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# Attitudes towards inclusion of general education teachers who have and have not taught in an inclusive classroom

Nicole P. MacCarthy  
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Abstract

Attitudes Towards Inclusion of General Education Teachers Who Have and Have Not  
Taught in an Inclusive Classroom

by

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M.Ed., University of Arizona, 1992

B.A., University of Nebraska, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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Education

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## Abstract

Through the lens of Bandura's social-cognitive theory, which proposes that one's sense of self-efficacy can foster positive beliefs, the purpose of this descriptive, quantitative study was to determine whether the attitudes held by general education teachers have an influence on their perceptions of inclusion. General education teachers' beliefs in their abilities regarding teaching in inclusive classrooms may have an influence on the success of inclusion. This study examined the difference in attitudes toward inclusion between elementary school general education teachers whose previous teaching experience was with solely general education students but who now teach in an inclusive classroom, and those whose only teaching experience has been in the inclusive classroom. Eighty one general education teachers from public elementary schools in a suburban school district completed the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC). Results from independent-samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney difference tests showed no significant statistical difference between mean STATIC scores and indicated the attitudes of both groups were positive towards inclusion. The acknowledgement of current teacher attitudes towards inclusion promotes positive social change by serving as a rationale for other school districts to create professional development opportunities. These opportunities will allow general education teachers to become better prepared in supporting and educating special needs students in their classrooms.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Educators across the nation are embarking on a new era of education for students with disabilities. The concept is called *inclusion*, and the focus is on the belief in every person's inherent right to fully participate in society (Wolpert, 1996). Ideally, the concept of inclusion applies to the entire continuum of services that places the student with a disability in a regular education classroom. This is accomplished with appropriate support personnel, and students with disabilities have the opportunity to receive an education and related services alongside peers (Wolpert, 1996). In an ideal, fully inclusive school, the special education student will be learning in the same curricular areas as same-age peers, with the help of teachers, aides, or peer tutors to learn content at an appropriate level (Bradley, King-Sears, & Tessier-Switlick, 1997). Inclusive classrooms include special education students in every aspect of school life and make them a part of the school community (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004, Sec 612 5B).

Several laws have proposed that public schools open their doors to students with special needs. The first one, Public Law 94-142, the Education of All the Handicapped Students Act (1975, 39-44), provided services to students with special needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE). After undergoing several revisions, this law was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA). It provided all students with special needs a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE), as well as the right to be educated in the general curriculum with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent

appropriate. IDEA requires the availability of a continuum of placement options for students with special needs.

The law requires that to the maximum extent appropriate, children, disabled or not, will be educated in the same classroom. Unless the disability is severe enough to require special classes, more intense supplementary aids, or separate schooling, children will not be removed from their regular environments. (IDEA, 1997, Sec 612 5B)

In the last few decades, the view of special education has changed in the United States. Instead of segregating students with special needs and placing them in self contained special education classrooms and schools, special education is trying to meet the academic and social needs of all students by forming inclusion (Bradley, King-Sears, & Tessier-Switlick, 1997). This change of purpose is reflected in the change of the related laws (e.g., IDEA, No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001) and is supported by the literature reviewed in chapter 2. The education system is responsible for including students with special needs in order to provide them with appropriate education. IDEA supports the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classrooms. Additionally, NCLB stated that all students, with or without disabilities, will be grade level proficient by the year 2014. Thus, it is imperative that all potential obstacles to each child receiving a FAPE be investigated and researched thoroughly to ensure that our country can achieve this goal.

The concept of inclusion is likely to generate passionate debate in any group of general education teachers. This movement is aimed at creating schools where the needs of all students, with and without disabilities and of same grade level, are met in general

education classrooms (Ferguson, 1996). There is agreement that people with and without disabilities are entitled to the same rights, discussions continue because inclusion also affects and alters the education of general education students (Ferguson, 1996).

Integrating students with special needs in the general education classroom has been the norm for about 25 years, according to the U.S. Department of Education (1997).

Evidence regarding special education must be examined beginning with an assertion of the basic principles underlying the purpose of education. The world of academics is designed to prepare students for the world of work (Bradley, King-Sears, & Tessier-Switlick, 1997). According to Turnbull (1993), the statutory definition of FAPE requires that the student who receives special education must benefit from his or her Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in order for the IEP to be considered a success. Studies have shown, however, that special education students who graduate from self-contained special education programs are overall less likely to attain employment and generally have lower self-esteem than their peers who receive their education in the mainstream (Brown et al., 1987; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Thousand, 1991; Wagner, 1989).

D'Amico, (1991), conducted a national study using 8000 special education youths between the ages of 13 and 21 and showed only 35.9% were competitively employed by the time the student was age 21 or older. Furthermore, the competitive employment rates of students who received special education in the last year of their education was 50.7%, compared to 38% among students who did not receive special education in their last year of vocation school. Additionally, when IEPs were combined with work experience for

students with special education needs (SEN), the employment rate increased to 62.2%. When appropriate programs and services were provided in inclusive settings, students tended to develop into more viable adults with higher competitive employment rates, and fewer needs for costly taxpayer-supported adult services (Brinker & Thorpe, 1984; Madden & Slavin, 1983; Piuma, 1989, Vandercook, York, & Forest, 1989). Target outcomes or goals are determined not only in terms of specific objectives, but are based also on the impact the program will have on individuals' future goals and, ultimately, the quality of their lives (Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1993).

### **Statement of the Problem**

General education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion may have a positive influence on the success of inclusion. According to Schumm et al. (1995), teachers do not always feel adequately prepared to meet the broadening range of student needs. Needs that may include both academic and behavioral goals of special and general education students. The problem investigated in this study was whether attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusive classroom, and those whose only teaching experience has only been in the inclusive classroom, has a positive influence on the success of inclusion. If it is true that teachers' attitudes are influential in the classroom, it is possible that the quality of education for all students could be suffering and that steps should be taken to adjust teachers' attitudes and rectify the problem. Results of this type of education have been called into question for several years (Adler, 1990; Goodlad, 1984). According to Ford, Davern, and Schnorr (1992), the

questions revolve around concerns about graduates acquiring a solid base of knowledge, and their ability to integrate it, apply it, manage it, build on it, and put it to use in a meaningful way. Ford et al. suggested that a lack of these skills is, at least in part, a result of deficit-based planning both in general and special education classrooms.

Bradley et al. (1997) stated that quality instruction for a highly diverse group of students requires collaborative teams to develop and implement educational programs designed to meet the needs of each student as an individual. According to Schulte, Osborne, and Erchul (1998), general education teachers may run into a number of difficulties when teaching in inclusive classrooms. These difficulties include deficits in teachers' skill levels, lack of necessary time available for the increase in instructional planning, and not being accustomed or prepared to implement individualized and small group instruction within a large group. According to Huefner (2000), difficulties also include an increase in paperwork, lack of financial compensation, lack of adequate funding for special education programs, and required time for additional training and outreach for special and general education teachers (Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003).

With regard to the effect of IEPs on education, the teachers of students with special needs being educated in inclusive settings were surveyed to determine whether such IEPs made quantitative differences in the students' education (Dudley-Marling, 2004). Results indicated that most teachers did use the student's IEPs when developing educational programs but that it was too time consuming and not especially useful in planning day-to-day activities. Most teachers (86%) reported that the IEPs were inaccessible because they are locked up in separate, central locations or locked in a file

cabinet within the classroom to protect the privacy of the student (Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003).

### **Nature of the Study**

The design used to conduct this study was a quantitative descriptive design. The reason for using this design was that it provided the researcher with the ability to assess whether there is a relationship between variables (Cozby, 2001). The use of a questionnaire provides information that is based on “quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). This means that the information collected from the questionnaire may be quantified so that descriptions of a target population may be made. In this study, the population of interest was elementary school teachers whose previous teaching experience was with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusive classroom, and those whose only teaching experience is in the inclusive classroom. More importantly, the information collected from the sample may be generalized to the target population so that specific claims may be made (Creswell, 2009). Participants’ scores on the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC) questionnaire then will be compared to determine whether there is a difference between these groups. This difference will be tested using an independent samples *t* test or, if the data are not normal, a Mann-Whitney U test.

Participants in this study included 81 elementary school teachers teaching in suburban Illinois schools district 40 miles outside of Chicago. The study instrument consisted of a carefully worded questionnaire assessing the attitudes general education

teachers have toward inclusion. Participants were selected in accordance with their qualifications and positions in an inclusive school setting. Criteria for inclusion in this study were that the participant must: (a) be a general education teacher, (b) be teaching at the elementary school level, and (c) have special education students in their classrooms. The only participants in this study were general education teachers who have special education students in their classrooms.

The following question guided this study: Is there difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion? This question stated both as the null and the alternative hypothesis is as follows:

$H_0$ 1: There is no significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion

$H_A$ 1: There is a significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the attitudes held by general education teachers toward inclusion are influenced by a key notion that derives from

Bandura's social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1994). Specifically, Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory proposes that one's sense of self-efficacy influences positive beliefs. This study examined the question of whether there is a difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusive classroom, and those whose only teaching experience has been in the inclusive classroom. The group of teachers sampled for this study was teachers in elementary schools. A questionnaire designed to measure teachers' attitudes toward students with special needs was administered. Also included in the analysis of the teachers were descriptive statistics employed to describe the characteristics of the participating teachers.

One intention of an IEP is to provide individualized education plans for students with special needs since not every student learns in the same way or at the same rate. An IEP should reflect the goals and objectives which will provide the most effective learning environment and education for each individual (Kaye & Aserlind, 1979). Numerous studies have stated that negative attitudes of teachers and administrators can be seen as barriers toward successful inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom. These barriers stem mainly from teachers beliefs that they have neither the time nor skills necessary to develop and implement IEPs for each student with special education needs. In order to be most effective, however, IEPs must be student-specific and pertain to the relevant curriculum (Cook, 2001; Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999, Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2000; Dudley-Marling, 2004; McComas, & Laflamme, 2002; Praisner, 2003). Study results indicated that general education teachers

need more training when it comes to the purpose, development, and implementation of an IEP (Cook, 2001) because they need more training in developing lessons appropriate for the entire classroom and not just individualized lessons for the students with special needs.

Students with SEN who are educated in self-contained classrooms are taught using a modified curriculum that is specifically written according to their IEP goals and objectives. Students with SEN who are educated in inclusive settings are taught using ongoing general education curriculum with modifications in presentation, practice, and evaluation methods that match the individual's learning needs, as these have proven most effective at educating students with SEN in an inclusive classroom (Bradley et al., 1997).

McLaughlin (1992) noted that students with disabilities might be learning objectives from more than one curriculum option and sometimes even more than one grade level. It would, therefore, be helpful for educators and related service personnel to become familiar with more than one curriculum. Although this is a worthy goal with a noble ideal, the expectation that teachers will have the ability to gain expertise in several curricular areas, develop and implement IEPs, ensure that IEPs are effective for students with SEN as well as those students without, and the time to educate students without SEN, may be unrealistic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Possibly the greatest challenge facing educators today is effective planning to meet the individual needs of all students in the general education setting (Bradley et al., 1997). Bandura's (1994) self-efficacy theory postulates that one's sense of efficacy helps

an individual not only to assess his or her performance, but provides information to the self regarding what one is capable of doing. According to Bandura, people's levels of self-efficacy for a given task (i.e., their beliefs in their abilities to successfully perform a certain task or accomplish a certain goal) are influenced by four main sources of information. These include: (a) personal mastery experiences, (b) seeing other people being successful managing similar tasks, (c) social persuasion by others reinforcing their capability to succeed, and (d) physical and emotional conclusions regarding personal strengths and weaknesses. Bandura explained that people must, therefore, feel confident in their field in order to sustain the determination necessary to succeed. People tend to avoid situations when they do not feel competent. Bradley et al. proposed that inclusive education requires far more than individuals with and without disabilities participating as much as possible in the same classroom; it requires specific planning to ensure that participation is meaningful for all members of the classroom grouping.

Schulte et al. (1998) have stated that there are several difficulties regarding effective instruction of special education students in regular education classrooms. These include deficits in teachers' skill levels, lack of necessary time available for the increase in instructional planning, and not being accustomed or prepared to implement individualized and small group instruction within a large group (Schulte et al., 2004). Bandura (1994) noted that a strong sense of efficacy enhances self confidence. People who feel competent in their capabilities are less likely to avoid difficult challenges (Bandura, 2004). The purpose of this study is to analyze teacher responses to assess whether the data of this study supports or refutes this theory.

## Definitions of Terms

*Accommodations:* An accommodation is a modification to the delivery of instruction that does not significantly change the content or the conceptual difficulty of the curriculum (Bradley et al., 1997, p. 239).

*Attitude:* A readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way (Jung, [1921] 1971,).

*Disability:* A general term used to describe a physical, mental, or sensory condition which may limit a person's ability to walk, hear, learn, or lift (Bradley et al., 1997).

*Goals and objectives:* Goals are written as a statement of the results the IEP committee would like the student to achieve during that year (i.e., the annual goals). Objectives are shorter-term benchmarks designed to measure progress on a weekly or monthly basis (Harris-Schmidt, 2008).

*Individualized Education Plan (IEP):* An IEP is a written document that synthesizes the educational program necessary for the special education student to benefit from education (Bradley et al., 1997).

*Learning disabilities:* impairments that prevent people from understanding, communicating, or remembering information for reasons that are specifically not related to a physical disability (Shalaway, 1997,).

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):* The LRE must satisfy two criteria: (a) provide students with disabilities an education appropriate to their unique learning needs,

and (b) do so in as close proximity as possible to normally-developing, age-appropriate peers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

*Self-perception:* Self-perception refers to an awareness of the characteristics that constitute one's self-knowledge (Cooley, 1904).

*Special education:* The term special education means specially designed instruction at no cost to parents or guardians that meets the unique needs of a student with a disability (IDEA, 20 U.S.C., 1401 (16)).

*School District 303:* Located in St. Charles Illinois, which is a suburb of Chicago where the public education system is operated by the Community Unit School District 303.

## **Assumptions and Limitations**

### **Assumptions**

The researcher was guided by the following assumptions: (a) the use of questionnaires is an adequate means of data collection when investigating the attitudes of general education teachers toward inclusion; (b) all participants would respond honestly, and be professional and cooperative in their responses to the survey questions; and (c) students with special needs who were being educated in general education classrooms were not receiving an instructional program based on their individual strengths and needs.

### **Limitations**

A number of limitations should be noted. First, the perceptions of general education teachers in various elementary schools may or may not be equivalent to each

other. Second, requirements and strategies for inclusion classrooms may differ at various schools. Third, because the grade levels to be examined in this study were elementary school grades K through 5, findings should not be generalized to other grade levels or situations. Finally, this study was limited to the results collected and analyzed from the participating elementary schools. The results of this study derived from quantitative analyses using descriptive statistics, independent-samples *t*-tests, and Mann-Whitney U test analyses of surveys from 81 general education teachers. Because teacher preparation and experience, school requirements, and school and community cultures differ between grade levels, classrooms, and school districts, the conclusions drawn from this study most likely cannot feasibly be applied to the needs of other classrooms and schools. Certain aspects of the findings may be practical to other general education staff when it comes to creating and implementing lesson plans in the inclusion classroom.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study examined the attitudes that general education teachers have toward inclusion. The study was limited to 81 elementary school teachers teaching 40 miles outside of Chicago. St. Charles Illinois is a suburb of Chicago where the public education system is operated by the Community Unit School District 303. The only participants in this study were general education elementary school teachers who teach in the inclusive classroom.

### **Significance of the Study**

Prior to the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Students Act in 1975 (now IDEA, 1997), Congress found that of an estimated 8,000,000 U.S. students with

disabilities, as many as 1,000,000 were excluded from public education and at least 3,000,000 were being underserved (Smith, Dowdy, Polloway, & Blalock, 1997). Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Students Act, legislation, litigation, and social change have resulted in dramatic and significant changes in the way students with disabilities were educated in U.S. public schools. Although these legal and social changes have resulted in important new services and protections for students with disabilities, they also have brought new challenges and problems.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the attitudes of general education teachers have an influence on inclusion. The results of this study could have significance for special education because the success of inclusion is crucial to the successful education of students with special needs. There is a need for a better understanding of teachers' perceptions toward inclusion and how the inclusive environment can be improved. Special education students have a right to FAPE. All students have the right to receive the benefits of grade-level curriculum and social learning. How the students are taught this curriculum is determined by the teachers. Special education students being educated in inclusive settings deserve to have their special educational needs met, whether it is through individualized instruction, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, or teacher understanding. These students have IEPs written for them annually. Annual academic, and sometimes behavioral, goals and objectives are a fundamental part of IEPs, and, legally, these must be implemented into the curriculum. This study was an attempt at examining the attitudes of general education teachers towards teaching special education students in inclusive classrooms.

Chapter 2 will discuss a review of literature. The review will cover inclusion teachers' views on special education programs, the history of mainstreaming through to inclusion, and the results of other studies that have focused on inclusive classroom settings for students with SEN. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used for the study, design of the study, the precise research questions being investigated, the means of soliciting and selecting participants, sample size, role of the researcher, the validity and reliability of the research design, the steps of the data collection and analysis, and, finally, the relevant ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will discuss the findings of the study and chapter 5 will interpret the findings as well as discuss implications for social change and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 provides the platform upon which this study is based. The chapter is a literature review focusing on teacher attitudes toward inclusion, IEPs, teachers' views on special education programs, the history of mainstreaming through to inclusion, and the results of other studies that focus on inclusive classroom settings for students with special education needs. To locate scholarly conceptual and empirical articles and books, the following sources were used: The Walden University database, the Internet, EBSCO Host, ProQuest, the ERIC database, and the Questia On-Line Library. Keywords used in this search were *inclusion, special education, teacher attitudes, individual education plan, assessment, mainstreaming, and perception.*

### **Learning Disabilities**

Broadly defined, learning disabilities are impairments that prevent people from understanding, communicating, or remembering information for reasons that are specifically not related to a physical disability (Shalaway, 2003). The U.S. Office of Education, 1977, (p. 65083), defines specific learning disabilities (SLD) as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language spoken or written, which may alter a person's ability to listen, think, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. Conditions such as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia are included.

### **History**

The first research committee, now known as the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), was founded by Wacker and McMahon in 1975. The goal of this

committee was to keep learning disabilities in the forefront of the federal government and in the scientific and medical professional communities.

The LDA remains active in promoting the rights of those with learning disabilities and continues to assist government agencies in writing appropriate legislation.

### **Assessment**

Proper assessments of learning disabilities are somewhat more difficult to determine because one cannot see a learning disability (Logsdon, n.d.). Once diagnosed, however, students may be provided the intervention that is appropriate for their learning disability. Strumonski (1997), states that students not only need learning strategy skills to cope with immediate academic demands but also life skills to cope with the demands of life. Learning strategy skills are resources anyone, especially when faced with new learning situations (Sturomski, 1997).

Failure to appropriately address learning disabilities in an educational setting can lead to an adulthood situation in which the adult with a learning disability struggles to perform along-side his or her peers who do not have learning disabilities. However, when disabilities are properly diagnosed and accommodated by implementing student appropriate lessons plans, necessary workplace skills in preparation for the working world and overall productivity as adults may be learned (Nadeau, 1997). Because of their specific nature and wide variety of symptoms, learning disabilities present unique legal challenges to creating inclusive classrooms.

### **Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy**

Bandura first introduced the ideas of self-efficacy in 1977, and later developed his social-cognitive theory in 1986. Bandura's (1977) work on self-efficacy helped explain social learning theories (including Bandura & Walters, 1963; Miller & Dollard, 1941) because it addressed a component that had been missing – the impact of one's belief in oneself on one's behavior. Unlike other behaviorists of the time, Bandura's social-cognitive theory incorporated the cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes of human functioning. While other theorists argued that one of personal factors, behavioral factors, or environmental factors was the main catalyst for human functioning, Bandura's social-cognitive theory proposed that human functioning is the result of the interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. According to Pajares (2002):

Bandura altered the label of his theory from social learning to social 'cognitive' both to distance it from prevalent social learning theories of the day and to emphasize that cognition plays a critical role in people's capability to construct reality, self-regulate, encode information, and perform behaviors. (p. 2)

Self-efficacy refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). It plays an important role in social-cognitive theory, given that this broader theory incorporates people's perceptions and beliefs as important elements in the prediction of behavior. According to Bandura (1986), economic and socioeconomic

factors as well as educational and family structure factors do not directly affect human functioning. Pajares explained, "Instead, (economic, socio-economic, educational, and family factors) affect (human functioning) to the degree that they influence people's aspirations, self-efficacy beliefs, personal standards, emotional states, and other self-regulatory influences" (p. 7). One's self-efficacy beliefs are not only important by themselves, but they also influence other important factors, such as a person's optimism or pessimism, motivation and the determination of goals, and whether failures are motivating or demoralizing (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995; Schwarzer, 1992).

Bandura (1986) believed that every human has fundamental abilities; including the ability to symbolize, have forethought, learn vicariously, possess self-regulatory mechanisms, and be able to self-reflect. Humans model from others what they have observed using the process of symbolizing. Symbolizing also helps humans to solve problems and to conduct the process of forethought. Pajares (2002) indicated that having the ability of forethought allows humans to "anticipate the consequences of an action without actually engaging in it" (p. 8). Such forethought sometimes is based on what humans have learned through observation or through vicarious learning. Humans' self-regulatory mechanisms allow them to change their own behavior based on their self-observations and judgments. Self-reflection allows people to explore their own thoughts and to complete the type of self-observation that is used by the regulatory mechanisms. On the importance of self-efficacy, Bandura (2001) believes that unless people believe in themselves and what they are capable of, they will not succeed. People need to believe they are able to produce results and effects by their own actions.

## Legal Framework

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 both require a significant effort be made to find an inclusive placement for children with disabilities. There are also several court cases regarding the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). A few examples are: *Doe v. Arlington County*, 41 F. Supp. 599 (Ed. Va. 1999), *Oberti v. Clementon*, 995 F.2d 1204 (3<sup>rd</sup> Cir. 1993), and *L.B. and J.B. ex rel. K.B. v. Nebo UT School District*. However, one of the most famous Supreme Court cases regarding the LRE, is the *Board of Ed. of Hendrick Hudson Central School Dist. v. Rowley* 458 U.S. 176 (1982). This case was the first decision in a special education case by the U. S. Supreme Court and, in it, the phrase, FAPE in the least restrictive environment was defined.

The overall objective of providing FAPE is to prepare youths for life beyond their academic careers in area such as life skills, workplace skills, and preparation for social interaction with peers and authority figures (IDEA, 1973). IEPs for students with SEN are discussed with the understanding that in order for the laws governing FAPE and inclusive education to achieve these intended goals, the students must be capable of leading productive self-managed lives with a minimum of costly tax-sponsored programs without further assistance. In order to meet these legal requirements, and to avoid the legal implications of failure to provide a FAPE to a person with a learning disability, individual education plans have been designed as a means to address the challenges posed (IDEA, 1973).

### **Individualized Education Plan**

An important intervention tool for people with learning disabilities is the IEP. An IEP gives students customized plans for instruction, including goals and objectives, that take into consideration their uniqueness as a student and individual (Cutter, Jaffe-Gill, & Benedictis, 2008). Following the initial diagnosis of a learning disability and a thorough assessment of the brain dysfunction, this plan for instruction and remediation is constructed so that instruction works around and improves upon the brain's capabilities (Cutter, Jaffe-Gill, & Benedictis, 2008).

Accommodations or interventions vary when working with learning disabilities. Some students are able to learn in inclusive classrooms while others may need self contained classrooms or schools focused specifically on learning disabilities and other special needs. Students may need the use of special equipment such as word processors, voice synthesis programs, voice recognition programs, portable tape recorders, talking calculators, electronic spellers and dictionaries, audio textbooks to aid in their education while others are helped by special education assistants, note-takers, readers, proofreaders, transcribers. Special education assistants may aid in utilizing individualized accommodations such as outlining the lesson plans, reading lessons out loud, modifying homework assignments or just making sure students are seated in the front of the class (Cutter et al., 2008).

Whereas IEPs have been adopted as a means of addressing those specific needs of individuals with learning disabilities, they create a strain on resources that may be already stretched and they may place a burden on teachers' class preparation. Three views of

SEN illustrate the different bases for IEPs and addressing SEN and the problems with each (Frederickson & Cline, 2002).

### **Inclusion and Teachers' Lesson Plans**

The development of lesson plans for teachers in inclusion environments can be delicate and challenging. Spooner, Baker, Harris, Ahlgrim-Deizell, and Browder (2007) studied the effects of training educators in the Universal Design for Learning. They examined the lesson planning skills of both special and general educators in a college classroom setting who first had been instructed in the Universal Design for Learning. The experimental group received one hour of instruction in the Universal Design for Learning and the control group received no instruction. Results showed that training in the Universal Design for Learning, even for as little as one hour, had a significant impact on teachers' ability to design lesson plans that are accessible for all students. Rose, Hall, and Murray (2008) acknowledged that making proper assessments of all students in an inclusion classroom is difficult when attempting to follow the Universal Design for Learning guidelines, but they also anticipated that such techniques should become easier as technology advances and digital versions of assessment materials become more readily available.

The Universal Design for Learning consists of three main principles or guidelines: (a) *representation*, meaning, provide multiple means of representation; (b) *expression*, meaning, provide multiple means of action and expression; and (c) *engagement*, meaning, provide multiple means of engagement (Teaching Every Student, 2009). Among these are nine sub guidelines (three for each of the primary guidelines). Sub guidelines for the

representation principle are: provide options for perception, language and symbols, and comprehension. Sub guidelines for the expression principle are: provide options for physical action, expressive skills and fluency, and executive functions. Sub guidelines for the engagement guidelines are: provide options for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation. When these guidelines are followed, the Universal Design for Learning provides teachers with “blueprints for creating flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments that accommodate learner differences” (CAST, 2009, p. 1). The lesson plans should be developed with the students’ IEPs in mind.

Bitter (2009) provided four tips for lesson planning of special education or inclusion classrooms. Her advice is applicable to all educational settings, but is particularly useful for classrooms with special education students. Bitter recommended: (a) constructing lesson plans so that each day’s plan includes much more material than one would expect to complete in one day, (b) being prepared to improvise, (c) being flexible, and (d) enjoying the children one is instructing and always bearing in mind the impact that special education instructors can have on their students. Bitter advocated planning more activities than one would anticipate finishing because students often finish early, especially when high expectations are placed on them.

Particular lesson plans for teachers in co teaching or inclusion environments are very important to student success (Fattig & Taylor, 2008). Benefits to the inclusion classroom of creating specific lesson plans specific include that it clarifies roles of teachers, combines ownership of planning, improves instructional planning for meeting the needs of individual students, increases collaboration in lesson development and

delivery, and improves monitoring of the development and use of specific accommodations for reporting IEP progress (Dieker, 2006). Murawski (2008) provided the following five keys to co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: (a) Know what co-teaching is, and when it is needed, (b) recognizing that co-teaching is a marriage and you are the matchmaker, (c) making scheduling a priority, (d) understanding that lesson planning is critical, and (e) monitoring success, giving feedback, and ensuring evidence-based practice.

### **Three Views of Special Educational Needs**

Frederickson and Cline (2002) offered three views on Special Educational Needs (SEN). The first view is also referred to as the traditional way of thinking about SEN was to look at SEN as individual deviation from the norm. An individual child is compared to his peers. Several biological, cognitive, or behavioral factors prevent the child from functioning or developing in the same way as other children. This type of thinking presents two problems. It is based on the false assumption that all children have equal learning opportunities prior to starting school. And, the social and educational context is ignored, and exclusive focus on the individual is given (Frederickson & Cline, 2002). This view is likely to lead to confusion and a misunderstanding of students with learning disabilities and is not likely aid in finding appropriate accommodations and services to help in forming appropriate educational settings.

The second view is contrary to the first and argues that SEN arise when children are exposed to inappropriate environmental demands. This view recognizes the past learning experiences of students; however, this view presents problems when the present

skills of the student do not meet the curriculum requirements of the school. It places the responsibility for problems faced by people with special needs on the environment, rather than on the individual. This view fails to recognize the individual differences between students and their different responses to different ways of teaching (Frederickson & Cline, 2002).

The third, and most accepted view, relies on an interactional analysis. It recognizes the students as individuals. It takes into consideration differing strengths and weaknesses, environmental backgrounds, support systems, and the appropriateness of the education being provided. This view poses a more balanced view of SEN. A quantitative study by Yamanashi (2005) concluded that inclusive classrooms afforded opportunity for students with SEN to experience the positive effects of learning and interaction even when the teacher was not able to provide one-on-one teaching and learning time. These results were accomplished through cooperative learning with peers in a collaborative environment – the inclusive classroom (Yamanashi). This view seems to correlate most highly of the three with the present philosophies governing inclusion in the classroom, in particular when contrasted with the recent mainstreaming philosophy.

### **From Mainstreaming to Inclusion**

Although often confused with the term mainstreaming, inclusion stems from a different set of philosophies. It is important, then, to note the distinction between the two concepts. Mainstreaming is closely linked to the traditional form of selective placement of students that require special education in general education classes. It is assumed that some special education students may keep up with the workload in general education

classes and may therefore join the group. Mainstreaming focuses on identifying student learning characteristics, developing specialized learning environments, and classifying students depending on their ability to function in classrooms separate from their peers, who do not have SEN (Alley, 1997). Mainstreaming was the previous method of addressing SEN, which may have contributed to the fact that only 35.9% of inclusion is based on the belief that the student should always start out in the general education classroom before being moved to a more restrictive (Stout, 2001). Inclusion broadens the focus of teaching students with SEN from academic achievements to the development of the required skills for children with EBD or a learning disability toward becoming functional and independent adults. In inclusive philosophies, this is accomplished by imposing the least restrictive learning environment possible, ideally a general classroom education with special assistance, preparation of the student for adult independence, and assistance in developing social and life skills under the guidance of an inclusion specialist (Alley, 1997). Further study needs to be conducted on the employment rates, social interaction levels, and life skills of adults with SEN who obtained their academic education in inclusive classrooms to determine the correlation of the theoretical basis of inclusion with the results.

### **Inclusion in Education**

The concept of inclusion has evolved throughout the years. Inclusion mainly refers to students with SEN. Students with SEN are described as students who have learning which significantly affect their ability to learn. Recently, inclusion has been viewed as a social concept of equality. According to Odom (2002), no one definition of

inclusion fits all, but rather, "inclusion means different things to different people" (Odom, 2002, p. 161). All services must be given to the child within the school setting, and he or she does not need to seek outside services.

Booth and Ainscow (2000) provided a summary of what inclusion in education should involve. Their list includes:

1. Valuing all students and staff equally;
2. Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools;
3. Restructuring the cultures, policies, and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality;
4. Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as 'having special educational needs';
5. Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely;
6. Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome;
7. Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality;
8. Improving schools for staff as well as for students;
9. Emphasizing the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement;
10. Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities;

11. Recognizing that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

Inclusion of student with SEN in the general education classroom is the logical place to start training new generations in the acceptance and tolerance of individuals with different backgrounds and needs. A tolerant and accepting view of individuals with diverse backgrounds has been a goal of society in the United States since the creation of the Constitution, and the continued development of new standards and methods to achieve this goal continues today. Inclusion is one more strategy that is aimed at achieving this goal.

### **The History of Inclusion**

Inclusion is a relatively new process. Before 1975, the education of special needs children was given very little consideration by the public or the government (Crossley, 2000). At the onset of education, special needs children were excluded from ordinary classrooms, and for the most part, taught at home. Such exclusion was considered more convenient than having disabled children in an ordinary school (Osborne, 1996). Even as special needs children were permitted to attend regular schools, they often were excluded from the general population of students and placed in special classrooms (Sarison & Doris, 1979). The number of special needs children continued to grow, and by the 1970s, “approximately eight million children in the United States received some form of special education, primarily through separate educational facilities” (Crossley, 2000,p. 243).

The racial segregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education* benefited students with special needs and was the first step toward inclusion. Supporters of inclusion drew parallels from segregation based on race in an effort to demonstrate that the exclusion of

special needs children should be considered unconstitutional. Court cases more specific to special needs students (*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Pennsylvania, Mills v. Board of Education*) further established the rights of special needs children and the responsibilities of the schools that should educate them.

In 1975, congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, now titled the IDEA. In regard to IDEA, Crossley (2000) wrote, Congress' goal behind the IDEA is to provide disabled children with a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment that meets their needs. Appropriate funding needs to be allocated in order for students with disabilities to be educated to the 'maximum extent appropriate,' in classrooms with non disabled peers (p.245).

The act, specifically the verbiage that indicates disabled children are to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate, provided the first real hope for inclusion. Since the act was enacted, some schools have adopted pure inclusion, but many remain very exclusive in nature.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusion**

The prevalence of inclusion in education has encouraged researchers to conduct studies of its effects. Various advantages as well as disadvantages have been identified.

#### **Advantages**

According to Becker, Dumas, and Roberts (2000), studies have demonstrated various benefits of inclusion. When students are placed in the inclusive setting, they have been shown to improve socially, academically, and behaviorally, without negatively impacting the educational experience of the other students in the classroom. Kartsen,

Peetsma, Roeleveld, and Vergeer (2001), had similar findings when comparing students with special needs who are educated in the inclusive classroom to special needs students in non-inclusive classrooms. Baker, Wang & Walberg, 1995; Carlberg & Kavale, (1980) have confirmed a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusion education on the academic and social outcome of students with SEN using meta-analyses.

A study called The Success for All Program at Johns Hopkins University also measured student achievement. This study involved family support teams, professional development for teachers, reading, tutoring, special reading programs, eight-week reading assessments, and expanded opportunities for pre-school and kindergarten children. All types of students, disabled or not disabled, showed various improvements, including an increase in friendships (Bogdan & Taylor, 1989), increased self-comfort levels and self-concept (Peck, Carlson, & Helmstetter, 1992), and growth in social cognition (Murray-Seegeert, 1989).

Pioma (1989) conducted a study of high school graduates with special needs who had been educated in segregated programs and found that over a 15-year period, the employment rates of these graduates was 20% lower than graduates who had been educated in inclusive settings. Pioma also found that it cost taxpayers double to educate a student in a self contained classroom as opposed to an inclusion classroom.

Bosworth (2001), Salend (2001), Berg (2004), and (Wood, 1993) all found that students who are educated in inclusive classrooms showed great benefits, ranging from children with Down syndrome gaining in language development and peer acceptance to

students with various disabilities becoming more engaged in their education, gaining leadership and helpfulness skills and developing friendships with non-disabled peers.

### **Disadvantages**

Several disadvantages of inclusion program also have been noted. McDonnell stated, "Although there is a research base on school reform and systems change, the nuts and bolts of what schools should specifically be doing to make inclusion work is just emerging" (Sharpe, 2005, p. 1). McDonnell cited three needs on which to focus. One was the need for more research to determine which technology would allow students with disabilities to be most successful in the general and special education classrooms. Second, there was the need for more new teacher training to teach them to serve all students. McDonnell explained, "I believe that there is a need for both well-trained general educators who have deep knowledge about subject areas and special educators who have expertise in effective instruction for students with disabilities" (Sharpe, 2005, p.1). Last, he pointed out the need to redesign teacher education programs, stating a need for teacher education programs to become more aggressive in teaching differentiated instruction for students with disabilities.

According to several authors, the problem lies in poorly planned and poorly implemented inclusion programs (Ferguson, 1995; LaMaster, Gall, Kinchin, & Siedentop, 1998). There is a need to study specific techniques, staffing models, and training protocols that are successful in making inclusion more effective. In other research, some students with autism showed growth and success when placed in inclusion

classrooms, while others who were placed in self contained classrooms showed little success(McEachin, Smith, & Lovaas, 1993).

Given the reported advantages and disadvantages researchers have uncovered in the short time that inclusion of students with SEN in the general education classroom has been in effect, it is clear that there is potential for inclusive classrooms to have a positive effect on students with SEN, but more research on the topic will be necessary to determine the true nature and severity of the effects before schools decide whether they are ready to implement inclusion system-wide.

### **Methodologies for Studies**

Various methods have been employed to conduct studies within schools on inclusion and related topics. Questionnaires are one such type used. An advantage of questionnaires is that different types of questions can be posed, including dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions, rating-type questions, constant sum questions, ration-data based questions, and open-ended questions (Cohen, 2000). Cohen writes that questionnaires are widely used and are seen as useful for collection of structured numerical data and do not require the researcher to be present. However, questionnaires can be felt as an intrusion upon the life of the respondent, whether in terms of the time taken to complete them or in regard to the questions themselves in terms of their sensitivity.

Idol (2006) used a questionnaire format in a study conducted in four elementary and four secondary schools in a large, southwestern school district, to determine how many students with disabilities were being educated in the general education classrooms.

The evaluations involved a structured interview with pre-set questions and response choices. The interview questions were specific to the roles of the educators being interviewed. The evaluator provided the interviewee a copy of the questionnaire in each interview, so that the interviewee could read the questions on the questionnaire as the evaluator asked questions.

The use of questionnaires as a means of collecting data from general education teachers for the present study is appropriate. Campbell et al. (2004, p. 146) described questionnaires as, “a very versatile data-gathering method; they are cheap, easy to administer, whether it be to three people or 300, and can be used to gather great variety of data of both quantitative and qualitative nature.” Cohen et al (2000) also praised the use of questionnaires for their expedience: They allow an efficient use of the researcher’s time, as they can collect a significant amount of information in one attempt, rather than conducting interviews over a period of weeks. Gillham (2000) added that questionnaires make efficient use of the respondent’s time as well, as they can complete the questionnaire at a time suitable to them and which does not require the researcher and respondent to work to arrange mutually convenient times to meet.

Cohen et al (2000) and Gillham (2000) emphasized the usefulness of questionnaires for ensuring participants' anonymity, which in this study, may be requested due to the study's sensitive and controversial nature. It could be argued then that questionnaires are therefore most likely to generate more truthful answers, as there is no personal contact with the interviewer.

Kartsen et al. (2001) used questionnaires in the qualitative portion of their research. A group of 34 pupils of divergent development and their teachers were interviewed to assess the children's development. Instruments used included questionnaires on the pupils' psychosocial functioning, the characteristics of their education, and an interview guide on the pupils' development as well as the process of their education.

### **Are We Ready for Inclusion?**

Programs, not children, have to be "ready for inclusion" (Odom, 2002, p. 161). Inclusion is the starting point for all children. It seems that the greatest successes attributable to inclusion do not lie in inclusion itself, but rather to the method of *implementing* the inclusive program. Theoretically, inclusion programs in schools present an advantageous program for children with SEN and other students. If inclusion is to be successful, teachers' attitudes must be considered (Baker & Gottlieb, 1980). Previous attitude studies do not suggest empathic understanding of general educators toward students with special needs. The results of one study conducted in the UK (Clough & Lindsay, 1991), which investigated the attitudes of teachers toward inclusion and associated program tools, suggest that over the past ten years or so attitudes have shifted in favor of inclusion. In a meta-analysis of American attitude studies, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that one third or less of teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms do not feel prepared to meet the needs of significantly disabled students. They do not feel they are adequately trained, have necessary resources, or have enough time to plan. These studies indicate that their attitudes towards teaching in the inclusive

setting could be the result of the severity of the disabling conditions presented to them in the classroom.

### **Teachers' Perception on Inclusion**

Recent research indicates that the success of inclusion programs is dependent on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (Cook et al., 1999; Salend, 2001; Van Reusen, Shosho, & Bonker, 2000). Studies on the link between teachers' beliefs and their actions (Lieber et al., 1998) indicate that a positive attitude among teachers is related to the success of an inclusion program. In short, the success of inclusion directly correlates to positive or negative attitudes general education teachers hold toward inclusion.

Moreover, there is empirical evidence that teacher self-efficacy is the single most important factor affecting the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion (Weisel & Dror, 2006). As stated above, Bandura (1977, 1986) has defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in his or her abilities to successfully perform a set of required behaviors necessary to achieve an anticipated result. Furthermore, an individual's sense of efficacy is constructed by a process in which feedback is received from significant others indicating their degree of trust and faith in the person.

Many researchers have found that teachers have negative perceptions of inclusion (Coates, 1989; Semmel et al., 1991; Vaughn et al., 1996). In his study of general education teachers from Iowa, Coates found that teachers supported programs of segregation did not support programs for integration. In a separate study, Semmel et al., through a survey of 381 elementary teachers in both Illinois and California, found that teachers were satisfied with programs that removed students with special needs from the

ordinary classroom. Finally, in a study in which focus groups of teachers were used to determine their feelings regarding inclusion programs, Vaughn et al. found negative attitudes toward the implementation of inclusion programs. Each of the educators in these three studies had relatively little experience with inclusion.

Other studies have been conducted with teachers who do have experience with inclusion. Villa et al. (1996) found that the more teachers had inclusion experience, the more they accepted the program. Sabastian and Mathot-Buckner (1998) found similar results in their case study of educators at the middle and high school levels in Utah. They interviewed 20 teachers and determined that teachers felt inclusion was a challenge, but that it was working. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) studied the effects of inclusion over a three-year period. Similar to the results of others, LeRoy and Simpson found that as educators become more experienced and familiar with inclusion, they seem to have more positive attitudes about inclusion and, thus, better results. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that 65% of teachers believed that inclusion was in theory a positive idea, but less than 40% believed that the inclusion process was a realistic possibility for their school district.

### **Conclusion**

In chapter 2, a review of the literature was presented. The review discussed inclusion teachers' views on special education programs, the history of mainstreaming through to inclusion, and the results of other studies that have focused on inclusive classroom settings for students with SEN. Chapter 3 will address an existing gap in the literature. The chapter covers the methodology used for the study, design of the study, the

precise research questions being investigated, the means of soliciting and selecting participants, sample size, role of the researcher, the validity and reliability of the research design, the steps of the data collection and analysis, and, finally, the relevant ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will discuss the findings and chapter 5 will interpret the findings as well as discuss implications for social change and recommendations for future research.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative study was to discern teachers' perceptions of inclusion, both among general education teachers whose previous experience is with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusive classroom, and those whose only experience has been in the inclusive classroom, has a positive influence on the success of inclusion. The group of teachers examined was teachers in elementary schools. This was accomplished via a questionnaire designed to measure teachers' attitudes toward students with special needs. Items also were included that helped to describe the characteristics of the teachers assessed in this study.

#### **Research Design**

The questionnaire used in this study was the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC) developed by Cochran (1997). Through use of the STATIC questionnaire, attitudes of teachers toward students with special needs were measured. The research design used was a quantitative descriptive design. This design permits a comparison of responses to questions across the two groups of teachers (Cozby, 2001). The use of a questionnaire provides information that is based on “quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). This means that the information collected from the questionnaire may be quantified so that descriptions of a target population may be made. In this case, the populations sampled from and of interest were elementary school teachers.

Scores on the STATIC questionnaire were examined and compared to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups of teachers. This difference was tested using an independent samples *t*-test and a Mann-Whitney U test. The independent samples *t*-test was used for normally distributed data while Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare mean scores of non-normally distributed data. The dependent variable was attitudes toward inclusion and the independent variable was whether or not the teacher had teaching experience in classrooms with solely general education students as well as in inclusion. In being able to assign numerical values to the study variables, results can be quantified, thus permitting the application of various statistical procedures. This is appropriate, as the STATIC questionnaire has been shown to be a valid and reliable measure of the attitudes of teachers who teach special needs students. Descriptive statistics, which include frequencies and measures of central tendency, were used to describe the results obtained on the questionnaire. These statistics were performed to determine the attitudes towards inclusion of the teacher participants.

The following question guided this study: Is there difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion? This question stated in both alternative and null hypothesis forms is as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general

education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

H<sub>A</sub>1: There is a significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

### **Setting and Sample**

Participants were educators in suburban Illinois. The study instrument consisted of a carefully worded questionnaire regarding perceptions teachers have toward inclusion. Participants were selected in accordance with their qualifications and positions in an inclusive school setting. Inclusion criteria were as follows. At the time of the data collection, they must have: (a) been general education teachers, (b) been teaching at the elementary school level, and (c) had special education students included in their classrooms. Study participants were 81 elementary school teachers teaching in a Western suburban Illinois schools district outside of Chicago; there were no other participants.

For the purpose of the study, a convenience sampling plan was used. This method was employed because it has an advantage over a probability sampling method (i.e., random sampling) in that the researcher is able to obtain more observations for the study in a shorter period of time (Cozby, 2001). Additionally, the convenience sampling method was appropriate for the present study given that the teachers were not randomly selected from the entire population of teachers in elementary schools, but were selected based on whether they voluntarily chose to participate in the current study.

### **Role of Researcher**

It was the researcher's responsibility to contact potential participants to determine if they were willing to participate. The STATIC survey instrument was provided to the participants to gather the needed data. A demographic questionnaire was also provided to participants in order to gather information regarding ethnicity, education, location of teaching assignment, average class size, types of special need in classroom, number of special need students in classroom, whether or not teacher has special needs child living in home, years of experience teaching, and type of teaching experience. Data analysis was based on the STATIC and demographic data collected.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used in this study were the STATIC (Cochran, 1997) and a demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was comprised of both fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice items. The information collected via the demographic questionnaire included specific information, including participants' ethnicity, education, location of teaching assignment, average class size, types of special need in classroom, number of special need students in classroom, whether or not teacher has special needs child living in home, years of experience teaching, and type of teaching experience.

To assess whether general education teachers had teaching experience with solely general education students as well as with special education students, or just with special education students, a yes/no question was added to the STATIC questionnaire.

The STATIC was developed by Cochran (1997) to measure the attitudes of teachers who teach students with special needs. It also was used to compare the attitudes

of teachers toward disabled or special need persons in general. The STATIC questionnaire is comprised of 20 items. Some example items are: Special education children should be in special education classes, anxiety towards teaching special education children, training for teaching special education children, and accommodating the physically disabled. Four subscales comprise the STATIC questionnaire. These are (a) Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education, (b) Professional Issues, (c) Philosophical Issues, and (d) Logistical Concerns.

The Advantages and Disadvantages subscale is comprised of seven questions (7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 20). The Professional Issues subscale is comprised of five questions (1, 2, 3, 4, and 10). The Philosophical Issues subscale is comprised of four questions (5, 6, 11, and 16). And finally, the Logistical Concerns subscale is comprised of four questions (9, 17, 18, and 19).

The researcher was able to garner verbal permission from Dr. Cochran to use the STATIC questionnaire prior to conducting the study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The validity of an instrument refers to how well it represents the information collected (Cozby, 2001). In other words, the validity of an instrument is its ability to accurately measure the variable or construct of interest. To affirm the validity of the STATIC instrument, Cochran (1997) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation to assess its factor structure. He found that four factors were being measured by the STATIC instrument. These factors corresponded to the Advantages and

Disadvantages, Professional Issues, Philosophical Issues, and Logistical Concerns subscale scores.

The reliability of an instrument is a measure of the consistency between items used to measure a certain behavior or construct (Cozby, 2001). Cochran (1997) conducted analyses of the internal consistency (via Cronbach's alpha) of the full measure and each of its subscales. He found that for the overall STATIC instrument, the reliability was consistently observed to be around  $\alpha = .89$ . This coefficient held for both general and special education teachers as well as elementary and secondary school teachers. As for the individual subscale scores confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis, varying reliabilities were observed. The Advantages and Disadvantages had a reliability of  $\alpha = .87$ , the Professional Issues had a reliability of  $\alpha = .83$ , Philosophical Issues had a reliability of  $\alpha = .57$ , and Logistical Concerns had a reliability of  $\alpha = .62$ . This provided evidence that both the overall STATIC score and subscale scores were adequate measurements based on the reliability coefficients.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were obtained by administering the STATIC and demographic questionnaires to the participants. Teachers were provided with a description of the study and informed consent information (see Appendix C) along with the questionnaires. The amount of time it would take to complete the study was provided to the potential participants, as was any other further information necessary for them to make an informed decision about participating in the study. The potential participants were made aware that if at any point in the study they wished to not finish the study, they could

discontinue participating without any consequences to them. Participants were told that completion of the survey would be taken as implied consent to participate, and as such that written consent was then waived.

The questionnaires were to be completed and returned to the researcher within four weeks. The next step was to apply the quantitative methods outlined by Cochran (1998) in the analysis of the data toward obtaining a complete and insightful view of the issues facing educators within the inclusive classroom. The understanding reached when the study results were interpreted was the basis for conclusions and recommendations made for addressing the issues facing the specified participants. These results also served as the basis for recommendations for further research into the challenges posed by inclusive classroom settings.

The raw data from the questionnaires were imported into a computer spreadsheet, such as Microsoft Excel for analysis. The information was imported such that each row received a unique identification number. This identification number was used to identify which responses corresponded to which participants. The data were saved on a separate flash drive and stored in a filing cabinet or a personal computer to which only the researcher has access. By following these procedures, the confidentiality of each participant was maintained such that no personal information was accessible. The data will be kept on file for a period of 5 years, at which point it will be destroyed and deleted from the storage device.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analyses strategies used in this study comprise summary statistics and independent samples *t*-tests (Mann-Whitney U procedures in cases where in the data were non-normally distributed). Each of these analyses was conducted in SPSS Version 16.0. Descriptive statistics include frequency distributions as well as measures of central tendency. For the frequency distributions, the number and percentage of each occurrence was presented for the categorical or dichotomous variable under study. These included the demographic characteristics of the teachers. The measures of central tendency included a presentation of the mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values for the continuous variables in the study. These continuous variables included the attitudes toward inclusion items for the two groups of teachers being compared. The distribution of the variables was assessed to ensure that assumptions of normality were met for the difference tests. When assumption of normality was not met, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted.

### **Ethics**

Permission was sought from prospective participants. Participants signed a waiver. When conducting a study that includes human subjects, a number of ethical concerns must be taken into consideration (Cozby, 2001). The researcher obtained approval from her institutional review board (IRB Approval Number: 12-17-09-0303999) before any data were collected. Once approval had been granted, the researcher provided each of the participants with an informed consent form describing the main components of the study. According to Cozby (2001), the components of informed consent include

the purpose of the research and expected duration and procedures; a clear statement conveying that participants have the option to decline or withdraw from the research prior to and once the research begins; a clear statement conveying that there will be no consequences of declining or withdrawing; adequate information to truly inform the decision to participate (i.e., especially indicating any information that is likely to have an effect on whether a person would choose to participate or decline), including the potential risks, potential discomfort, or any reasonably expected adverse effects participation may have; a statement of the potential benefits the research may have; a statement explaining the limits of confidentiality; the provision of information regarding any incentives offered (e.g., gift certificates, prizes); and, information regarding who can be contacted if questions arise about the research.

### **Conclusion**

In chapter 3, the research methodology to be employed in this study was presented. Detailed information regarding the data collection procedures to be followed as well as the statistical analyses proposed (i.e., descriptive statistics, independent samples t test, Mann-Whitney U test procedures) were discussed. Also discussed, was the appropriateness of the research design to this particular research question, as well as the sample sought, the sampling plan, and the role of the researcher. In chapter 4, the results of this study are presented and chapter 5 will interpret the findings as well as discuss implications for social change and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 4: Results

This descriptive quantitative study focused on examining whether the attitudes held by general education teachers toward inclusion are influenced by a central proposition from Bandura's (1986) social-cognitive theory. Bandura's theory (1977; 1986) suggests that one's sense of self-efficacy can influence positive beliefs. In this study, the STATIC (Cochran, 1997) was used to measure the attitudes of teachers toward students with special needs. This questionnaire was administered to teachers in elementary schools of suburban Illinois who were selected according to their qualifications and position in an inclusive school setting. To be included in the study, they had to meet the criteria of being general education teachers, who were teaching at the elementary school level, and teaching in the inclusive classroom setting. The STATIC has four subscales: (a) Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education, (b) Professional Issues, (c) Philosophical Issues, and (d) Logistical Concerns.

The design employed allowed an examination and comparison of the following specific research question: Is there difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion? This question stated both as the null and the alternative hypothesis is as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant difference between the perception towards inclusion of general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is solely with general

education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

H<sub>A1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the perception towards inclusion of general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is solely with general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

This chapter details the descriptive statistics of the study variables, including the demographic variables as descriptive variables and the STATIC questionnaire responses as dependent variables. To determine whether there were significant differences across the two groups of teachers on the subscales of the STATIC questionnaire, independent samples *t*-tests (in cases of normally-distributed data) and Mann-Whitney U procedures (in the case of non-normally-distributed data) were used. This chapter concluded with an overview of the findings that emerged.

### **Data Collection**

In total, 81 teachers participated in this study. Their demographic data are summarized as follows: The location of the teachers is divided into two groups, suburban and community. 82.7% identified their teaching location as a suburban school ( $N = 67$ ) and 17.3% a community school ( $N = 14$ ). In terms of their teaching assignments, most identified themselves as teaching elementary (K-6) regular education ( $N = 74$ , 91.4%), whereas smaller numbers identified themselves as teaching K-12 regular education ( $N = 7$ , 8.6%), however, all taught in an elementary school in District 303. The experiences of these teachers were gathered via two questions. The first question pertained to their years

of teaching in their current assignment and the second question pertained to their years of teaching as a whole. In their current assignments, most respondents had been teaching in them for more than 10 years ( $N = 24, 29.6\%$ ). In terms of their entire teaching careers, most had, again, been teaching for more than 10 years ( $N = 36, 44.4\%$ ). The average class size was about 11 to 20 students ( $N = 14, 17.3\%$ ) and 21 to 30 students ( $N = 67, 82.7\%$ ). The majority of teachers had earned a Master's degree ( $N = 55, 67.9\%$ ) and most respondents were Caucasian ( $N = 74, 91.4\%$ ). In terms of the types of special needs students that participants would least want in their classrooms, most commonly cited were students who are emotionally disturbed ( $N = 36, 44.4\%$ ). Less than half of the teachers reported having two or three special needs children as students ( $N = 33, 40.7\%$ ). Most did not have a special needs child living with them ( $N = 67, 82.7\%$ ). Regarding the grouping variable, there were more teachers whose previous teaching experience was with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusion classroom ( $N = 50, 61.7\%$ ) as compared to those whose only experience teaching is in inclusive classrooms ( $N = 31, 38.3\%$ ).

The results of the STATIC questionnaire identified four subscales: the Advantages and Disadvantages, the Professional Issues, Philosophical Issues and Logistical Concerns (Cochran, 1997). To derive subscale scores, participant responses to the 20 questions regarding perception were summed. Cochran explained, "the sum score of the 20 items for each subject may be considered an index of their attitude toward inclusion" (Cochran, 1997, p. 69).

### Data Analysis

To determine whether the data were normally distributed, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted. The results of this test indicate which type of statistical approach is appropriate when analyzing the data to assess for any differences across the two groups of participants. In instances in which the data were normally distributed, an independent samples *t*-test was used to compare the mean subscale scores across the groups. In cases in which the data were not normally distributed, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to test for any significant differences across the two groups. Chi-square goodness of fit tests were used to assess the normality of each of the four subscales of the STATIC. As a point of reference, data are deemed normally distributed if the *p*-value associated with the chi-square test is greater than .05, and non-normally distributed if the *p*-value is less than .05. Results indicated that the Professional Issues subscale ( $\chi^2 = 8.75$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .12$ ) and the Logistical Concerns subscale ( $\chi^2 = 8.64$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .12$ ) are normally distributed. The Advantages and Disadvantages of inclusive education subscale ( $\chi^2 = 17.04$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .00$ ) and the Philosophical Issues subscale ( $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .02$ ) are not normally distributed.

To answer the primary research question of this study, a comparison of means for each of the four subscales was conducted across the two groups of teachers. For the purposes of data analysis and discussion, *Group 1* refers to teachers whose teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and *Group 2* refers to teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

In regard first to the normally-distributed data, the means and standard deviations of teachers' scores on the Professional Issues subscale and Logistical Concerns subscale are presented in Table 1. It can be observed from these data that Group 1 had a relatively higher mean score on the Professional Issues subscale ( $M = 17.94$ ,  $SD = 2.15$ ) compared to Group 2 ( $M = 17.1$ ,  $SD = 2.44$ ). Group 1 also had a relatively higher mean score on the Logistical Concerns subscale ( $M = 16.11$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ) compared to Group 2 ( $M = 15.40$ ,  $SD = 2.69$ ).

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Professional Issues and Logistical Concerns*

STATIC Subscale	Teaching Experience	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
Professional issues	Group 1 (I have experience teaching in classrooms with solely general education students as well as in the inclusive setting)	47	17.94	2.15	.31
	Group 2 (I only have experience teaching in inclusive classrooms)	30	17.10	2.44	.45
Logistical concerns	Group 1 (I have experience teaching in classrooms with solely general education students as well as in the inclusive setting)	47	16.11	2.31	.34
	Group 2 (I only have experience teaching in inclusive classrooms)	30	15.40	2.69	.49

The results of the independent samples *t*-test across the two groups of teachers for the Professional Issues and Logistical Concerns subscales are presented in Table 2. Levene's test for Equality of Variances shows that it is statistically valid to assume equal variances for both dependent variables (Levene's Test *p*-value > .05). Thus, the *t*-test for equality of means under this category is used. Results indicate that there was no significant difference between the two groups of teachers on either the Professional Issues subscale ( $t = 1.58, p = .12$ ) or the Logistical Concerns subscale ( $t = 1.226, p = .224$ ). Although scores are generally higher for teacher participants classified as Group 1, the difference is statistically insignificant which implies that these groups have the same perspective on professional issues involved and of logistical concerns involved in classrooms with inclusions. Teachers with experience in teaching solely general education classrooms do not see a difference in these classes with those with inclusions. This is a probable reason as to why the results showed insignificant difference. It is more likely that the experience of teachers in teaching general education classrooms did not affect their attitudes towards teaching inclusive classrooms.

Table 2  
*Independent Samples t-test for Professional Issues and Logistical Concerns Subscales*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% CI of the Difference	
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i> Diff.	<i>SE</i> Diff.	Lower	Upper
Professional Issues									
Equal variances assumed	.285	.595	1.578	75	.119	.836	.530	-.219	1.892
Equal variances not assumed			1.534	56.182	.131	.836	.545	-.255	1.928
Logistical Concerns									
Equal variances assumed	.032	.858	1.226	75	.224	.706	.576	-.441	1.854
Equal variances not assumed			1.186	55.194	.241	.706	.595	-.487	1.899

*Note.* *CI* = Confidence interval; *M* Diff. = Mean difference; *SD* Diff. = Standard Deviation difference.

In regard to the non-normally-distributed data, the comparison of means across Groups 1 and 2 was conducted using the Mann-Whitney U test. This test is appropriate

for comparison of means when groups have non-normal data. Table 3 presents the mean rank of data for the two non-normally-distributed subscales, Advantages and Disadvantages and Philosophical Issues. Group 1 had a higher mean on the Advantages and Disadvantages subscale ( $M = 41.38$ , Sum Ranks = 1945) than did Group 2 ( $M = 35.27$ , Sum Ranks = 1058). Similarly, Group 1 had a higher mean on the Philosophical Issues subscale ( $M = 41.37$ , Sum Ranks = 1944.50) than did Group 2 ( $M = 35.28$ , Sum Ranks = 1058.5).

Table 3  
*Mean Ranks and Sum Ranks for Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education and Philosophical Issues Subscales*

STATIC Subscale	Teaching Experience	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Advantages and Disadvantages	Group 1 (I have experience teaching in classrooms with solely general education students as well as in the inclusive setting)	47	41.38	1945.00
		30	35.27	1058.00
	Group 2 (I only have experience teaching in inclusive classrooms)			
	Total	77		
Philosophical Issues	Group 1 (I have experience teaching in classrooms with solely general education students as well as in the inclusive setting)	47	40.79	1917.00
		30	36.20	1086.00
	Group 2 (I only have experience teaching in inclusive classrooms)			
	Total	77		

The Mann-Whitney Comparisons of Means for Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education and Philosophical Issues are presented in Table 4. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups of teachers on these two subscales of the STATIC. The Mann-Whitney U test points to a significant difference between groups when its associated  $p$ -value is less than .05. The  $p$ -values of both the Advantages and Disadvantages subscale (.234;  $U = 593$ ) and Philosophical Issues subscale (.376;  $U = 621$ ) exceeded .05, indicating no significant differences between the two groups of teachers on these subscales.

The findings of this study indicate that the null hypothesis, which stated that there would be no significant difference between the general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion who have taught classrooms with solely general education students and now teach inclusion and teachers who have only taught inclusion classes, cannot be rejected. Although teacher participants who have experience in general education classes responded with relatively higher scores in advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education subscale and the philosophical issue subscales as compared to those who have only taught in classrooms with inclusion, the statistical difference was deemed to be insignificant. This implies that the attitudes of teachers, whether or not they have handled general education classes or solely inclusive classes, are the same. Both groups of teacher participants view their students in the same manner probably because regardless of the experience of teachers, they see the value of imparting knowledge to their students, with or without special needs. It is highly probable those teachers who have taught in solely

general education classes do not see any difference with inclusive classrooms wherein students with special needs are taught.

Table 4  
*Mann-Whitney Comparison of Means for Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education and Philosophical Issues Subscales*

	Advantages and Disadvantages	Philosophical Issues
Mann-Whitney U	593.000	621.000
Wilcoxon W	1058.000	1086.000
Z	-1.190	-.885
Asymptotic <i>p</i> -value (2-tailed)	.234	.376

### Summary of Findings

Results of the analyses conducted indicated that the Professional Issues and Logistical Concerns subscales comprised normally-distributed data whereas the Advantages and Disadvantages of inclusive education and Philosophical Issues responses were non-normally-distributed. Therefore, the independent samples *t*-test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference in the two groups of teachers for Professional Issues and Logistical Concerns. Meanwhile, the Mann Whitney U test was used for the Advantages and Disadvantages of inclusive education and Philosophical Issues. The primary finding of this study is that there were no significant differences across the two groups of teachers on any of the four subscales of the STATIC. These findings indicated that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. That is, there is no support for inferring a difference in attitudes toward inclusion across general education teachers' whose teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach

inclusion and teachers whose teaching experience is only in inclusive classrooms.

Chapter 5 provides interpretations of these results, provides recommendations for action and further research, and discusses implications for social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In the United States, how special education is viewed has changed since the 1970s. The education system has become responsible for including students with special needs for appropriate education, as reflected in the laws (IDEA, 2004; No Child Left Behind, 2001). IDEA mandates that students with disabilities are, to the maximum extent possible, educated in classrooms alongside students without disabilities. It is imperative, therefore, to investigate any potential obstacles to a child's receipt of special education services.

Ideal inclusive education focuses on fitting schools to meet the needs of all students. Quality instruction for a highly diverse group of students requires collaborative teams to develop and implement educational programs designed to meet the needs of all students (Bradley et al., 1997). Classroom teachers do not always feel adequately prepared to meet the broadening range of student needs. These needs may include both academic and behavioral goals of special and general education students. (Schumm et al., 1995). These difficulties include deficits in teachers' skill levels, lack of necessary time available for the increase in instructional planning, and not being accustomed or prepared to implement individualized and small group instruction within a large group. According to Huefner (2000), difficulties also include an increase in paperwork, lack of financial compensation, lack of adequate funding for special education programs, and required time for additional training and outreach for special and general education teachers (Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003).

This study sought to determine whether attitudes toward inclusion differ across general education teachers whose teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion and teachers whose teaching experience is only in inclusive classrooms. A quantitative descriptive design employing the STATIC (Cochran, 1997) to measure the attitudes of teachers towards special needs students in general was used. The findings measured and compared the attitude towards persons with special needs across the two teacher groups. This chapter provides interpretation of the results presented in chapter 4, makes recommendations for action and future research, discusses implications for social change, and concludes with a summary statement.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

This section includes an interpretation of the results. These interpretations were based on the theoretical framework and the literature review. The primary research question guiding this study was, Is there difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion? The null and alternative hypotheses associated with this question were:

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion

H<sub>A</sub>1: There is a significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general

education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion.

Alternately stated, the research question asked whether teachers' attitudes toward inclusion differ based on their past experience with or without teaching inclusion classrooms. The theoretical framework of this study was Bandura's (1994) social-cognitive theory and, more particularly, his theory of self-efficacy. According to Bandura, people's beliefs in their efficacy are developed via four main sources of influence (i.e., their beliefs in their abilities to successfully perform a certain task or accomplish a certain goal). These include: (a) experience with personal mastery (b) seeing other people being successful managing similar tasks, (c) social persuasion by others reinforcing their capability to succeed, and (d) physical and emotional conclusions regarding personal strengths and weaknesses. According to Bandura's social-cognitive theory (1994), human functioning is the result of the interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. Bandura (1994) argued that a strong sense of efficacy enhances confidence. People who feel competent in their capabilities are less likely to avoid difficult challenges (Bandura, 2004). According to Bandura's theories, teachers' attitudes as well as their beliefs in their efficacy regarding teaching inclusive classrooms may be influenced by their mastery experiences. Indeed, the success of inclusive classroom education may be influenced by teachers' attitudes and their beliefs about inclusive education.

Inclusive education refers to meeting the educational needs of all students. Classroom teachers must be well prepared to meet the varying needs of students,

however, barriers to effective inclusion practices exist (Cook, 2001; Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999, Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2000; Dudley-Marling, 2004; McComas, & Laflamme, 2002; Praisner, 2003). Those barriers include teachers feeling unprepared and unable to implement IEPs for each student in their classrooms with SEN (Cook, 2001; Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999, Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2000; Dudley-Marling, 2004; McComas, & Laflamme, 2002; Praisner, 2003).

In this study, the researcher focused on the impact teaching in inclusive classrooms had on general education teachers and their perceptions of inclusive education. After The STATIC data were obtained a *t*-test and Mann-Whitney analysis was conducted to test for significant differences in the perceptions of inclusion across the two groups of teachers. Those whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and those whose only teaching experience is with inclusion

The Professional Issues and Logistical Concerns subscales of the STATIC followed a normal distribution, and therefore a *t*-test was used to test for significant differences across teacher groups on these two subscales. The Advantages and Disadvantages of inclusive education and Philosophical Issues subscales' data were not normally distributed, and therefore a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess for significant differences across teacher groups on these two subscales.

Results indicated that teachers with experience teaching inclusion only classrooms have relatively higher mean scores on all four of the STATIC subscales than do teachers who also have previous experience teaching classrooms with only general

education students, but now teach in the inclusive setting. However, these differences, in the cases of all four subscales, did not reach statistical significance (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ).

Therefore, the null hypothesis of this study (which stated that there is no significant difference between general education teachers' perceptions towards inclusion whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only teaching experience is with inclusion) cannot be rejected. This implies that there is no significant influence of experience in teaching in classrooms with special and general education students on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion.

Several prior researchers have found that many teachers with various levels of experience with inclusion hold negative attitudes toward inclusion (Coates, 1989; Semmel et al., 1991; Vaughn et al., 1996). Semmel et al. found that elementary school teachers were satisfied with segregated programs. Vaughn's study using focus groups of teachers revealed negative attitudes toward the implementation of inclusion programs.

However, there have been other researchers that reported that teachers who are more experienced with inclusion tend to have more positive opinions about inclusion. Sabastian and Mathot-Buckner (1998) found positive attitudes in their case study of educators at the middle and high school levels in Utah. Based on LeRoy and Simpson's (1996) study, they found that as educators became more experienced and familiar with inclusion, they held more positive attitudes about inclusion, and thus, had better results. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that 65% of teachers believed that inclusion was

good in theory, but less than 40% believed that the inclusion process was a realistic possibility for their own school district.

Results of the present study suggest there was no significant difference in perceptions toward inclusion across general education teachers who have experience teaching classrooms with solely general education students, but now teach inclusion, and teachers whose only experience is in inclusion. This may be attributable to at least one factor—methodological variance. That is, previous studies employed case studies or other qualitative methodologies in examinations of teacher’s attitudes toward inclusion. The qualitative method may have enabled those researchers to obtain a greater understanding and more in-depth analysis of these attitudes and the factors that play into these attitudes. The researcher employed a larger sample, quantitative survey design to be able to quantify participant response to each question.

The current study revealed that teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusive classroom, did not differ significantly from teachers whose only teaching experience has been in the inclusive classroom. This implies that there is no significant influence of experience on general education teachers’ perceptions toward inclusion. The present analysis yielded valuable insight into this topic and has important implications for social change, theory, and research.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The acknowledgement of current teacher attitudes towards inclusion promotes positive social change by serving as a rationale for other school districts to create

professional development opportunities. These opportunities will allow general education teachers become better prepared in supporting and educating special needs students in their classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the attitudes by general education teachers have an influence on their perceptions of inclusion. The attitude trends toward inclusion evaluated among general education teachers with or without teaching in inclusive classrooms contribute to the body of knowledge that can assist education policy makers, school administrators, general education teachers, and parents by exploring the influence of self-efficacy on teacher's perception toward inclusion. The present analysis has laid the foundation for further exploration of how teachers with different experiences in teaching in the general education and inclusion classrooms will actually implement quality instruction in inclusion classrooms and how those experiences affect the success of teaching in inclusion classrooms. This study provided a starting point; however, the findings suggested a need to further examine the influences of teachers' experiences with inclusion using a larger sample size and adding teachers' gender and specific grade levels taught as variables. Whereas some researchers have reported that teachers who were experienced solely with inclusion tended to have more positive opinions about inclusion, there also have been studies that report that the majority of teachers surveyed believed that was a realistic possibility for their school district (Mastropieri, 1996).

This new data will continue to affect social change because now school administrators and school teachers have more information about general education teachers' perceptions toward inclusion. The results of this study are likely to be of interest

to the field of special education because the success of inclusion is crucial to a successful education of students with special needs. As stated above, special education students have a right to a (FAPE). There remains, however, a need for a better understanding of teachers' perceptions toward inclusion and how the inclusive environment can be improved. This provides a starting point to examine teacher's attitudes toward inclusion and special education students and a reexamination of how special and general education teachers can work together to fulfill the academic needs of all students.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was limited in several ways. First, the study relied exclusively on a self-report inventory to measure teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Whenever participants are asked to self-report, the environment in which questions are answered and social desirability bias can occur, thus affecting participants' responses. Because participants completed the surveys on their own, without the researcher present, it is not known to what extent other people or distractions may have influenced any one individual's responses to the STATIC items. Additionally, in the contemporary culture wherein discriminatory attitudes are frowned upon, participants may have felt a desire to appear socially sensitive, and thus conveyed more positive attitudes than they actually hold.

Second, the sample size and sampling frame may be limiting factors. The sample was limited to one school district in the Midwest. Attitudes within a school district may become relatively homogenized over time, as within any group or culture, and this may account for the lack of a difference between the two groups of teachers sampled.

Selecting participants from a larger heterogeneous sample of participants creates potential for more variation in attitudes and behaviors. Too, because the sample was not a representative sample of teachers, the results should not be generalized to all teachers.

Further research is needed to develop a depth of understanding in this curricular area. Subsequent study in this area is likely to help uncover the factors that do influence general education teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusion. The following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1. A replication of this study using a larger, more heterogeneous and representative sample is recommended. Although the sample size is adequate for the analyses conducted, a larger sample size introduces more statistical power and the ability to pick up effects in the data. Examination of the subscale means and mean ranks across the two teacher groups shows that Group 1's scores were somewhat higher than Group 2's on each subscale. It is possible, then, there was a trend toward a significant difference between the two groups of teachers, but that sample size and other factors prevented its emergence. Related, because this study was conducted with participants from only one school district, the homogeneous makeup of the sample (i.e., that it was drawn from one school district) may have restricted the potential to discern differences across teachers with varying levels of experience. That is, it is possible that a larger, more heterogeneous sample would have provided responses representing a greater diversity of attitudes, and that a difference between the two teacher groups would have emerged. Also, the results of a

study based on one school district in suburban Illinois, although a contribution to the literature, cannot be reliably generalized to all teachers nationally.

Therefore, future research should employ a larger sample with participants from multiple school districts and states including elementary and middle schools.

2. Another approach to understanding the factors that influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion is to employ a case study design. This approach would likely yield a more in-depth understanding of the issue at hand, to an extent at least. Case studies are limited in that their results are not generalizable to the population as a whole, because they rely on the very individual experiences of one or two cases.
3. Similarly, a qualitative design using interviews, personal experiences, observations, or ethnographic methodologies would likely provide an in-depth understanding of inclusion attitudes, but too would be subject to limitations that are similar to those faced by case studies.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study reported here was to examine general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and to assess whether differences in attitudes toward inclusion exist between teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students but now teach in the inclusive classroom, and those whose only teaching experience has been in the inclusive classroom. The results showed that the teachers whose previous teaching experience is with solely general education students but

now teach in the inclusive classroom, showed slightly higher scores on the STATIC than did teachers whose only teaching experience has been in the inclusive classroom. These differences, however, did not reach statistical significance. The present results, then, suggest that attitudes toward inclusion held by general education teachers are not influenced by their mastery experiences with inclusive teaching.

The present findings are not consistent with previous findings that teachers who are more experienced with inclusion tend to have more positive opinions about inclusion. Sabastian and Mathot-Buckner (1998) and LeRoy and Simpson (1996) found that as educators became more experienced and familiar with inclusion, they held more positive attitudes about the success of inclusion. The findings of the present study point to a need for further study of the factors that influence teachers' attitude towards inclusion, including whether experience teaching classes with solely general education students before teaching inclusion is a factor. The results presented here contribute to the body of research regarding general teachers' attitude toward inclusion. The lack of a difference across teachers with varying levels of experience means that the question of experience remains open and in need of further study.

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## Appendix A: Research Authorization Form



Community Unit School District 303

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**Donald D. Schlomann, Ph.D. • Superintendent of Schools • (630) 513-3030**

December 14, 2009

Nicole MacCarthy  
Nicole.dolman@waldenu.edu

Dear Ms. MacCarthy,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION: GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM" within the District 303 organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite members of my organization, whose names and contact information I will provide, to participate in the study as survey subjects. Their participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Elementary Education  
Becky.McCabe@d303.org  
630.513.3030  
630.513.5392 (fax)

## Appendix B: Teacher Consent Form

Dear District 303 Elementary School Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a research study on Regular Education Teachers' Perceptions of Special Education Inclusion being conducted by Nicole MacCarthy, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. You were selected as a possible participant because of your qualifications as a regular education, elementary school teacher. If you have had previous inclusion experience, or are teaching in the inclusive setting now, I would greatly appreciate your input. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in the study. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a survey that includes both a demographic section and a section that asks you questions about your attitude toward having students with special needs in your classroom.
- This survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

By completing the attached survey entitled the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC), you agree to participate in the study titled:

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION: GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

By completing the survey you understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect you:

1. Your responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future publications.
2. Your participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point in the study prior to submission of the survey.
3. Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. 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.
4. Your consent or refusal to participate in this study will not affect your employment in any way. Your participation however, will help to determine factors related to inclusion and its influence on general education teachers.
5. There is no compensation for your participation.

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via e-mail: [nicole.dolman@waldenu.edu](mailto:nicole.dolman@waldenu.edu). If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you may call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210.

By completion of this survey it is implied that you agree to participate in this study. And to protect your privacy, no consent signature or other identifier is requested.

Please keep/print this consent letter for your records and if you choose to participate in this study, please complete the attached survey.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Nicole MacCarthy

## Appendix C: Letter To Expert Judges

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Special Education program at Walden University. I AM CURRENTLY WORKING ON A DISSERTATION TITLED “Attitudes Towards Inclusion: General Education Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom.” There are two items that I would greatly appreciate your expert judgment on.

I chose a scale, the *Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms* (STATIC), as a means to measure the attitudes of teachers who teach students with special needs. It was also used to compare the attitudes of teachers towards disabled or special needs persons in general. Added however, is one question to the original instrument. This question was added in order to measure difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers who have taught classrooms only with general education students and teachers who have taught classes with both special and general education students. This question is “Is there difference in attitudes toward inclusion between general education teachers who have taught classrooms only with general education students and teachers who have taught classes with both special and general education students?”

The STATIC Questionnaire also includes a Demographic Survey that will help to identify characteristics of each participant within this study. The information that will be collected from the demographic questionnaire will include whether the individual is an elementary school teacher. Also included on the demographic questionnaire will be information, which includes the age, gender, ethnicity, education, and years of experience teaching of the participants.

Through this letter, I am asking experts to validate the STATIC and Demographic Survey given its nature to my study. Please see the instrument provided.

If you are willing, I request that you provide any feedback and or concerns that may benefit my use of this instrument.

Sincerely,

Nicole MacCarthy  
Nicole.dolman@waldenu.edu

## Appendix D: STATIC Scoring Information

Revised 3/8/2000

Be sure to reverse code items 3, 4, 7, 9, 13, and 15 when entering or analyzing data as follows: 0 = 5, 1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, 4 = 1, 5 = 0

Once the items indicated in #1 above are reverse coded, the sum score of the twenty items for each subject may be considered an index of their attitude toward inclusion. Higher scores are indicative of more positive attitudes. Lower scores are indicative of more negative attitudes.

Indices for each of the four factors identified for the STATIC may be calculated in the same manner. Items associated with each subscale are as follows:

Factor 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education; Items: 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20

Factor 2: Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education; Items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9

Factor 3: Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education; Items: 5, 6, 10, 16

Factor 4: Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education; Items: 8, 17, 18, 19

Please remember that, at this time, the norm group for the STATIC was teachers from school districts in the Southeastern United States; therefore, inferences made from/to other populations may be limited ( $N = 481$ ,  $\mu = 58.91$ ,  $\sigma = 7.94$ ,  $sem \pm 2.63$ ). However, the norm group did approximate a normal distribution.

Presently, STATIC data is being collected from teachers in the Midwestern United States, Canada, Great Britain, Greece and Japan. Please share with the author of the STATIC your findings as additional information and data are available.

Any use of the STATIC requires that: (1) permission is obtained from the author, (2) the author's name appear *on the instrument*, (3) acknowledgment is made to the author of the instrument using one of the citations below in any publication(s) that may arise from the use of it, and (4) additional requests for permission to use the instrument be obtained for each subsequent use, research study, or project after initially obtaining permission. Minor changes may be made to demographical data collected or to the instructions on the instrument for collecting demographical data to meet the individual needs for specific research questions.

H. Keith Cochran, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
 Department of Psychology | 3950 East Newman Road | Joplin, Missouri 64801  
 Cochran-k@mail.mssc.edu

## Appendix E: STATIC Measure

INFORMATION  
STATIC

Scale of Teachers= Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms  
H. Keith Cochran  
1999

**DIRECTIONS:** The purpose of this instrument is to obtain information about your attitude toward the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular education classrooms. There are no correct or incorrect answers. Your responses are completely autonomous and confidential. You should mark your response to each item on the sheet. Also, please adhere to the simple guidelines below when completing your response sheet.

## DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Choose the option that best describes the location of your teaching assignment for this year.

- Urban (100,000 or more)
- Suburban (30,000-99,999)
- Community (5,000-29,000)
- Rural (less than 5,000)

2. Choose the option that best identifies your teaching assignment for this year.

- Preschool – Special Education
- Elementary (K-6) – Special Education
- Secondary (7-12) – Special Education
- Elementary (K-6) – Regular Education
- Secondary (7-12) – Regular Education

3. Choose the option that identifies the number of years experience you have had in your current assignment as recorded in Question 2.

- Preservice or Student Teaching
- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

4. Choose the option that identifies the number of years experience you will have as a teacher at the end of this school year.

- Preservice or Student Teaching
- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

5. Choose the option that best describes your average class size.

- 1-10 Students
- 11-20 Students
- 21-30 Students
- 31-40 Students
- More than 40 Students

6. Choose the option that identifies the highest degree that you have earned.

- Less than Bachelor's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Educational Specialist Degree
- Doctor of Education
- Doctor of Philosophy

7. Choose the option that most closely identifies your racial/ethnic background.

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- Other

8. Choose the option that identifies the type of special needs student you would least prefer to have in your classroom as an inclusion student.

- Learning Disabled (LD)
- Emotionally Disturbed (ED)
- Health or Physical Differences
- None of the above
- All of the above

9. Choose the option corresponding to the number of students that are included in your classroom this year who have been identified as special education students.

- 0 Students
- 1 Student
- 2-3 Students
- 4-5 Students
- More than 5 Students

10. Choose the option corresponding to the statement that best describes you.

- I do not have a child with special needs living in my home.
- I do have a child with special needs living in my home. (If you came from a family where there was a person with special needs, mark this option.)

11. Choose the option that best describes your teaching experience.

- I have experience teaching in classrooms with only general education students as well as classrooms with general education and special education students.
- I have experience teaching in classrooms with only general education students and special education students.

## SURVEY

1. I am confident in my ability to teach children with special needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

2. I have adequately trained to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

3. I become easily frustrated when teaching students with special needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

4. I become anxious when I learn that a student with special needs will be in my classroom.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5. Although children differ intellectually, physically, and psychologically, I believe that all children can learn in most environments.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

6. I believe that academic progress is possible in children with special needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7. I believe that children with special needs should be placed in special education classes.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

8. I am comfortable teaching a child that is moderately physically disabled.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

9. I have problems teaching a student with cognitive deficits.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

10. I can adequately handle students with mild to moderate behavioral problems.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

11. Student with special needs learn social skills that are modeled by regular education students.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

12. Students with special needs have higher academic achievements when included in the regular education classroom.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

13. It is difficult for children with special needs to make strides in academic achievements in the regular education classroom.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

14. Self-esteem of children with special needs is increased when included in the regular education classroom.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

15. Students with special needs in the regular education classroom hinder the academic progress of the regular education student.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. Special inservice training in teaching special needs student should be required for all regular education teachers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

17. I do not mind making physical arrangements in my room to meet the needs of students with special needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

18. Adaptive materials and equipment are easily acquired for meeting the needs of students with special needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

19. My principal is supportive in making needed accommodations for teaching children with special needs.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

20. Students with special needs should be included in regular education classrooms.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Not sure, but tend to disagree
- Not sure, but tend to agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

## Curriculum Vitae

Nicole P. MacCarthy

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**OBJECTIVE**

Assistant Professor, Special Education

**TITLE OF DISSERTATION**

Attitudes Towards Inclusion: General Education Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom

**EDUCATION**

Ph.D., Special Education, Walden University, 2010 – in progress

- Minneapolis, MN
- Dissertation: Attitudes Towards Inclusion: General Education Teachers in the Inclusive Classroom

M.Ed., Special Education, University of Arizona, 1994.

- Tucson, Arizona
- Concentrations: High Incidence Disabilities, Assessment, Positive Behavior Interventions, Mathematics and Technology
- Endorsements: Learning Disabilities, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

B.S., Human Development and the Family – Family Science, University of Nebraska, 1992

- Lincoln, Nebraska
- Concentrations: Child Psychology, Family Psychology, Early Childhood Development

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

ED/BD/MR/LD Special Education Inclusion Teacher (Grades 1-5)

Chicago Public School District, Chicago, IL, 2004 - 2006

Resource/inclusion, co-teaching models

ED/BD/MR/LD Special Education Teacher (Grades 9-12)

Fluvanna County School District, Palmyra, VA, 2000 - 2004

Self-contained, resource, and co-teaching models  
 ED/BD/MR/LD Special Education Teacher (Grades 4-6)  
 Cicero Public School District, Cicero, IL, 1998 - 2000  
 Self-contained, co-teaching models  
 ED/BD/MR/LD Special Education Teacher (Grades 1-4)  
 Green County Public School, Stanardsville, VA, 1996 - 1998  
 ED/BD Special Education Teacher (Grades 1-4) (Severe Behavioral/Emotional disorders)  
 Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ, 1994 - 1996  
 Self-Contained -

### **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PAPERS**

Principles of Human Development and Special Education. Walden University,  
 Minneapolis, MN

Principles of Organizational and Social Systems and Special Education. Walden  
 University, Minneapolis, MN

Theories of Intelligence, Learning, Motivation, and Implications for Persons with Special  
 Needs. Walden University, Minneapolis, MN

Institutional Contexts for Special Education: Leadership, Learning, and Accommodation.  
 Walden University, Minneapolis, MN

### **TEACHING COMPETENCIES**

- Postgraduate Professional License (K – 12) in the area of Emotional and Behavioral Handicaps.
- Learning Behavior Specialist I

### **Research and Analytical Skills:**

Quantitative social science research skills

- Knowledge of multivariate statistics and regression analysis
- Knowledge of SPSS statistical program

### **MEMBERSHIPS**

PTP: Powerful Teachers In a 21st Century Profession  
 Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)  
 National Education Association