 10, and 10 to 15 years of experience, and high experience included teachers with 15 to 20, 20 to 25 and 25-plus years of experience. The results were also divided into two other subgroups, general education and special education teachers, using results from responses to students with SMR. Three hypotheses were projected to direct this study.

Hypothesis 1: Teachers attitudes will show a significant difference based on the severity of the disability.

Hypothesis 2: Special education teachers will have significantly more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities when compared with general education teachers.

Hypothesis 3: Teachers with more experience with students with severe disabilities will show a significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

This chapter will provide a summary of the data, draw conclusions from the current study, and make recommendations for future research.

Data Analysis Summary

One hundred twenty-eight teachers volunteered to participate in this study. Most of the participants were regular education teachers that had 0 to 15 years of teaching experience. The majority of the current teaching assignments were at the high school level and a majority of the teachers were working with students with disabilities in their classroom at the time of the survey. Also, a large amount of the teachers received special education training through the school district in which they taught. Interestingly, the fewest number of teachers reported that they received special education training through preservice.

Hypothesis 1

Teachers' attitudes will show a significant difference based on the severity of the disability.

This hypothesis was not rejected because there was a significant difference in attitude based on the severity of the disability. When responses to SMR of the survey were compared separately to Emotional/Behavioral, SLD, MMR, and OHI, a significant difference was found. These results showed a statistically significant difference in the attitude of the participants based on the severity of the student's disability.

Hypothesis 2

Special education teachers will have significantly more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities when compared with general education teachers.

When the survey results were separated based on general and special education teachers, there was no significant difference found in attitude. These results showed that special education teachers do not have more positive attitudes toward students with severe disabilities when compared to general education teachers.

Hypothesis 3

Teachers with more experience with students with severe disabilities will show a significant difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities.

Teachers with high experience did not show a difference in attitude toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities when compared to teachers with low experience. Low experience grouped the teachers that had 0 to 5, 5 to 10, and 10 to 15 years and high experience grouped the teachers that responded 15 to 20, 20 to 25, and 25+ years of experience

Interpretation of Findings

The overall results confirm that teachers have more positive attitudes toward students with less severe disabilities, such as emotional/behavioral disorders, specific learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, and other health impairments when compared to students with severe disabilities. These finding can be related to past research that showed teachers having negative attitudes toward students with more severe

and less common disabilities (Cook, 2001, Cook et al., 2007; Dupoux et al., 2005; Engstrom, 2003; Wall, 2002). On the other hand, results also showed that there was no attitude difference between general and special education teachers. There was also no difference in attitude among the participants when examining the years of experience they had with students with severe disabilities. These findings contradict some previous studies that found advanced degrees, special education training, and experience resulted in more positive teacher attitudes (Dupoux, 2005; Leatherman & Niemeier, 2005; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006).

Responses to several of the survey questions show the majority of teachers had a more positive attitude toward students with SLD, MMR and OHI. This positive attitude could be because of teachers' experience level and familiarity with students with these particular disabilities. Responses to the individual survey questions showed that a higher percentage of participants had positive attitudes and agreed that students with SLD, MMR and OHI will work toward academic goals and will develop a better self-concept in the regular education classroom. Students with disabilities need to be placed into normal situations such as, working in cooperative group. This inclusion can help to develop their self-concept and social roles (Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972).

The participants of this study also felt that students with SLD, MMR and OHI should be taught with nondisabled peers as much as possible. This feeling was not true for students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorder and SMR. It is possible that the negative attitude observed in the teachers of this study derives from the lack of training in working with students with these disabilities. As examined in this study, teachers feel that they need more professional development when dealing with students with disabilities in

the regular classroom. The negative attitudes of the current participants may stem from the lack of training or the quality of the training they have received from their school and their preservice training.

Individually examining each of the survey questions had some interesting findings. Regarding motivation, more teachers agree that students with SLD, MMR, and OHI would be more motivated than students with severe disabilities in the regular classroom. But respondents felt that students with Emotional/Behavior Disorder and SMR would not be motivated to work academically. Also, more teachers felt that inclusion would not help any of the students with disabilities learn more rapidly. This feeling could be due to the fact that a separate special education classroom is perceived to be a place where students with disabilities are given explicit intensive systematic instruction. On the other hand, a higher percentage of teachers felt that students with Emotional, SLD, MMR and OHI would develop a better self-concept in the regular education classroom.

These responses contradict one another. According to this survey, students cannot develop a better self-concept if they are not with their peers, but if they are with their peers they are not learning rapidly. These results are similar to a study completed by Talmor et al. (2005) that reported inclusion was appropriate for only some students with disabilities. Also, the current study extends prior research on not including all students in the regular classroom. The current research specifically shows that teachers feel that students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders and SMR should not be in an inclusive classroom. Additionally, this current study reported that special education and regular education teachers feel that students with more severe disabilities should not be in an

inclusion setting (Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006). Furthermore, teachers felt that students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders and SMR would be the most disruptive in their classroom. This feeling can be related to their lack of experience and knowledge of these disabilities. It can also be related to teachers having to modify and adapt curriculum to fit the needs of these students. Not being ready or prepared to make certain curriculum changes can be overwhelming and create a sense of negativity.

Moreover, a majority of participants felt that all of the students with disabilities would be accepted by their peers. This acceptance is a step in the right direction to show that students are being taught how to accept diversity in their schools. Diversity is a necessary component of inclusion and shows that the participants in this study are teaching their students how to deal with diversity. These findings also support prior research, which reported that an inclusion setting helps all students learn and increase their social roles (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Idol, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Following the questions further, teachers did find it too much work or unfair to have all type of students with disabilities in their classroom. Severity of the disability was not a predictive factor of teacher attitude when weighing up workload and time constraints. On the other hand, students with SLD and OHI were not considered a burden, as opposed to students with Emotional/Behavioral, MMR, and SMR. Also, the teachers felt that they had enough training to work with students with SLD and OHI. Their lack of training with students with Emotional/Behavioral, MMR and SMR might be a source of their negative attitudes.

Interestingly, a larger percentage of participants felt that each of the categories of disabilities involved more work, took more time, and required more professional development on their part. These findings support other research that showed students with disabilities create a larger workload that was a greater burden and caused added stress to teachers (Hammond & Ingalis, 2003; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Kristensen et al, 2005; Talmor et al., 2005; Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005; Van Reusen et al, 2001).

Impact on Social Change

This quantitative study is significant to scholarly research and literature in the field of education because teachers' attitudes have a great deal to do with how we view students with disabilities and how classrooms run. This study has an impact on social change because it offers an insight and awareness that attitudes are critical to the success and failure of an inclusion program. Every educator must learn to do more than just accept inclusion and stop waiting for the next big thing. Inclusion should be embraced and become the way to educate all students. Inclusion helps a student with a disability feel normal and accepted by their peers. Students with disabilities need to be placed into societal roles of value. These social roles will help them learn how to be a part of society and help others learn to accept differences (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Race, 2003; Wolfensberger, 1972).

Also, inclusion of students with disabilities allows the school system to make critical decisions about special education services students will receive. Careful thought has to be given to the appropriate placement of a student based on the individual needs of that student. A separate learning environment cannot and is not always the best place to start. Placement has to be considered in the general education classroom first with

supplementary aids and services. School systems have to consider the structure of their school environment (Handler, 2003; IDEIA, 2004). This current study provides evidence of social change because the attitudes of educators are a critical component to the success and achievement of students with disabilities. Proper training and support is the key to successfully implementing an inclusion program. Successful inclusion is determined by the attitudes and emotions of educators.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were the lower return rate of the surveys and the limitation to only Northeastern Pennsylvania. A higher return rate would produce a greater number of participants and would possibly yield a higher statistical significance. Therefore, the results of this study should be viewed carefully when making generalizations to school districts out of the area included in the study. Other school populations and circumstances may vary from the districts included in the current study.

Another limitation of this study was that not all of the surveys collected were completed. Not having these surveys caused the exclusion of these surveys.

Yet another limitation in this study was the small number of special education teachers compared to general education teachers. This small number caused the data to be skewed. Most school districts have small numbers of special education teachers, therefore making it harder to have a larger representative sample.

A final limitation can be observed in the way the data is collected. Although it is valid for this study, having a Likert scale limits the participants to only the choices on the survey. This format did not allow for participants to make in-depth comments. Even

though comments were allowed, they were not and could not be included in the data analysis of this study.

Recommendations for Action

The improper implementation of inclusion has been associated with problems, and some feel that the average-achieving peers are losing their privileges. It is true that students with disabilities have many rights, but it must be noted how hard it was to fight for those rights. With all of the innovative and continuously changing educational trends, there are plenty of resources for children to use for learning. Teachers in an effective program recognize that they have to change their instructional strategies and implement a variety of modifications and supports. All students should be and can be provided a quality education in a regular classroom. Separation gives the impression of segregation and discrimination. A good teacher will teach their students and use the many resources and differentiation of instruction to help all students succeed (Huber et al., 2001; Tomlinson, 2000). The proper implementation of inclusion services is critical for students with disabilities. Appropriate inclusion of students with disabilities helps to provide these students with the same opportunities as their same-age peers. However, this success depends largely upon the attitude of the educators that are implementing these services. This study was expected to show where positive and negative attitudes are observed and from where they derive.

Educators, supervisors, administrators, superintendents and anyone who is part of the school community needs to be aware of successful inclusion practices to ensure all students are treated equally. The overall attitudes of teachers in this study were more positive toward students with Emotional/Behavior Disorders, SLD, MMR and OHI, when

compared with students with SMR. The lack of preservice training and improper training at the district level can contribute to these negative attitudes. Following this further, finding that special educators and general educators do not differ in attitude is a cause for concern. It appears that both types of educators feel the need for more training and understanding of students with severe disabilities.

With much recent litigation, special education is being challenged. A student with a disability needs to be provided an education in the least restrictive environment. This environment is becoming the regular education classroom for all students with disabilities, no matter the severity. First, school districts need to evaluate their current special education practices. Knowing where you are will help you be aware of where you are going. With that, it is important to understand how the educators feel when working with an array of disabilities and using current practices. Now more than ever, the general education classroom can be a place for children with different abilities to come together and learn. Surveying attitudes among educators can show what is lacking in current special education practices and services.

An attitude survey can also give the district an idea of which teachers would be more willing to work with students with disabilities. At times, only certain teams of teachers may need to work with students with disabilities. More stress can be averted if teachers can choose with whom to work, but avoiding stress is not always possible. Finding the most positive teachers can help ease the transition to smooth inclusion. After a review is done, the educators can provide the input on what is lacking in their classroom. If many of the teachers are receiving their training from the school district and they are showing negative attitudes. This shows the need for better training to be

implemented to help alleviate this discomfort. Training in a school district needs to be centered on various types of disabilities and inclusive practices. Training should be held on a regular basis to keep educators informed. Limited training on inclusion is not going to make a teacher an expert.

Along with training, inclusion implementation needs to have a structured plan that is school-wide so students with disabilities can be easily transitioned into the regular education classroom. Teachers feel that it takes extra time and work, part of the plan should be centered on how many students can be included in a classroom. To elevate some of the work, the special education teacher may need to be assigned to only one classroom in which they can co-teach all day. Some of the stress observed by teachers comes from not having enough support in a class. Proper inclusion may take more individuals to make things work.

Recommendations for Future Study

The topic of inclusion can be complex and has several aspects that need to be addressed. The present study examined attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. It specifically investigated teachers' attitudes toward students with emotional/behavioral disorders, specific learning disabilities, mild mental retardations, severe mental retardation, and other health impairments. Additionally, the study explored the differences in attitudes of general education and special education teachers. Finally, it inspected differences in attitude based on the teachers' experience working with students with severe disabilities. Future research could explore the attitudes of other professionals in the field of education, such as administrators, supervisors, paraprofessionals and other related service providers.

Future research can replicate the current study to identify where training on inclusion practices is needed. Most of the training teachers receive comes from their school districts. Surveying the teachers' attitudes and knowing what type of training they have received can help school districts know what type of training their teachers need. On the other hand, instead of replication -using the same survey questions -taking a qualitative approach can lead to an in-depth data analysis.

As a final point, further research can also examine more specifically how inclusion programs and separate education classrooms are being structured. Examining classroom structure along with teachers' attitudes can help pinpoint what is working and what may be failing. For example, it can be determine if there is a correlation between teacher attitude and a specific inclusion program. This determination could be done by finding several school districts that implement inclusion differently.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a significant difference among the attitude of teachers based on the severity of a disability, type of teacher, and the years of teaching experience. The researcher compared teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe mental impairments when associated to students with emotional/behavioral disorders, specific learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, and other health impairments. As a result, this information has generated ideas and a plan on what is needed to properly implement inclusion practices.

The findings of this study show that many teachers are not comfortable or familiar with students with severe disabilities. These negative attitudes were not different based on being a regular or special educator and did not vary based on the number of years of

experience working with students with severe disabilities. These attitudes show the need for informative and proper inclusion training for all teachers. Although the attitudes of the general and special educators were similar, there is still a need for inclusion education. With the changing laws and recent demands of new laws, collaboration and preparation must be provided to help foster a positive learning environment for all students. Not including students with disabilities, no matter what the severity, is taking us backward in our civil rights. All individuals have the right to be a part of normal society. When in school, this place is the regular education classroom. Social change will come when our attitudes change. Discovering where these attitudes originate can help us take a step toward creating the social change that is needed to make all education special.

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APPENDIX A:

CONSENT LETTER

CONSENT FORM

This informed consent form will review research procedures, explain confidentiality and privacy information, and describe your participant rights.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Tracie Davis, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

The purpose of this study is to examine educators' attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom. This study will fulfill the requirements for completion of my Ph.D. degree in Special Education. My interest in this study is to examine how your experience influences attitude and to ultimately help in creating positive social change of inclusion practices.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer a series of statements that express feelings about teaching students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Crestwood, Hanover, Dallas, Wyoming Area, or Pittston Area schools will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no potential risks or benefits from the completion of this survey.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for the completion of this study.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Tracie Davis. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Joseph Nolan. If you have any questions, you may contact the researcher via 570-820-0556 or at

tracie.davis@waldenu.edu or the advisor Dr. Joseph E. Nolan at joseph.nolan@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 2396.

Please print a copy of this form for your own personal records.

Statement of Consent:

1. By clicking “yes” below, I assert that I have read the information provided, my questions have been answered, and I choose to take part in this research:

Yes

No

2. I also affirm that I am 18 years old or older by typing your birth date below.

APPENDIX B:

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we begin, please answer a few short questions about your teaching experience.

1. How many years have you been teaching? *Options offered would be 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 years, and 25+ years.
2. What grade levels do you presently teach? *Options K,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12
3. Are you a special education teacher? *yes or no
4. How many years of teaching experience do you have working with:?
For question 4 use a chart of the disabilities
5. Next to each disability the years of experience working with those disabilities will be chosen
6. Do you presently have any students in your classroom that have disabilities? *yes or no
7. Please check the type of trainings you have had in Special Education:

Preservice

In-Service (District)

Conferences

Books/Journals

Training on Modifications

Training on Co-teaching

APPENDIX C:

ATTITUDE SURVEY

General Directions: The following survey contains a series of statements that express feelings about teaching students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. There are no right or wrong answers. Your identity will not be known. All responses will be kept confidential. Select the response that best describes your feelings for each statement.

Here is an overview of the disabilities that you will be asked about. These descriptions will help you in answering the questions.

Emotional/Behavioral Disorder: This refers to a condition characterized by one or more of the following behavior clusters: severely deviant disruptive, aggressive or impulsive behaviors, withdrawn or anxious, general pervasive unhappiness, depressed or wide mood swings, delinquency, hyperactivity, social maladjustment, hypersensitivity. It is usually serviced with a behavior management program.

Specific Learning Disability: "A specific learning disability is a disorder within the individual which affects learning relative to that individual's potential. The disability interferes with the acquisition, organization, and/or expression of information such as in listening, reading, writing, thinking, and movement. In physical education this student could have difficulty with spatial awareness."

Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired: This student would be considered to have an IQ score in the range of 50 to 80 on standardized intellectual tests. The student will probably develop communication skills and social skills but will lag behind their peers. The student usually can learn vocational and daily living skills but may need guidance and/or assistance in these areas. These students may have difficulty in performing motor skills, and exhibit a short attention span.

Severely Mentally Impaired: This student would be significantly sub average in intellectual functioning. They would have an IQ score below 50 on standardized tests. They may or may not be able to verbally communicate. There is little socialization or interaction. They are totally dependent on others for care.

Please check one response for each disability that best corresponds with your level of agreement to the statement.

1. One advantage of teaching students with disabilities in a regular education classroom with their nondisabled peers is that all students will learn to work together toward achieving goals.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

2. Teaching students with disabilities in the regular education classroom will encourage them to work harder academically.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

3. Students with disabilities that are included in the regular education classroom will learn more quickly.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

4. Students with disabilities will develop a better self-concept when included in the regular education classroom with their peers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

5. Students with disabilities included in the regular education classroom will be accepted by their nondisabled peers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

6. Students with disabilities included in the regular education classroom will not disrupt my class.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

7. Having to teach students with disabilities in the regular education classroom does not place an unreasonable burden on the teachers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

8. I have enough training to teach students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers in the regular education classroom.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

9. Teaching students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with their nondisabled peers is not more work for me.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

10. Students with disabilities being taught in the regular education classroom with their nondisabled peers does not take too much of my time.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

11. As a teacher, I feel I DO NOT need more professional development because I feel comfortable teaching students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

12. Students with disabilities should be taught in the regular education classroom with their nondisabled peers whenever possible.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder					
Specific Learning Disability					
Mild-Moderate Mentally Impaired					
Severely Mentally Impaired					
Other Health Impairments(Includes ADHD)					

*Adapted from the Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities-III (Rizzo, 1993)

APPENDIX D:
IRB APPROVAL

Dear Ms. Davis,

Notice: The Walden IRB approval for the pilot study # 01-07-08-0305740, will expire on 1/7/09. If you wish to request an additional year of IRB approval, please make sure the IRB receives this form requesting continuing review prior to 5 p.m. central time on 12/31/08. Failure to return this form will result in expiration of your Walden IRB approval for your study. Please note, you only need to submit the attached form if you are still collecting data or if there is a chance you will be collecting more data in the future. If your study has already been completed, you may let the approval expire.

Sincerely,
Jenny Sherer, M.Ed.
Operations Manager
Office of Research Integrity and Compliance
Email: irb@waldenu.edu
Fax: 626-605-0472
Tollfree : 800-925-3368 ext. 2396
Office address for Walden University:
155 5th Avenue South, Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55401

APPENDIX E:

DR. RIZZO EMAIL

From:
"Terry Rizzo" <trizzo@csusb.edu>
To:
"Tracie Davis" <butterfly4512@verizon.net>
PEITID-II CALIFORNIA DATA.doc (64KB)

Hi Tracie,

Thank you so much for your interest in my research. Read some of my recent research on labeling, it may offer you some ideas.

You should review my recent survey (attached) for your review. This is my recent version based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. You can review the model and scoring on Ajzen's web site.

As a gentle reminder, please be careful about revising any survey as it affects validity. However, Joe will walk you through the validity issue.

Good luck with your research endeavors.

Please give my kind regards to Joe.

Terry Rizzo

CURRICULUM VITAE

Tracie L. Davis
58 North Main St. Ashley, PA 18706
Phone: 570-820-0556
Cell: 570-262-9469
tracie.davis@waldenu.edu

Objective

To obtain a full-time tenure track faculty position working in a Special Education department.

Education

Ph.D., Education, Walden University, 2009

Concentrations: Special Education

Dissertation: General and special education teachers' attitudes toward students with severe disabilities included in the regular education classroom

M.A., Reading, King's College, 2003

Concentrations: Reading Specialist

Thesis: Use of CD ROM to help increase students reading fluency

B.A., Education, King's College, 2000

Concentrations: Elementary Education, Special Education, Psychology

Experience

Learning Support Teacher 5th and 6th grade, 2004 to present

Lake-Lehman School District, Lake Noxen Elementary

Course: All core academics

Learning Support Teacher 7th and 8th grade, 2000 - 2004

East Stroudsburg Area School District

Courses: All core academics

Certifications

- Elementary Education - PA
- Special Education - PA
- Reading Specialist – PA
- Instructional II

Work Experience

- Teacher of the Year Nomination at East Stroudsburg– 2000
- ESASD Mentor 2003/2004
- Wilson Reading Program
- Corrective Reading Decoding and Comprehension
- Project Read
- PSSA Assessment Anchors
- Progress Monitoring
- Differentiated Instruction
- Collaborative and Co-Teaching Strategies
- Anchor Assessment
- IEP Writer
- Statewide Assessments and students with Disabilities
- Presentation to staff at Lake-Noxen Elementary on Progress Monitoring

Professional Memberships

- Beyond Policy: Creating A Healthy Classroom
- Cambridge Who's Who – 2008
- Council for Exceptional Children Chapter
 - Health Advisory Committee
 - Steps to a Healthier PA

Skills and Qualifications

- SPSS, Microsoft Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Internet, Windows XP
- Coral Draw
- Net meeting
- Smart Board
- KidPix, Hyper Studio, Inspiration
- CPR certified
- Teacher Web

References

Mrs. Nancy Edkins– Principal at Lake-Noxen Elementary
edkinsn@lake-lehman.k12.pa.us, 570-639-1129

Ms. Tina Antenello – Special Education Supervisor
antonellot@lake-lehman.k12.pa.us, 570-639-2790

Dr. Joseph Nolan - Walden faculty member, joseph.nolan@waldenu.edu