THE PERSPECTIVES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ON STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES IN AN INCLUSION SETTING

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Doctor of Education

By

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Waldrian Coleman Boyd
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Dedication

This research and study is dedicated to my late grandmother, Charlie Pearl Larkin, who told me at a young age that “I am expecting great things out of you, and do not start anything, if you will not finish it”. I believe that without her expectations and motivation, the world of learning and teaching would never been a sufficient inspiration for me. She is the role model who instilled in me to make good choices. I did this research with her in my heart and mind.

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Abstract

The Perspectives of Special Education Teachers on Students with Disabilities in an Inclusion Setting

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This study examined the debate focused on inclusion, the methods for teaching in inclusive classrooms, and described positive aspects of inclusion for academic growth. This study also researched the perspectives of special education teachers on students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Inclusion in public school districts is a very debated and sensitive subject that has been controversial for many years. Inclusion denotes to the education of students with disabilities and students that do not have disabilities in the same classroom setting. The data for the study was statistically analyzed to conclude whether a significant difference occurred in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. The following research questions were also addressed:

1. How do special education teachers with various years of experience respond to having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?
2. How do the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

Finally, a focus group of special education teachers was interviewed to gain more depth on their experience as an inclusion teacher.

Keywords: inclusion, least restrictive environment (LRE), special education, Individual Education Plan (IEP)
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction and Background

There are so many debated topics under controversy in education today. Some issues include Common Core, national standards research, tech trends, social policy, school reform, and child development. One such topic of relevance is the perspectives of special education teachers on inclusion. Inclusion education is the full-time dynamic participation of students with disabilities in the general education classroom with students without disabilities (Shin, Hyunjoo, & McKenna, 2014). A recent trend has been inclusion in schools across the country in so many school districts. Today in schools, there are teachers and students who are under extreme pressure to increase academic achievement because of the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. Teachers need to be steadfast to ensuring that all students are meeting state standards and are reaching grade-level benchmarks. Furthermore, teachers need to understand students’ learning variances and provide these different learning styles in classroom instruction on a daily basis. This has become more challenging for teachers to achieve because of the implementation of inclusion in schools today (Salisbury, 2006).

Research of Problem

An increasing number of students with disabilities are spending most of the day in regular education classrooms together with their naturally-emerging peers, according to new federal statistics (Heasley, 2016). In 2013, more than 6 out of 10 students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act spent at least 80 percent of their day in a regular classroom (Heasley, 2016). By disparity, half of students with disabilities met that onset in 2004 (Heasley,
2016). The data come from a report that Congress had issued last year by the U.S. Department of Education charting the progress of the nation’s special education students (Heasley, 2016).

In addition, the annual report indicated that more than 5.8 million students ages 6 to 21 were assisted under IDEA in 2013 (Heasley, 2016). Meanwhile, 745,000 children ages 3 to 5 and 339,000 infants and toddlers received services through the program (Heasley, 2016). According to the federal data in 2013, 95 percent of special education students spent some of their day the general education classroom (Heasley, 2016). Moreover, students that were identified as having intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities were not likely to spend the bulk of their time in an inclusive environment.

Today, the implementation of inclusion into classrooms require teachers to have a positive view, plenty of time, energy, dedication, and assurance toward the process (Salisbury, 2006). The teacher is confronted with the everyday challenges of having to teach many different learning styles. These challenges require multi-tasking which may have an impact on their effectiveness and perspective on instruction in the inclusive setting. The absence of additional support staff and resources in the classroom make it hard for the teachers involved to function to their maximum potential and guarantee that each child's individual needs are being met (Salisbury, 2006). These are issues that can influence a teachers’ perspective. The knowledge of teachers’ views is essential when it comes to implementing inclusion. It is essential to study the views of special education teachers involved in the implementation process. Their goal is to create effective instructional strategies and demonstrate effective collaboration among all parties involved which will help students with disabilities feel comfortable in an inclusive environment. The way special education teachers perceive their role in the inclusion process will ultimately determine whether it will be beneficial to all parties involved and make progress.
Purpose

The goal of this study was to determine the perspectives of special education teachers on the controversy of inclusion for students with disabilities.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

Research Questions

This study also sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do special education teachers with various years of experience respond to having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

2. How do the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

Rationale for the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the views of special education teachers who are working in an inclusive environment. This study: 1) identified the views of special education teachers relative to inclusive education in the district; 2) examined and explained any variances between the inclusive school experiences of special education teachers at elementary and middle
school levels within the district and; 3) examined and explained any other major differences in responses based on selected demographic variables (definitely years of experience, etc.).

In public schools, inclusion continues to grow tremendously, so perspectives of special education teachers needs are essential for making the learning experience more meaningful and fruitful for students with disabilities. How they implement the inclusion process may be largely due to their attitudes towards it (Shin, Hyunjoo, & McKenna, 2014). Teachers are held responsible for the education of all students, including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Students with disabilities are no longer just visiting the general education classroom. Since the passage of NCLB, all students must participate in state standardized testing in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math, because schools must exhibit adequate yearly progress (AYP). This has led to increased pressure to ensure that students with disabilities are making progress parallel to students without disabilities.

Also, the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), which is the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) stresses that use of logical-based interventions in the general education classroom be utilized to ascertain whether students’ learning complications are due to lack of reasonable instruction. Studies have reported that general education teachers somewhat change their instructional methods when students with disabilities are placed in their classrooms (Berry, 2010). It is significant to better understand the special education teachers’ perspective to advance the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The results of this study will generate valuable information for educators who teach students with disabilities.
The Researcher

The researcher has an interest in the perspectives of special education in the extent of inclusion, because of the researcher’s involvement with students with disabilities first as a general education teacher and later as a special education teacher. The initial experience of the researcher was in the general education classroom for six years followed by three years as a special education teacher. It is the researcher’s desire to gain relevant knowledge in this area and to subsequently make it available for others who are involved in inclusion.

The researcher’s teaching experience has been significantly impacted by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHC) initially passed in 1975 and later referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). It commands that no child will be omitted from receiving an appropriate education, regardless of his/her disability. It also states that children with disabilities to the maximum amount possible. These iterations of Public Law 94 orders that students with disabilities be taught in the least restrictive environment (LRE) as much as possible. It also stipulates that a child with a disability receives an education that is appropriate for his/her individual needs which is particular sufficient support, and is allowed suitable adaptations in the general education classroom. As the researcher transferred from a roles as a general education teacher to a special education teacher, the researcher’s teaching style progressed to a more differentiated style to meet the needs of the students. For example, IEPs were required, and modifications and accommodations were also employed to meet the needs of the students to achieve grade level standards.
Definitions of Terms

Disability - The physical or mental impairment that substantially limits or restricts the condition, manner, duration under which an average person in the population can perform a major life activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, or taking care of oneself (Friend, 2005).

General Education - The set of integrated learning experiences structured across subject areas to provide the skills and knowledge needed for all students to function in society (Berry, 2010).

General education teacher - A professional who specializes in teaching regular education with special education students including general education classroom (Friend, 2005).

Inclusion - Term used to describe services that place students with disabilities in general education classrooms with appropriate support services. A student may receive instruction from both a general education teacher and a special education teacher (Weisshaar, 2010).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - A four-part (A-D) piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability provides a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that tailors to their individual needs (IDEA’s Definition of Disabilities, 2012).

Individual Education Plan (IEP) - Special education term outlined by IDEA to define the written document that states the disabled child's goals, objectives, and services for students receiving special education (Weisshaar, 2010).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) - The placement of a special needs student in a manner promoting the maximum possible interaction with the general school population. Placement options offers a continuum including a regular classroom with no support services, a
regular classroom with support services, designated instruction services, special day classes and private special education programs (Weishaar, 2010).

**Learning disabilities**-Impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. Students may experience significant problems in learning to read, to write, and to compute math problems. It is the most common disability serviced under IDEA (Friend, 2005).

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**-Focuses on accountability through data collection and implementation of adherence to standards set forth by the federal government. These measures are tied to financial inducements. NCLB requires reporting of annual yearly progress, graduation rates, and student achievement levels (Ed.gov, 2012d).

**Special education**-Instruction that is specially designed to meet the exceptional needs of a child with a disability. Special education is individually developed to address a particular child’s needs that result from his or her disability and occurs in many different educational settings depending on the needs of the individual (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2010).

**Special education teacher**-A teacher who works with students who have a broad range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities (Berry, 2010).

**Students with Disabilities**-Students sufficiently evaluated and analyzed with a disabling condition that requires accommodations and modifications to the general curriculum. Related services such as physical therapy, speech pathology, social work, psychological services, and occupational therapy are also included (Praisner, 2003).
Summary

Inclusion denotes to the placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) or setting where they can be most successful (Robertson and Valentine, 1999). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHC) originally passed in 1975 and is referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). It mandates that no child will be omitted from receiving an appropriate education, regardless of his/her disability. It also states that students with disabilities need to be educated with their peers who do not have disabilities in the general education classroom. Now, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) commands that students with disabilities be taught in the least restrictive environment (LRE) as much as possible with their peers who do not have disabilities. It guaranteed access to a free appropriate, public education on the least restrictive environment to every child with a disability (Ed.gov, 2012d). Arguably, the LRE for students with special and major needs is usually the general education classroom (Robertson and Valentine, 1999). The knowledge of special education teachers’ perspectives is essential when it comes to implementing inclusion.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Inclusion

Before 1975, children with disabilities were often deprived of an education in public schools. After it was passed, then it became right. Singer and Butler (2011) stated that special education services designed to include these children were presented in response to Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975. The main purpose of the law was to provide children with disabilities a free and appropriate public education intended to meet their exceptional needs (United States Department of Education, 2002).

The evolution of the education system initiated by PL 94-142 involved evaluations of all students with individualized and appropriate services outlined in individualized education programs (IEP). Students with disabilities were taught and assessed according to an improved curriculum that tended to cover fewer skills and was less complex than the general education curriculum in self-contained settings. According to Audette and Algozzine (1997) who asserted that students in special education programs, did not receive the same or comparable benefits as those in the general education programs which prompted a difference in curriculum content and assessments. This approach created gaps in achievement between students with disabilities and their general education peers which was not beneficial to students.

In an attempt to meet the exceptional needs of students with disabilities, reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, 1997, and 2004 placed more emphasis on providing services to students with disabilities among the general population whenever feasible (Murawski & Swanson, 2001). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
addressed the further revamping of federal guidelines for all students. The guidelines require that all students display yearly progress in content areas of reading and math, participate in the general education curriculum, and take part in district and state-wide assessments (United States Department of Education, 2005). The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, initiated changes known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), called for students with progressively diverse learning characteristics to have access to, participate in, and be tested in the general education curriculum (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; United States Department of Education, 2007). The number of individuals with disabilities in general education classrooms increased due to the result of legislative changes and evolving cultural standards (Kamens, 2007).

Moreover, IDEA is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, P.L. 114-95), the 2015 reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; P.L. 89-10). The ESSA allows states greater flexibility in administering student learning accountability systems than did the legislation it replaces the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act but continues ESEA’s legacy as a civil rights law (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

The evolution of inclusive education have been many differences among schools, districts, and states when it comes to defining and implementing it. In reference to some schools, inclusion means only the physical presence or social inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms; in other schools, it means the dynamic modification of content, instruction, and assessment practices so that students can successfully engage in academic experiences and learning (Villa et. al, 2016). By adjusting their instruction and evaluation approaches, teachers are allowing more students with disabilities to participate keenly in the learning. Inclusion varies and until every school can define it, and implement it the same way, successful inclusion will
become even more difficult to accomplish (Villa, et. al, 2016). Therefore, expectations are that students with disabilities will achieve the same as other learners, thus increasing the emphasis on educating them in general education settings (Gürür & Uzuner, 2010; Kamens, 2007). Audette and Algozzine (1997) suggested that schools have an “opportunity to carefully reinvent special education as an integral part of public education” (p. 378).

**Obstacles of Inclusion**

Inclusion seems to have many promising benefits for students, but it has to become increasingly hard to implement because there are many different setbacks that need to be overcome by teachers and administration. Furthermore, many people question if it is practical and realistic for all students to be educated successfully in the same setting. The need to educate all students, including those with disabilities, has led to the creation of special education programs. If inclusion classrooms are committed to teaching all students, they must choose to include both physically and philosophically, even the most with the most severe disabilities (Villa and Thousand, 2016). Many argued that students with any type of disability should be kept in an environment only for special education classrooms, and away from the children in the regular education classrooms. Many have argued that inclusion would present a problem for the children without disabilities (Villa and Thousand, 2016). They felt that the classroom atmosphere would have to be slowed down or sped up to compensate for the needs of the student (Villa and Thousand, 2016). For these various reasons, the topic of inclusion has caused much debate and controversy for many years.
Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusive education provides benefits to students with disabilities but also to their non-disabled peers too. McCarty (2006) stated, “it appears that students with disabilities in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings” (p. 8). An inclusion classroom is defined as being friendly, appreciating, investing, and supporting the academic, social/emotional, language and communication learning of all students in shared environments and experiences for the purpose of accomplishing the goals of education (Villa and Thousand, 2016). Providing students with the benefits in an inclusion setting should include teachers making a commitment to provide each student with the absolute right to belong and not to be excluded (Villa Thousand, 2016). Inclusion assumes that living and learning together benefits everyone, not just children who are labeled as being different. Inclusion is a value and a belief system, not just a set of strategies (Villa and Thousand, 2016).

An inclusion education orientation and a set of general practices benefit not only students with disabilities, but all students, educators, parents, and community members. As communities and schools embrace the true meaning of inclusion, they become better able to transform special education into an inclusive service delivery which supports social tolerance of differences. This embracement enables them to celebrate students’ natural diversity in an inclusion setting (Villa and Thousand, 2016). Inclusion is not a programmatic set of specific approaches, rather a way of life that is based on the belief that each individual is valuable and belongs (Villa and Thousand, 2016).
Social Aspects

Students with disabilities can face many difficulties when they come into the general education classroom. Becoming socially accepted by their peers in this classroom setting can be difficult. This is especially true for students who are experiencing inclusion for the first time. These students are not familiar to being around their peers without disabilities, so it is difficult for them to interact with them socially (Wilson and Michaels, 2006). Voltz and Brazil (2001) stated that becoming socially accepted depends on the severity of a student’s disability. Students without disabilities soon realize the differences in capabilities of those students with disabilities, and they label and treat them differently (Wilson and Michaels, 2006). This can result in students without disabilities rejecting them as friends, especially if their behaviors are unusual or inappropriate.

Modeling and explanations of behavior expectations sometimes for students with disabilities can find it difficult to follow the rules set in the general education classroom. This is especially true if the teacher does not take the time to model and to explain the behaviors they expect frequently enough for them to learn and to understand them. If students with disabilities become frustrated, they may act out inappropriately (Voltz and Brazil, 2001). Being in a larger classroom with more students and more noise can become a distraction for them and a catalyst for inappropriate behavior. Also, Voltz and Brazil (2001) found that students with disabilities may also display unsuitable behavior, because they are mimicking another student who is not abiding by the rules. So, is the behavior exceptional, or is it the norm?

These issues can take up precious instructional time, so that teachers feel that they are doing more disciplining than teaching. This is true especially if the general education teacher does not have any additional support staff in the classroom to help. Forlin (2001) found that one
of the greatest pressures of teachers during inclusion was the actual behavior of the students with disabilities. It was reported by over 70 percent of teachers that the students with disabilities disturbed others in their class (Forlin, 2001).

Social Benefits of Inclusion

A significant challenge in creating and sustaining inclusion in schools is building reliable friendships for students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Almost any parent of a child with disabilities stated that you will discover a concern for the number and characteristic of their child’s friends, schoolmates, and teammates. Almost observe any classroom and discover that students with disabilities typically have fewer friends and interact with them in fewer settings, primarily the boundaries of the school. Ask any teacher and discover while the social benefits are a concern, there are few practical skills and strategies to bridge this relationship gap (Kharevich, 2009).

The benefits of inclusive classrooms in research has shown that it reaches beyond academics (Kharevich, 2009). When students with disabilities are sequestered and taught only in special education classrooms, they are not given the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people. By creating inclusive settings these students are now able to socially interact and develop a relationship with their peers (Kharevich, 2009). McCarty (2006) believed that this allows the students with disabilities to increase their social skills and their behavior by having appropriate examples in the general education classroom. McCarty (2006), also stated that students with disabilities have shown improvement in their ability to follow directions and initiate contact with others.
When students with disabilities become part of a general education classroom, they are more likely to become socially accepted by their peers (Kharevich, 2009). The more students without disabilities have contact with their peers with disabilities the greater the chance they will learn tolerance and have a greater acceptance of other’s differences (Kharevich, 2009). The climate of the classroom should facilitate the idea that differences are natural, and each student should be comfortable with being him or herself (Kharevich, 2009). Every student should be seen as having something special and unique to offer. Students with disabilities will feel that they are part of a learning community in their classroom because of the belief in inclusion by their peers and their teachers.

It is well known that unless adults, teachers, and parents do something purposeful, meaningful friendships for students with disabilities are more limited in number and depth (Kharevich, 2009). Children with disabilities are targets of bullying more often than their typical peers, and this problem appears to grow worse as physical and verbal aggression in schools is being quantified and studied (Kharevich, 2009). Parents, students, and teachers need provision and skills to reverse this long-recognized rejection from friendships and the social life of the school.

**Social Justice**

Being exposed to inclusive settings have a better understanding of social justice and students are more accepting of individual differences. Culture and climate respects in the classroom and reflects diversity, so will the students who are exposed to that environment, and they learn tolerance. When students with disabilities do not have the “special education student” label while in inclusive classrooms, they do not feel singled out or embarrassed in any way (Idol,
2006). Idol (2006) stated, when every student is included in the learning activities occurring in the classroom, students are unaware of the students who receive special education services.

Cooperative learning groups are beneficial when teachers can mix students with disabilities into groupings based on their strengths. Students will feel that they belong, because they are not taken out of the room or being segregated from their peers. Their peers will see them as contributing members to the classroom and not as “different” or “special”. Voltz and Brazil (2001), felt that every student has something unique to share and differences among students should be openly acknowledged and addressed. Differences should be respected and seen as assets to students’ learning.

In a learning community, every student should feel comfortable in their classroom, and feel that they are part of it as well. By exposing children to diversity, teachers are modeling social justice and showing them real life situations (Idol, 2006). By doing this in inclusive classrooms, students with and without disabilities are forming friendships, gaining an improved sense of self-worth, and are becoming better human beings by learning tolerance (Idol, 2006).

**Classroom Climate**

Every student including students with disabilities should feel safe in their school environment, they must feel accepted by their teachers and peers. Developing respect for differences implies this need for all students. Ratner (2016) suggested that teachers first model an attitude of respect for individual differences. Equality involves words and actions presented by the teacher. Directly discussing various types of human diversity, as well as the individual strengths and weaknesses that we all have, can be used to develop a sense of acceptance and understanding (Ratner, 2016). Community is essential in the classroom. Additionally, students
with disabilities should not feel that they are not an asset to a general education classroom, but a part of it, and they belong there. Every student feels respected when the teachers make accommodations and support student participation. In order to be valued, all students need to be encouraged to participate in all classroom activities. Fostering mutual respect by teachers should be done among all of their students.

The rules of the classroom should reflect a positive learning environment that exhibit respect, cooperation, and acceptance (Shin, Hyunjo and McKenna, 2014). Accountability is pertinent for every student in regards to their actions, whether it is positive or negative. The students will be responsive and considerate of the rules and expectations, by setting the standards and discussing them early in the school year.

**Academic Aspects**

Many argue that it is not realistic to expect these students to successfully keep pace with all of the other students without disabilities and that it may be beneficial to expose students with disabilities to age-appropriate curriculum. If teachers are not modifying the curriculum to meet these students’ needs, then it may be true. According to Schwartz (2007), this can lead to a situation where there are greater chances that students with disabilities will fall farther behind, because the general education classroom is not as individualized as a special education setting. In an inclusive setting, it may be greater academic expectations put on students with disabilities. When pressures are added for state assessments with emphasis it can be true as well. Paying attention to the instruction can be a challenge to students which is important. They may be receiving information at a faster pace which can affect what they may be use to in the general education classroom. General education classrooms can be a distraction compared to a special education setting due to being larger. Smith, Tyler and Skow (2003) claimed that students found
a special education setting to be a “supportive and quiet environment where they could receive extra academic assistance”. Finally, students become frustrated and embarrassed when tasks are not modified and explained by the teacher. Self-confidence can become a problem for the student.

In the inclusion setting, there may also be issues when it comes to teaching the general education students. Critics have warned that the class content may be simplified to address the needs of the students with disabilities, placing average and high achieving general education students at a disadvantage (Wilson and Michaels, 2006). Teachers are not allowing the average and high achieving students to learn at their highest potential because they are placing students with disabilities in the same group as students without disabilities. The teachers became more concerned about differentiating instruction and making accommodations for the students with disabilities than challenging their students that need it (Wilson and Michaels, 2006).

**Individualized Instruction and Academic Achievement**

Implementing inclusion in more classrooms, students with and without disabilities are benefiting academically. Ratner (2016) believed that “the regular education class can provide an environment in which students with special needs have more opportunities to learn and to make educational progress in academic achievement”. Additional staff in the classroom provide benefits to individualized and small group instruction to all of the students, and allowing for students with disabilities to be exposed to a richer curriculum. Ratner (2016) stated that often, in special education classrooms, teachers can be forced to stray away from the curriculum due to fear that their students will not understand the important concepts and will not be able to master the material. Students with disabilities in an inclusive setting are being exposed to age
appropriate curriculum and are receiving individualized instruction to support them in the
general education classroom. This can lead to students with disabilities feeling more confident
in them, because they are being given important work that is challenging them academically, as
opposed to completing work that is easy and feeling like their accomplishments were minimal.
Giangreco (2007) believed that if students feel that they are being given authentic, meaningful
work, the more likely they will be to show pride and accomplishment in that work.

It is necessary for teachers to vary their instructional strategies because of the diversity of
students involved. One size approach does not fit all. Kharevich (2009) felt that special
attention must be paid to differentiating what is taught, as well as how it is taught. Direct
instruction with teacher-led lessons are often times needed, but it is also essential to have more
constructivist, learner-centered activities and lessons to give students with and without
disabilities the chance to have ownership in their learning. As noted by Kharevich (2009), the
sole reliance on direct instruction would deprive students with disabilities the opportunity to
develop greater independence and the ability to work with and learn from their peers (Kharevich,
2009). The heterogeneity of the students can be effective in inclusive classrooms such as
cooperative learning models. The teachers during this cooperative learning activities, the room
can provide direct instruction and additional support to those students that who it.

**Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiated instruction has been highly used in American education for many years. It
was created in the 1990’s which has been written in support of the practice. Bearne (1996)
defined differentiation as an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify
curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the
diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning
opportunity for each student in a classroom. Differentiated instruction is responsive teaching.
Differentiation is a modification of teaching and learning routines and can address a broad range
of learners’ readiness levels, interests, and modes of learning (Tomlinson, 2001). It stems from a
teacher’s concrete and growing understanding of how teaching and learning occur, and it
responds to varied learners’ needs for more structure or individuality, more practice or greater
challenge, and more active or less active approaches to learning.

Supporting the practice are four guiding principles that relate to differentiating classroom
practices: (a) a focus on essential ideas and skills in each content area, (b) responsiveness to
individual student differences, (c) integration of assessment and instruction, and (d) an ongoing
adjustment of content, process, and products to meet individual students’ level of prior
knowledge, critical thinking, and expression styles (Tieso, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999). Lending
further credence to the approach are seven basic beliefs (Tomlinson, 2000b): (a) same-age
students can differ greatly in their life circumstances, past experiences, and readiness to learn; (b)
these differences have a significant impact on the content and pace of instruction; (c) student
learning is improved when they receive support from the teacher that challenges them to work
slightly above their comfort level; (d) student learning is enhanced when what they are learning
in school is connected to real-life experiences; (e) student learning is also strengthened by
authentic learning opportunities; (f) student learning is boosted when they feel they are respected
and valued within the context of the school and community; and (g) the overarching goal of
schooling is to recognize and promote the abilities of each student.

Lawrence-Brown (2004) reported that differentiated instruction has a great importance
for students who struggle in the mastery the grade level curriculum. Two goals are achieved as a
result of differentiated instruction. First, and foremost, a high level of achieving the grade level standards for all students is paramount. It is important for teachers to scaffold the instruction as necessary for struggling learners. The second goal is to make curricular adaptations for those students who need it.

Teachers who differentiate are very much aware of the scope and sequence of curriculum prescribed by their state, district, and school. They are also mindful of the students in their classrooms who begin each school year spread out along a continuum of understanding and skill. The teacher’s goal is to maximize the capacity of each learner by teaching in ways that help all learners bridge gaps in understanding and skill and help each learner grow as much as quickly as he or she can (Tomlinson and Eidson, 2003). Tomlinson (2001) wrote that a differentiated classroom provides different paths for acquiring the content, causes the teacher to support students in processing or the making sense of ideas, and helps students create products so they can learn effectively. A teacher can differentiate instruction in many ways in various subjects. Instruction can be differentiated based on a student’s readiness, learning profile, or interest by varying the content, process, or product (Tomlinson, 2001). The main strategies utilized are compacting, independent projects, interest centers or interest groups, tiered assignments, flexible grouping, learning centers, varying questions, mentorships, anchoring activities, and learning contracts.

Differentiation occurs parallel with assessment and grouping. The way assessment is used to create groupings is unlike using it to create stagnant ability groups. While assessment helps to determine which students need more challenge, which ones are performing at grade level, and which ones need scaffolding to meet the expectations, the teacher must make a
decision as to how to make the lesson engaging and focused. These such approaches would be brain compatibility, learning styles, and cooperative learning strategies.

**Strategies of Effective Inclusion Programs**

Inclusive education is postulated upon the following beliefs: (a) All children can learn, (b) all children have a right to be educated with their peers in age appropriate heterogeneous classrooms within their neighborhood schools, and (c) it is the responsibility of the school community to meet the diverse educational needs of all its students regardless of their ability levels (Hunt et al., 2003, p.315). According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2000), in order for inclusion to be effective, several elements must be in place. There must be ongoing assessment and evaluation of the program to determine if consistent educational progress is being made. It is important that all educators and administrators involved in the implementation of inclusion engage in planning and training activities (Brownell & Walther, 2002; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). This training needs to be continuously implemented (“Collaboration: More Keys,” 1998). One suggestion was that adults and students with disabilities should be involved as experts in these planning and training activities (Barnes et al., 2002; NASP; Pivik et al., 2002). For effective inclusion of students with disabilities to occur, those involved must have the knowledge and skill in effective collaboration and co-teaching, curriculum adaptation, developing social relationships, and restructuring special services (Carpenter & Dyal; NASP; Ross-Kidder, 2003; Sharpe, 2005; Soukup et al., 2007). Gallagher (2006) cited Etscheidt and Bartlett (1999) as saying, “the key to efforts to educate children with disabilities in regular education settings is good faith and meaningful considerations of the provision of supplementary aids and services” (p. 59).
For inclusion to be effective, general education and special education teachers must be involved in collaboration and/or co-teaching (Blankenship et al., 2005; McLeskey & Waldron, 2007; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF), in their report, What Matters Most: Teaching For America’s Future (1996), stated that “across the country, schools are reorganizing their work to provide more time for student learning, more personalized relationships between teachers and students, and greater opportunity for teachers to work and plan together in teams” (p. 107). An article in Inclusive Education Programs (2006) stated that “collaborative planning time between general and special education teachers is a must” (p. 5). Other research found that collaborative efforts between teachers in the school environment result in improved academic achievement and social development (Carter, 2000; Soukup et al., 2007).

The various disability legislations presume that when students are included in the general education environment, it will be to the maximum extent appropriate and for the benefit of the students (Gallagher, 2006). According to Carter (2000), students of all abilities must have opportunities to interact with and learn from individual differences. These opportunities can be provided by establishing classrooms with a heterogeneous mixture of academic, social, and physical abilities. This can be accomplished if students with and without disabilities are taught in an inclusive environment. Gallagher referenced the case, Board of Education, Sacramento Unified School District v. Holland (1994), where the courts went to considerable extent to explain what was meant by the presumption favoring inclusion. The decision of the courts implied that schools may have to consider benefits besides academics, such as social benefits, for certain students for whom these benefits are enough to justify inclusion (Gallagher, 2006).
Models of Inclusion

There are several models that could be used when implementing inclusion in a school (Barton, 1996; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Idol, 2006). In one model, the special education teacher served as a consultant to the general education teacher. As a consultant, the special education teacher works indirectly with the students with disabilities. The special education teacher consults with the general education teacher to make sure that implementation of the goals and accommodations on the IEP occur in the general education classroom so the students can be successful (Barton, 1996; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Idol, 2006).

Co-teaching is another model of inclusion or the cooperative teacher model, which involves the special education teacher and the general education teacher teaching in the same classroom and being responsible for the instruction of all students (Barton, 1996; Idol, 2006; Ross-Kidder, 2003; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). Co-teaching involves a special education teacher working with a general education teacher “within a classroom full time or for ongoing portions of time to provide instruction that includes all students” (Spraker, 2003, p. 8). This model of teaming became more prevalent due to the increased number of students with disabilities receiving instruction in the general education classroom (Spraker, 2003). In order to implement the co-teaching model effectively, “both teachers need to learn strategies that work well with different kinds of students” (Ross-Kidder, 2003). In co-teaching, both teachers share their expertise, knowledge, skills, and resources for the same group of students (Gable & Manning, 1999; Idol; Ross-Kidder, 2003). The collaboration of the teachers involved in the implementation of inclusion is also essential for inclusion to be successful (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Hunt et al., 2003).
Collaboration of Faculty and Staff

The success of an inclusive classroom involves all the teachers and staff need to be committed to the idea of inclusion and be willing to work together. Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) stated that the faculty needs to work as a team to make sure that the needs of every student is being met, and that all students are being supported in reaching their maximum potential. By working together, teachers are more likely to create more diverse, engaging lessons for students who have a wide range of abilities, interests, and intelligence (Villa and Thousand, 2016). They will also be able to discuss their different instructional and assessment techniques.

Collaboration and Shared Responsibility

Everyone involved in the inclusion process needs to be committed to making it work. It is critical that general and special education teachers routinely meet to engage in collaborative problem solving around issues that may arise in the inclusion process (Ratner, 2016). Open communication between general education and special education teachers to negotiate co-teaching responsibilities and expectations before to initiating the inclusion process into their classroom is very essential. One teacher should not have the sole responsibility for the instruction of all of the students because it will cause problems. General and special education teachers need to work together effectively to create diverse learning opportunities for learners who have a wide variety of interests, learning styles, and intelligence (Villa and Thousand, 2016). To do this, there needs to be more time devoted to collaborative planning. Also, administrators need to provide time for general and special education teachers to meet to discuss the individual needs of their students and address classroom issues, such as behavior management, academic expectations, and assessments.
Moreover, administrators need to show their dedication to the process of inclusion because it will keep them informed on students with disabilities. They need to provide their teachers with the necessary training and professional development opportunities as an ongoing basis to give them the knowledge they need to teach effectively in an inclusive setting. Teacher visitations to successful inclusive classrooms, discussion groups focused on challenges in implementing inclusion, and peer coaching to provide support and guidance should be offered to make certain that inclusion is being implemented appropriately (Villa and Thousand, 2016).

This ongoing support created a professional learning community and helped teachers reflect on their co-teaching experiences, resolve problems, and experiment with new approaches (Friend, 2007). Friend (2007) suggested administrators ask themselves the following questions:

- Are both teachers actively engaged in the instructional process?
- Do both teachers contribute to discipline and classroom management?
- Are they grouping students in ways that will help them meet their learning goals?
- Are they addressing student learning needs and making use of each teacher’s strengths?

When everyone involved in the inclusion process shows their commitment to it by sharing common goals and roles, they are taking responsibility for it and would like to contribute to its success.

**Lack of Support Staff**

A general education classroom usually becomes an inclusion setting when more staff is needed in the classroom to assist the general education teacher. According to the National Education Association, inclusive classrooms should have no more than 28 students, and of those, students with disabilities should make up no more than 25 percent of the class (National
It has been estimated that approximately 290,000 special education paraprofessionals are employed in schools, with many playing an increasingly prominent role in the instruction of students with disabilities, especially in inclusive settings (Ghere and York-Barr, 2007). Schools, however, have had difficulty retaining paraprofessionals and support staff. According to Ghere and York-Barr (2007), there have been several explanations offered for paraprofessional turnover, including inadequate wages, few opportunities for career advancement, and a lack of administrative support and respect. Stress and ambiguity also negatively affected the retention of paraprofessionals.

Turnover usually happens when the development of a skilled paraprofessional workforce adversely affects at a high rate. Ghere and York-Barr (2007) stated teachers estimated that it takes between 3 to 12 months for new paraprofessionals to become proficient at working with students. There was a significant amount of time and money for school districts to hire, to interview, and to train a new paraprofessional. According to Ghere and York-Barr (2007), it was estimated that the cost of replacing an employee varies between 70 percent and 200 percent of the departing employee’s salary. The teachers and students involved in the inclusion program were affected by the turnover. When there are changes in personnel, this can result in extra demands and stress put on the teachers. Extra time is needed, in which no teacher has, to train the new paraprofessional to teach them the routines and to help them become familiar with whom the students they are working. Students are impacted when paraprofessional turnover occurs. The students build strong relationships with the paraprofessionals and when they leave, it is a significant loss for them, socially and academically.
Special Education Students in Inclusion Classrooms

The majority of research has focused on the achievement of special education students in inclusion classroom settings. Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, and Theoharis (2013) conducted a study to add to the body of research regarding special education student achievement in general education classes. The researchers wanted to make clear the special education students involved in the study were not only physically in a classroom with general education peers, but that they were given access to general education contexts, and they defined inclusion based on that criterion (i.e. special education students in general education classrooms and using the same text and curriculum as general education students). The researchers studied the relationship between the number of hours spent in general education classrooms and math and reading achievement of 1,300 children ages six to nine from 180 school districts. Cosier et al. (2013) found the more time special education students spent in an inclusion classroom, the better they scored on achievement tests for math and reading with a half point and .37 of a point gain for each hour in math and reading general education classes, respectively. Their findings implied that special education students would benefit from more time spent in inclusion classrooms. Since their study focused on the achievement of special education students, they offer no findings of the achievement of regular education students in the same classrooms.

Disadvantages of Inclusion

Even with increasing emphasis on inclusion of students with disabilities, there are still those who believe that there are disadvantages to the inclusion of students with disabilities (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005). These critics of inclusion object to the inclusion of students with disabilities because they believe it is too costly, provides an unfair advantage over students
without disabilities, and is detrimental to students without disabilities and education on the whole (Cawley et al., 2002; Jaeger & Bowman). The critics of inclusion also believe that the negative reaction of students without disabilities in an inclusion classroom to their disabled peers also affects the self-esteem of students with disabilities (Ferguson et al., 1992). Without the appropriate training and supports, the general education classroom can be a very socially isolating environment for students with disabilities (Ferguson et al., 1992).

Lawton (1999) mentioned a few studies on the effectiveness of co-teaching analyzed by Baker and Zigmond. Five schools that were implementing inclusion were included. Several disadvantages of inclusion models were found. First, the special education teacher moved between several classrooms throughout the day. The findings indicated that the students with disabilities were not getting enough individualized attention. There was no evidence of any “specific, directed, individualized, intensive, remedial instruction of students who were clearly deficient academically and struggling with the school work” (Lawton, 1999).

In 1997, a study conducted by Boudah and his colleagues examined the engagement of students with mild disabilities in co-taught secondary classrooms (Lawton, 1999). The results of the study indicated that the students with mild disabilities had “a low level of engagement in such activities as raising their hands, recalling prior knowledge, or using a strategic skill” (Lawton, 1999). Upon examining past research, Gordon (2006) found that students with disabilities receiving instruction in the general education classroom did not get the type and intensity of support needed and were struggling with the required academic tasks. The self-esteem of students with disabilities was often negatively impacted because of the academic struggles experienced in the general education classroom (Gordon, 2006).
DeSimone and Parmar (2006) conducted a descriptive study in a middle school setting to examine teachers’ beliefs regarding teaching students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The findings of this study suggested that although teachers felt these students should be included, teachers were not sure how to effectively address the instructional needs of the students with learning disabilities (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006). The teachers did not find a difference between the results of instruction in the resource classroom versus instruction in the inclusion classroom. Teachers also indicated that they are unsure about how to motivate the students with disabilities and keep their attention (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006).

**Lack of Teacher Training**

Teachers who support inclusion identified critical problems with its implementation. Research suggested that training and education are critical to the success of inclusion programs (Winter, 2006). Teachers are feeling ill-equipped to teach in an inclusive setting, because they feel that they did not receive appropriate training or professional development to implement inclusion into their classrooms properly. According to Smith, Tyler, and Skow (2003), many general and special education teachers feel that they were not prepared to plan and to make accommodations for students with disabilities.

Researchers have found that inclusion is inadequately addressed and often neglected in teacher training. The National Center for Education Statistics found that almost 60 percent of all public school teachers indicated that they did not feel well prepared to meet the social and emotional needs of students with special needs from their teacher education program (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Winter (2006) stated that ensuring that newly qualified teachers have a basic understanding of inclusive education are the best investment that can be
made. Pre-service preparation is a critical factor in helping teachers formulate their beliefs about inclusion as well as affecting their ability to teach students with disabilities. Cook (2002) stated, “If pre-service teachers do not possess the knowledge and skills to implement inclusion appropriately, the included students with disabilities in their future classes will certainly have diminished opportunities to attain desired outcomes regardless of teachers’ attitudes toward inclusive reforms” (p. 202).

In another study, researchers found that forty-five percent of the teachers they surveyed believed that they did not receive adequate staff development regarding teaching students with special needs (Pavri and Hegwer-DiVita, 2006). Teacher training is important and without a coherent plan in the educational needs of students with disabilities, attempts to include these students in the general education classroom become extremely challenging. For inclusion to be considered successful, it is important that teachers are prepared, have the confidence and the skills to teach in inclusive settings, and can provide instruction to every student (Winter, 2006).

Inclusion is based on several arguments and philosophies. These arguments asserted that isolating children with disabilities in special settings refuses these children rightful access to normal experiences (Robertson and Valentine, 2001). It also showed that segregated services have not resulted in satisfactory education for students (Robertson and Valentine, 2001). According to IDEA, exceptions for inclusion should be considered when the characteristics or severity of the student’s disability affects the achievement in regular education classes, despite the utilization of supplementary aids, supports, and services (Winter, 2006).

Some arguments against inclusion focus on concerns for the students’ social success and the potential strain upon the teacher. Possible feelings of frustration and excessive ridicule from other students without disabilities have led many to argue against inclusion (Tompkins and
Deloney, 2001). General education teachers have much responsibility, including the responsibility of the regular education students. Inclusion may cause too much strain on his or her time, therefore leaving the educator unable to effectively teach the class (Tompkins and Deloney, 2001). The regular education teacher also may not be trained to teach and may not possess the needed skills to teach a child with disabilities.

Moreover, the argument against inclusion deals with the best needs fit of the child who has a disability. Many students with disabilities require one on one attention, putting them into a class full of 25 to 30 students and only one teacher may hinder their education. Opponents of inclusion feel that students with disabilities should be isolated and worked for them to reach their full potential academically (Tompkins and Deloney, 2001). One of the most common educational difficulties that students experience in both school and community programs is an arbitrary age requirement for curriculum access (Giangreco, 2007).

There are many positive benefits for everyone in an inclusive classroom. Proponents of inclusion argued that the children with disabilities can grow more academically and socially due to inclusive environments (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004). Students with special needs are now exposed to the diversity present in the regular education classroom (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004). However, these benefits do not automatically assume that the sole reason for a child reaching their perceived potential is inclusion. It is primarily because the child is given the opportunity with inclusion to reach higher achievement levels than if they were confined to special education classroom (Kharevich, 2009).
Providing Training to Teachers

There are so many practicing teachers do not have any prior training in special education and are not adequately prepared to teach students with disabilities. Leyser and Kirk (2004) found that general education teachers use strategies and adaptations directed toward the class as a whole and incorporate only minor or no modifications based on student needs. Administrators need to provide their staff with training and professional development opportunities that give them the knowledge and skills needed to implement inclusion into their classrooms successfully.

General education teachers had training needs in curriculum modification, differentiated instruction strategies, assessment of academic progress, behavior management, development of Individual Education Programs (IEP’s), and use of assistive technology (Leyser and Kirk, 2004).

There should also be training to help teachers understand the different disabilities that their students may possess and will be dealing with on a daily basis. As Leyser and Kirk (2004) believed, training should be aimed at facilitating a better understanding of the perspectives of families of students with disabilities, as well as in strategies to promote communication and collaboration with parents.

More training also needs to be offered to teachers at the pre-service level. Leyser and Kirk (2004) stated that “a single three-credit hour course in special education for education majors in the United States, is not enough” (p. 73). More positive attitudes toward inclusion involves the proper knowledge and skills because they would feel better prepared to include students with disabilities in their classroom. They would willingly embrace inclusion with few or no reservations as long as they receive the guidance they need (Leyser and Kirk, 2004).
The General Education Classroom

Educators question whether or not the general education classroom is equipped to accommodate students with disabilities although many agree with the principles of inclusion. According to Kavale (2002), “the general education classroom is a place where undifferentiated, large-group instruction dominate” (p. 96). Teachers are more concerned with conformity and maintaining routine than with meeting individual differences (Kavale, 2002). General education teachers feel that there are more demands on them when they are teaching in an inclusive setting because they are concerned that they lack the knowledge and training to effectively implement inclusion in their classrooms. Kavale (2002) concluded that teachers were most comfortable when they used generic and nonspecific teaching strategies that were not likely to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities.

The uniqueness of special education was not being achieved in most inclusive settings. General educators are not trained to provide differentiated instructional methods nor can they cope with the needs of diverse learners (Cook, 2002). In a comprehensive evaluation of inclusive settings, Cook (2002) concluded that, “there was almost no specific, directed, individualized, intensive, or remedial instruction for students who were clearly deficient academically” (p.107).

Cook (2002) stated that many students with learning disabilities preferred special education pull-out programs over programs delivered exclusively in the general education setting. Most students with disabilities also felt that the special education setting was a supportive and quiet environment where they could receive extra academic help. Sometimes the general education setting can produce undesirable achievement outcomes for students with learning disabilities such as not being able to keep up with the curriculum and failing to meet
grade-level standards. Cook (2002) found that whether at the elementary or secondary level, many students with learning disabilities preferred to receive specialized instruction outside of the general education classroom for part of the school day.

**Instructional Strategies**

Teachers need to become flexible by using various instructional strategies when working with students with disabilities, especially in an inclusive setting. Students with disabilities need a variety of modifications that also require different methods of instruction for them to be successful in an inclusive classroom.

Teacher directed lessons should not be the only instructional strategy used. Student-centered lessons that require peer support is especially important to use in inclusive classrooms. Carter and Kennedy (2006) believed that cooperative learning lessons are very beneficial for both general education students and students with disabilities. It has been proven that in small groups that students are given the opportunity to learn from their peers and support each other. Content can be better understood when students receive help in cooperative groups. It also fosters meaningful participation from every student because of the amount of communication and cooperation that is needed when working with their peers (Carter and Kennedy, 2006).

It is important that students with disabilities are gaining as much access as possible to the general curriculum and age appropriate activities (Janney and Snell, 2005). Some students require accommodations to complete tasks in addition to instructional modifications as well. Accommodations may include, having students complete only specified problems for math homework, following picture cues to perform a multi-step task, and giving oral rather than written responses to comprehension questions. It is essential, however, that the tasks that are
given are related to the content that is being taught, so they can experience the general curriculum. These types of tasks may also require alternate assessments to evaluate the progress within the curriculum of special education students.

Furthermore, peer support interventions are also seen as beneficial to help students with severe disabilities have access to the curriculum and develop meaningful peer relationships. It is typically used in the elementary, middle, and high school settings. There are one or more classmates without disabilities who may provide interventions that assist with academic and social support to a student with severe disabilities. This usually takes place under adult supervision, students without disabilities provide individualized support to help differentiate activities and lessons. The students are provided with training in delivering support to their peers with severe disabilities. Some examples of objectives for peer support strategies are: adapting class activities to facilitate their participation, supporting behavior intervention plans, providing frequent, positive feedback, and modeling age-appropriate communication skills (Carter and Kennedy, 2006). Peer support provides students with severe disabilities with academic and social engagement. Carter and Kennedy (2006) believed that it leads to these students having a complete inclusive experience, by being exposed to the general education curriculum and being actively engaged in learning opportunities with their peers.

Teachers are improving the likelihood that the students with disabilities my incorporating different types of instructional strategies, modifications to tasks, and peer support strategies in inclusive settings, so that the students with disabilities who are in their classroom are going to be successful. It has been suggested that it is up to teachers to find ways to tap into their potential for students with disabilities to meet the high standards being set in today’s general education classrooms.
Strategies to Create Successful Inclusion

Successful inclusion involves putting components into place to allow it to take place. These strategies can have a major impact on whether or not inclusion is effective. Providing training and professional development opportunities to teachers to help them better accommodate every child’s learning needs and understand how to appropriately manage an inclusive classroom is one way to ensure school districts are effective. Creating a positive climate that embraces diversity, it helps inclusion become part of the culture of the school. Also, making sure that collaboration and shared responsibility between all faculty and administration are very important components of inclusion’s success. Lastly, when teachers use different instructional strategies and provide modifications to the curriculum they are ensuring that every student in their classroom is receiving the education to which they are entitled (Majoko, 2016).

Collaboration as a Process for Inclusion

Successful inclusive practices that integrated curriculum requirement and the needs of the students in the classroom benefit all students. Successful inclusive practices emphasize the need for collaboration among regular education teachers, administrators, and special educators, as well as student peers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002). The ways in which students with disabilities are educated and the setting in which they are educated have been greatly influenced by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). This reauthorization has placed great emphasis on higher expectations for students with disabilities and on participation in the grade level curriculum in the general classroom. This change in the direction of student learning outcomes has required more involvement of the regular education in the IEP process. The IDEA regulations outline strict requirements for the regular education teacher by
stating that the regular education teacher of a child with a disability, as a member of the IEP team must, to the extent appropriate, not only participate in the development of the IEP but must also determine appropriate positive behavioral interventions and supports, supplementary aids and services and program modifications (Wright & Wright, 2006). General education teachers help develop the IEP and make recommendations for adaptations and accommodations that are appropriate for students with disabilities to access the general education classroom and the curriculum. These have become part of a body that engages in discussions about the needs of the students. Consequently, the special educator becomes involved in collaborative activities with the regular educator to address the many aspects and procedures of the IEP. Collaborative discussions focus on students with disabilities in the regular education classroom, classroom problems, teaching practices, and the sharing of resources. The special educator has the task of networking with professionals both within their field and outside their field to get a better grasp of the fundamental issues associated with ensuring student access to the general education curriculum.

Collaboration is a strategy that advances inclusion and access to the general education classroom (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriquez, 2009). While special educators acknowledge the importance of collaboration, research showed that special education teachers found collaboration with general education teachers, parents, and paraprofessionals more challenging than paperwork. Collaboration has taken center-stage when administrators at the district and school level search for appropriate strategies that would reveal the techniques that best promote serving students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Although co-teaching has been identified in many districts as a viable process for including students with disabilities,
researchers have recognized that simply placing teachers in a classroom to promote inclusion is not necessarily evidence of collaboration and in of collaborative (Murawski & Hughes, 2009).

Working with others to obtain the best results of inclusion is a growing trend in the approach of administrators. When special educators engage in collaboration with their colleagues, it is expected that they ensure that students’ needs are met in the general education classroom through instructional and management practices and that there are ongoing collection and review of data. Their participation in classroom activities is influenced and directed by the regular education teacher.

Planning together is one way in which teachers can effectively enhance the access of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. There is a definite need for proactive collaboration through this planning exercise. The input of the special education teacher enables students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum more effectively (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). Collaboration with professionals is key to the inclusion process. For some special educators, it is a challenge, for others, it is a smooth interaction with colleagues who welcome their resources in making the necessary changes for inclusion to succeed. Special educators move through the process with varying perceptions and experiences triggered by these expansive variables such as teachers attitude, administrative support, co-teaching, integration of goals/accommodations, instructional/intervention strategies, and collaboration that either contribute to the success of inclusion or detracts from the intentions of the legal regulations. A look at these experiences and resulting perceptions of special educators can help clearly identify the essential concerns that may promote a better understanding of inclusion practices that can ultimately lead to satisfactory student learning outcomes.
Best Practices for Students

In an inclusive classroom, peer learning has shown to enhance a student’s self-esteem and a feeling of belonging among his or her peers (Kharevich, 2009). When students are given the opportunity to interact with other students, they learn to appreciate different abilities, interest, personalities, and variations (Kharevich, 2009). Therefore, the child with a disability may be able to one day function independently in society and the world. Another benefit that a student with a disability may acquire is the social factors among peers and be able to express them in an academic and social setting.

The pros and cons of inclusion are not easily solved and remain open for individual interpretation. Inclusion does not automatically provide students with special needs academic and social growth. It also does not guarantee that teachers and other students will become understanding or accept of children with special needs. Likewise, keeping students in separate environments or other more individualized structures for learning does not guarantee that he or she will be more successful either. Inclusion is a reality in schools and thus needs to be managed in the best possible way.

Since inclusive classrooms are a part of the school setting, it is important to understand what methods of instruction have been proven to be effective. Teaching children without disabilities is challenging, including children with special needs creates an even larger challenge and involves more careful planning of instruction (Kearney, 2006). Moreover, Kearney (2006) stated that classroom goals entail effectively individualizing education so that all students are receiving and understanding the curriculum. Respecting and teaching students to respect the exceptional developmental paths of all individuals involved may mean, no matter how unusual,
providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum, and providing related support services (Kearney, 2006).

Though most teachers believed that inclusive classrooms have great benefits, there remained a concern on how to instruct and manage academics in the classroom. Many general education teachers believed that they are not thoroughly ready to teach and handle special education challenges within their classrooms (Robertson and Valentine, 1999). Researchers have examined several benefits, strategies, assessments, interventions, and disciplines on how to teach students with special needs in inclusive classrooms without affecting other student’s learning.

There are several strategies that teachers can implement to ensure the best educational experience for students with disabilities. One way teachers can help increase academic performance is through assignments, assessments, and the curriculum. Public schools must provide access to the full range of curriculum, preschool through college for the curriculum to become intellectually accessible to all students (Kearney, 2006). If students find that assignments are too difficult or easy, they might become frustrated and upset or bored and distracted (Wright, 2001). With the contrast in assignments, student’s abilities, and different learning styles, teachers adjusting assignments that take inventory of the student’s skills as needed (Wright, 2001; Daniels, 1998).

Teachers should also consider their instructional plans and the way it either increases or decreases success in inclusive classrooms. Providing good strategies, well-structured assignments, and consistent enforcement can help alleviate problems in the classroom (Wright, 2001). The teacher should be patient, sensitive, a good listener, and impartial in order to
encourage a positive environment (Keller, 2005). Therefore, teachers and students should set goals that can be realistically achieved (Daniels, 1998).

Other ways that teachers can improve strategies for students with disabilities is through adjusting instruction to meet multiple intelligences, communication styles, attitudes towards the students with disabilities, and the expectations of these students (Winter, 2006). Teachers should also compare and evaluate communication levels between the teacher and students (Keller, 2005). Many of these interventions can be incorporated into cooperative learning instructions or groups working together on a particular assignment (Winter, 2006). Conducting cooperative learning are the group size, group composition, planning time, cultural and linguistic obstacles, and the limited access to material and resources are some factors (Winter, 2006). Groups should include a mixture of students and abilities to ensure an equal participation from every student. Cooperative learning is also vital in making social contacts possible (Keller, 2005). Students with disabilities in a general education classroom will be more acknowledged by peers, have balanced relationships, and gain more academic knowledge through small group and teacher instruction (Winter, 2006). However, some students may experience anxiety in a group environment, so it may be necessary to develop a strategy to slowly get the student’s participation in group activities (Keller, 2005). Well-designed cooperative learning can keep students actively engaged and motivated to succeed.

Teachers suggested that students be provided with academic choices to give students a sense of autonomy, opportunities to become more active participants, motivation to learn, and fewer occasions to misbehave due to frustration or boredom (Evans, Harden, Thomas, & Benefield, 2003). These choices can be executed individually, during group work, or through a
teacher’s menu of options (Kearney, 2006). Developing active participants can be achieved by using a variety of instructional equipment that the students can look at and handle (Keller, 2005).

The lessons should also be of high value or relevant to the students’ interest (Wright, 2001). Some students decline to learn different concepts, because they are unable to make the link between the lessons that are taught and how these skills will benefit them in the community and environment (Daniels, 1998). When teachers notice an interest in a particular topic, they can incorporate the topic into the lessons or activities and discuss it further with the students (Keller, 2005). Every effort should be utilized to arouse the interest of students with disabilities in activities, so they will learn to perform the activities with success, confidence, and pleasure (Keller, 2005).

The most important thing that educators can do to ensure an encouraging environment by providing positive feedback, whether to a group or individuals to ensure reinforcement. Regular praises and other positive exchanges between the teacher and students remind the students of classroom academic expectations and provide assurance that he or she is capable of achieving those expectations (Wright, 2001). If teachers neglect in giving praises and exceeds in supplying too many reprimands, the positive attitude may diminish, and students will eventually withdraw from participation in class due to the lack of recognition (Wright, 2001).

Some positive interactions might include specific praises spoken or written such as fantastic, terrific, perfect, I agree, job well done, or thank you (Daniels, 1998; Wright, 2001). Non-verbal gestures or physical expressions such as smiling, thumbs up, a pat on the back, or nodding can enhance positive attitudes and self-assurance (Daniels, 1998). Other forms of positive feedback include encouraging notes written on assignments, teacher/student interactions during free time, providing material items and food, or token rewards (Evans, Harden, Thomas,
& Benefield, 2003). Teachers could also delegate students in the general education classroom with disabilities to do several activities for them to promote unity with a student who does not have a disability. These activities can include leading group discussions, running errands, visiting other classes, choosing activities, putting away materials, or watching a movie (Daniels, 1998). Whatever the reinforcement, teachers should consider and acknowledge the appropriateness of each for the individual student (Daniels, 1998). It is crucial to remember that no matter how the reinforcement is given or when, feedback is a greater communicator of respect and promotes self-esteem and self-confidence within the student (Daniels, 1998).

The physical arrangement in classrooms and the classroom atmosphere may also contribute to the achievement of students with disabilities. With whom and where a child sits can have an intense impact on learning skills and achievement within the classroom setting? For example, changing seating arrangements in classrooms from groups to rows can affect time on task (Evans et al., 2003).

**Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Inclusion**

Developmental areas help students with disabilities grow have been stated by researchers that it is beneficial. A teacher must develop self-efficacy to believe that they have the ability to teach students successfully as stated by a theorist. A factor of lack of efficacy creates a concern for teachers regarding inclusive education because of their lack of training and education on inclusion. Teachers may feel effective in inclusive classrooms if they have had chances to experience some success in these settings through training and education. It has been important to research teachers’ attitudes toward because it can tell schools the areas that teachers need
support to help them implement inclusive education effectively and successfully (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999).

Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick & Scheer (1999) studied factors that contributed to teachers’ ability to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities within inclusive environment. This study explored teachers’ perceptions towards inclusion and their needs for supports and resources to successfully implement an inclusive setting (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999).

Generally, all the teachers voiced that they were in need of supports that they do not have to successfully integrate a student with disabilities into the regular education classroom. Of the general education teachers, 79% reported not having adequate class size, 78% needed in-service training, and 73% reported needing to, but not having time, to meet with families (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). Forty-nine percent of the special education teachers conveyed they needed but did not have appropriate class-size, and 48% reported that they needed in-service workshops with the general education teachers (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). The only areas that teachers stated met their needs were receiving support from the principal and teaming with a specialist (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999).

Overall, teachers must feel supported and empowered for inclusive practices to successfully address the individual needs of students has been discussed. Better in-service training can be implemented for teachers when they feel that they need more supports. However, Buell, Gamel-McCormick & Scheer (1999) pointed out that efficacy in teachers is not only developed through training, and gaining knowledge, but also through successful personal experiences and contextual practices. More efficacy helps to promote the schools need to
encourage more teacher participation in decision making and practices that concern their students with inclusion in the classroom (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999).

Horne & Timmons (2009), found that “overall most teachers were in favor of inclusion. Most felt they got needed support from the principal. However, teachers did feel that they “lacked the adequate training needed to implement inclusion successfully. They also felt they were not given sufficient time to prepare and they needed more support in the form of smaller class size and assistance with modifying the curriculum” (p.74).

Teachers felt that the lack of training or collaborative teaching opportunities had a more negative effect on inclusion. In understanding the current knowledge and concerns of elementary school teachers on the subject of inclusion, it could help develop remedies and supportive procedures that can be implemented to improve inclusion programs (Hammond, & Ingalls, 2003). The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers were supportive or non-supportive of implementing inclusive programs. It also determined if general patterns of responses are evident in the teachers’ attitudes and made recommendations to address teachers’ attitudes (Hammond, & Ingalls, 2003).

Inclusionary programs were evaluated as being beneficial by the majority of teachers in their schools. There was a high percentage of teachers that had either negative or uncertain attitudes toward inclusion which were not fully committed to the concept of inclusion. Lack of collaborative opportunities was a concern for teachers and the believed that they did not receive appropriate training for providing inclusion services (Hammond, & Ingalls, 2003).

Teachers involved in inclusion programs should have a positive attitude toward the concept of inclusion which is very important. Also, teachers need to realize the legal reasons for inclusion and the positive impact inclusionary programs can have on students’ academic and
social development. Another conclusion was that teachers need to voice their concerns and be actively involved in creating solutions to improve inclusion programs. However, the uncovered data that teachers had limited commitment, various levels of uncertainty, negative attitudes toward inclusion, and that the commitment of school administrators’ would be needed for the program to succeed (Hammond, & Ingalls, 2003).

According to de Boer, Pijl Sip, & Minnaert (2011), teachers were also negative or undecided on their beliefs about inclusion and did not consider themselves as competent in educating students with disabilities. They did not feel confident in teaching students with special needs and would more often reject students with special needs than regular students. Also, the authors concluded that teachers’ attitudes were vastly influenced by years of teaching experience, experience in inclusive environments, and training in special education.

**Attitudes of Special Education Teachers**

Special education teachers played an important role in the education of students with disabilities. Overall, teachers helped to develop and to implement inclusive models of education that meet the social and academic needs of all students enrolled in general education classrooms. The attitude of special education teachers towards students with disabilities is a main factor in determining the success or failure of inclusive education. Salisbury (2006) stated that attitudes toward inclusion were greatly influenced by the amount of education and academic preparation teachers received. Special education teachers who experienced specific training to teach students with disabilities expressed more positive attitudes towards inclusion when compared to those who did not have specific training (Lambe and Bones, 2006).
Additionally, the severity of the students’ disabilities is another factor that influenced special education teachers’ attitudes. Kniveton (2004) stated that the more severe the disability of a student, the less positive inclusion was regarded by teachers. It is difficult for students to adjust to the routines and rituals of a general education classroom which requires a greater amount of responsibility on the part of the general education teacher. Students with severe disabilities can become an added stress to the general education teachers.

Lastly, proper support from their principal was a paramount importance to teachers. Teachers felt that if they are not provided with the proper training or professional development opportunities, they believed that they were not fully supported by their principal. Also, if the principal did not prepare teachers with the appropriate teaching staff to support the students with disabilities in their classroom, such as a paraprofessional or a special education teacher, then they would not have a favorable view of inclusion.

Daane and Beirne-Smith (2001) interviewed 324 elementary teachers and found that although they agreed that students with disabilities had the right to be in the general education classroom, the majority of them disagreed that they could receive effective instruction in the general education classroom. Teachers also understood that the presence of students with disabilities in the general education classroom increased the instructional load of the general education teacher. Instructional modifications were seen as difficult to implement and required extra time and planning. The teachers also indicated that there were more management problems in the classroom when they included students with disabilities which was an issue. Daane and Beirne-Smith (2001) also found that special education teachers felt it was necessary to still use pull out services for some students with disabilities because they needed more one-on-one attention and assistance than the general education classroom can provide. They also believed
that the general education teacher should not have the primary responsibility for the education of students with disabilities when they are in an inclusive setting. They thought that the magnitude of the inclusion process was too great of a task for a teacher to implement alone, and it is important to include the expertise of the special education teachers to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving all of the support they need in the general education classroom (Daane and Beirne-Smith, 2001).

Moreover, special education teachers felt that careful thought and preparation were required for inclusion. It should not be something that happens vicariously (Pavri and Hegwer-DiVita, 2006). Teachers became frustrated but supported inclusion even if it is not treated as a process that requires time and energy to implement. If teachers received the appropriate support and tools to implement inclusion successfully, then they would have more optimistic attitudes toward this method of instruction.

**Summary**

Inclusion can be a very beneficial factor in every student’s life. It is not only good for academic purposes, but for social and emotionally learning as well. When children learn from each other, they eventually become more understanding and well rounded. Being segregated in schools does not prepare students for society. When students begin to enter the work field, there will not be an issue of inclusion or not. It only hinders their concepts of what true America is. Diversity is healthy and helps to eliminate issues such as prejudice, racism, and discrimination. Through inclusion, well-rounded and educated people are objectives for schools. Inclusion helps introduce new ideas, concepts, and mentalities can be a vital aspect in all regular education classrooms. The teacher is to determine how to assist every child in the class and maintain a
productive and positive atmosphere. Having various options on how to deal with any type of
disability can lead to a successful academic year for both the students and teachers.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Description of Research

This study investigated the perspectives of special education teachers regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Specifically, this research explored the perspectives of special education teachers with various years of teaching experience and determined if there is a difference in perspectives among elementary and middle school special education teachers. The hypotheses for this study were:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

This study also addressed the following research questions:

1. How do special education teachers with various years of experience respond to having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

2. How do the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

This chapter presents a description of the research, the specific research approach, participants and setting, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and the data analysis procedures. This chapter concluded with a discussion of issues that would place limitations on the study followed by the summary.
Research Approach

This research examined the perspectives of special education teachers with various years of experience on students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. This study employed categorical data as well as questionnaires in order to uncover trends in thoughts, opinions, and to allow a deeper insight into this issue. Measures of Central Tendency and Chi Square Test of Independence were used to analyze the data. Chi-square is the most frequently used statistical test for nominal level data. Information regarding the frequency of occurrence within categories was solicited. From the nominal level data, a nose-count of the data was done. This told the number of cases with a certain characteristic in each category. The data were sorted into discrete mutually exclusive categories and then the frequency of occurrence within each category was counted (Agresti, 2013).

Instrumentation

Teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms have been found to be strong predictors of the success of efforts to create inclusive learning communities. Specifically, research has shown that when teachers have positive mindsets toward inclusion, they more readily adapt their teaching methods to meet a variety of student learning needs (Cullen, Gregory & Noto, 2010). This assumption suggested that the inclusion movement would benefit from research that identifies effective ways to assist teachers in the formation of positive attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion. Inquiries of this kind required instrumentation. To address this need, the Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (TATIS) was developed. This is an instrument that was built around three well-researched components of teacher attitudes toward inclusive teaching: (a) attitudes toward students with disabilities in
inclusive environments, (b) beliefs about professional roles and responsibilities, and (c) beliefs about the effectiveness of inclusion (Cullen, Gregory, & Noto 2010). The TATIS was developed for (a) teachers who are both in-service and pre-service to assure maximum utility in all phases of professional development, (b) this country since attitudes on any subject tend to vary significantly by culture, and (c) was developed in the last 8 years to reflect the significant shifts in educational policy that have occurred during this time frame (Cullen, Gregory & Noto, 2010).

The research questions and hypotheses in this current study were aligned with the questions in TATIS. The survey consists of 14 Likert scale questions with six demographic questions to get the background of the participants. Additionally, the questions retrieved knowledge of participant’s experience with inclusion. The Likert scale responses were on a scale of 1-7 consisting of: 1-Agree Very Strongly 2-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree 5-Disagree, 6-Strongly Agree, and 7-Disagree Very Strongly. The items were developed from literature that identified the benefits and disadvantages of inclusion. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

Validity

The TATIS was subjected to a principal components analysis to confirm its construct validity. The procedure revealed three factors that accounted for just over 58% of the variance (Cullen & Noto, 2007). Commonalities for the 14 items ranged from 0.40 to 0.80 with a mean of 0.58 (Cullen & Noto, 2007). When the items were rotated using the Equamax method with Kaiser Normalization, the component loadings ranged from 0.584 to 0.88 with a mean of 0.72 (Cullen & Noto, 2007). The items found to load on the expected factors and the commonalities were similar to those of another survey called the APTATIS, from which the TATIS was
developed. These results confirmed that the TATIS was successful in eliciting what it was
designed to measure.

**Reliability**

The reliability of the TATIS was confirmed through Cronbach’s alpha correlation
procedure (Cullen & Noto, 2007). The results revealed that along with the strong factor loadings
indicating good content validity, the reliability of the instrument was assessed and found to have
an overall correlation coefficient of 0.821 (Cullen & Noto, 2007). It was computed that the
alphas for each of the factors. The reliability coefficients confirm that the TATIS is a reliable
instrument for measuring teacher attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities (Cullen
& Noto, 2007).

**Participants and Setting**

The sample for this study was selected from the population of special education teachers
who are teaching in elementary and middle schools in Wilson County. An email list of possible
participants were provided by the Special Education Director. Approximately 3,700 students are
served in the school district in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth. There are about 500
dedicated men and women who were “Committed to a Community of Excellence” for all
students. The district included four elementary schools and two middle schools. Out of a
population of 13 inclusion teachers in the district, 12 teachers were selected for the study.
Teacher 13 did not complete the questionnaire in the allotted time frame, so results could not be
collected. Participants were instructed to sign an informed consent document which explained
and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.
Data Collection Procedures

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Carson Newman University from the beginning of this research. Following IRB approval a letter of permission was sent to the Director of Special Education of the school district. The instrument then was distributed to participants through Google Docs, which is an online survey service. All of the respondents gave consent before completing the questionnaire. Also, demographic questions were included to obtain information such as position, gender, years of teaching experience, courses, and teaching level. Participation in the survey was voluntary and kept anonymous by not revealing the participants names and other demographic information. Participants were given the option to leave survey items blank if they did not want to provide the requested information. The consent form Appendix A and survey were given to 13 special education teachers in elementary and middle schools who had direct involvement with inclusion from the identified school district. Twelve of the participants responded. The participants were asked to return the survey within two weeks. A follow-up notice was sent through email to all participants after one week reminding to complete the survey if they had not previously. A second follow-up notice was sent after a period of two weeks. The 92% return rate was considered adequate. After two weeks, the response time for the survey was closed. The completed survey answers to each question were analyzed. After, the surveys were analyzed.

Additionally, qualitative data was collected from the six participants who agreed to be part of a focus group. These six responded to a request to all 12 of the original participants. A dynamic group discussion was used to collect information from this focus group (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The focus group activity was held outside of school hours and were arranged two weeks before data gathering. The setting was familiar to the participants, which reduced risk
for anxiety that could arise from a sense of exposure or loss of confidentiality. The data collected were appropriate in meeting the purpose of the study by producing quality in depth descriptions of the phenomenon of study within the bounded context. Questions for the focus group consisted of inquiries regarding special education teachers’ perceptions, feelings, or attitudes about inclusion. The purpose of using the group setting was to analyze the perceptions of special education teachers on inclusion and to see whether the years of experience makes a difference in teachers’ perceptions of students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

Individuals were allowed to respond at will and cooperatively as they desired. All participants were offered chances to explain and build upon the topic by adding thoughts as they arose. The focus group discussion was recorded by audio recorder. As an added caution, notes were taken when points of interest or emphasis arose and were reviewed later during transcription and data comparison. The focus group interaction was anticipated to last for about two hours and met the expectation. The results were debriefed with the participants and were analyzed to make sure that it was completed correctly.

**Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

All schools and teachers were treated with confidentiality and anonymity throughout the entire study. Based on the small number of participants, specific schools within the district were not named, but specificity beyond that information remained masked and anonymous. Informed consent forms were given to all participants before including them and their responses to data in this study.

The findings could be subjected to other interpretations which can be a limitation of this study. The sample size was appropriate for this study; however, it was too small to generalize
The survey was administered to special education teachers in the school district only.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The data collected from this study were analyzed using measures of central tendency, specifically the mode and percentages and the chi square test of independence. Frequency data were displayed on bar charts and tables. Demographic data were utilized to compare answers on selected responses, such as years of experience. The definitive answers to the research questions were based on the highest frequency of responses from clusters of survey responses. The chi square test of independence was used to test the hypotheses and to determine if there was a significant difference in the perspectives of special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. The .05 alpha level was used for the level of significance.

Focus group data remained confidential to protect participant’s contributions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data were viewed and analyzed. The results were shared with the participants to ensure that the data were analyzed done correctly. Common statements, a discussion, themes, words, and phrases were re-played to clarify what was stated by the participants. The focus group discussion was transcribed into text-based documents immediately after interaction. After the transcription, the responses were coded by the themes, words, and phrases. This was used to write the analysis of the participant’s personal experiences as a special education teacher and their opinions regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of special education teachers with various years of teaching experience and to determine if there is a difference in perspectives among elementary and middle school special education teachers. The hypotheses for this study were:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do special education teachers with various years of experience respond to having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?
2. How do the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

This chapter presents the results of the data collected, including the data entry, a description of the demographics, and a statistical analysis of the results.
Population

The sample for this study was special education teachers in Wilson County, Tennessee. The district is made up of four elementary schools and two middle schools. All schools were selected based on convenience. The researcher developed a relationship with the Director of Special Education in the district. The communication involved weekly correspondence by email or by telephone. Moreover, the Director of Special Education provided the researcher with the email addresses to send out the survey to the participants. There was a total of 12 participants out of 13 for this research. One of the participants did not participate. The focus group consisted of 6 participants, 5 females and 1 male.
Table 1.1 – Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position in District</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Inclusion Courses</th>
<th>Professional Development Courses</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>Middle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-10</td>
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<td>1-2</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-11</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher-12</td>
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<td>3-4</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 provides the demographics characteristics of the respondents. The number of respondents and percentages was provided for categorical variables with mean and mode. The first six questions were demographic questions in the survey. The first question was designed to
determine what the participant’s position was in the district. With 12 responses, 100% were special education teachers compared to the choice of a general education teacher, which was none. This set the basis for understanding the perspectives of special education teachers who taught only students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Question 2 was regarding gender and based on the responses of 12, there were 11 (91.7%) female and 1 (8.3%) male. Question 3 addressed the number of years of experience and there was 0% for 0-1 years of experience, there was 1 (8.3%) for 2-3 years of experience, there were 4 (33.3%) for 4-5 years of experience, there were 4 (33.3%) that had between 6-10 years of experience, and 3 (25%) who had 11 or more years of experience in an inclusion setting. Question 4 described the number of pre-service course work regarding inclusion. There was 1 (8.3%) for no pre-service courses taken regarding inclusion. There were 5 (41.7%) who had taken 1-2 courses related to inclusion. There were 3 (25%) who had taken between 2-4 courses and 3 (25%) who had taken five or more courses. Question 5 involved professional development taken by respondents that was focused on including students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. There were 3 (25%) respondents who completed 1-2 workshops. There were 4 (33.3%) who completed 3-4 professional development workshops and 5 (41.7%) who completed 5 or more professional development workshops involving inclusion. Question 6 was in relation to what setting that the participants taught in the district. There were 7 respondents (58.3%) who taught in an elementary school and 5 respondents (41.7%) who taught in a middle school. The results of the chi-square test of independence analysis will not be affected by the number of respondents in each category because the categories are mutually exclusive.
Responses for Questionnaire Items

The charts below are a representation of how the special education teachers in elementary and middle school responded to each survey question in the study. The responses are from agree very strongly to disagree very strongly based on the Likert scale.

Figure 1.1-Question 7

All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent.

The bar chart above gives a pictorial representation of the responses regarding this question. This distribution was bi-modal. The data showed the following responses for the statements: Disagree Very Strongly-0, Strongly Disagree-1 (8.3%), Disagree-0, Neither Agree or Disagree-0 (0%), Agree-4 (33.3%), Strongly Agree-4 (33.3%), and Agree Strongly-3 (25%).
Figure 1.2-Question 8

It is seldom necessary to remove students with mild to moderate disabilities from regular education classrooms in order to meet their educational needs.

The bar chart above illustrates responses regarding this question. The mode for this distribution was 3 (25%). The data showed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-0 (8.3%), Strongly Disagree-0 (0%), Disagree-3 (25%), Neither Agree or Disagree-2 (16.7%), Agree-7 (58%), Strongly Agree-(0), and Agree Strongly-0 (0%).
Figure 1.3-Question 9

Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated.

The bar chart above illustrates responses regarding this question. The mode for this distribution was 3 (25%). The data showed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-1 (8.3%), Strongly Disagree-0 (0%), Disagree-3 (25%), Neither Agree or Disagree-2 (16.7%), Agree-7 (58%), Strongly Agree-(0), and Agree Strongly-0 (0%).
Most or all regular classrooms can be modified to meet the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities.

The bar chart displays the responses for this question. The mode for this question was 1 (8.3%). The data showed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-0 (0%), Strongly Disagree-0 (0%), Disagree-1 (8.3%), Neither Agree or Disagree-1 (8.3%), Agree-8 (66.7%), Strongly Agree-1 (8.3%), and Agree Strongly-1, (8.3%).
Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.

The bar chart above describes responses for this question. The mode for this question had two modes which was 1 (8.3%) and 4 (33.3%). The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-1 (8.3%), Strongly Disagree-1 (8.3%), Disagree-5 (41.7%), Neither Agree or Disagree-3 (25%), Agree-2 (16.7%), Strongly Agree-0 (0%), and Agree Strongly-0 (0%).
Figure 1.6-Question 12

Inclusion is a more efficient model for educating students with mild to moderate disabilities because it reduces transition time (i.e. the time required to move from one setting to another).

The bar chart gives a view of the responses for this question. The mode is 1 for this question. The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-0 (0%), Strongly Disagree-0 (0%), Disagree-2 (16.7%), Neither Agree or Disagree-4 (33.3%), Agree-4 (33.3%), Strongly Agree-1 (8.3%), and Agree Strongly-1 (8.3%).
Figure 1.7-Question 13

Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classrooms with non-disabled students because they will not require too much of the teacher’s time.

The bar chart demonstrates the responses for this question. There was no mode for this question. The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-0 (0%), Strongly Disagree-0 (0%), Disagree-6 (50%), Neither Agree or Disagree-4 (33.3%), Agree-5 (41.7%), Strongly Agree-0 (0%), and Agree Strongly-1 (8.3%).
Figure 1.8-Question 14

I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the academic skills necessary for success.

The bar chart reveals a pictorial representation of the responses for this question. The mode for this question was 1 (8.3%). The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-0 (0%), Strongly Disagree-0 (0%), Disagree-0 (0%), Neither Agree or Disagree-1 (8.3%), Agree-7 (58.3%), Strongly Agree- 3 (25%), and Agree Strongly-1 (8.3%).
I believe that including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success.

The bar chart above gives a pictorial representation of the responses for this question. The mode for this question was 3 (25%). The data resulted in the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-(0), Strongly Disagree-(0) not applicable, Disagree-(0), Neither Agree or Disagree-(0), Agree-6 (50%), Strongly Agree-3 (25%), and Agree Strongly-3 (25%).
Figure 1.10-Question 16

I feel that general education teachers often do not succeed with students mild to moderate disabilities, even when they try their best.

The bar chart above gives a pictorial representation of the responses for this question. The mode for this question was 2 (16.7%). The data results revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-2 (16.7%), Strongly Disagree-2 (16.7%), Disagree-8 (66.7%), Neither Agree or Disagree-(0), Agree-(0), Strongly Agree-(0), and Agree Strongly-(0).
I would welcome the opportunity to team teach as a model for meeting the needs of students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms.

The bar chart above represents the responses for this question. There was no mode for this question. The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-(0, Strongly Disagree-(0), Disagree-(0), Neither Agree or Disagree-1 (8.3%), Agree-4 (33.3%), Strongly Agree-5 (41.7%), and Agree Strongly-2 (16.7%).
All students benefit from team teaching that is, the pairing of a general and a special education teacher in the same classroom.

The bar chart illustrates the responses for question 18. The mode for this question was 3 (25%). The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-0, Strongly Disagree-0, Disagree-0, Neither Agree or Disagree-1 (8.3%), Agree-3 (25%), Strongly Agree-5 (41.7%), and Agree Strongly-3 (25%).
Figure 1.13-Question 19

The responsibility for educating students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms should be shared between general and special education teachers.

The bar chart above depicts the responses for this question. There was no mode for this question. The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-(0), Strongly Disagree-(0), Disagree-(0), Neither Agree or Disagree-(0), Agree-5 (41.7%), Strongly Agree-4 (33.3%), and Agree Strongly-3 (25%).
I would welcome the opportunity to participate in a consultant teacher model (i.e. regular collaborative meetings, between special and general education teachers to share ideas, methods, and materials) as a means of addressing the needs of students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms.

The bar chart above gives a pictorial representation of the responses for this question. The mode for this question was 1 (8.3%). The data revealed the following responses for the statement: Disagree Very Strongly-(0), Strongly Disagree-(0), Disagree-1 (8.3%), Neither Agree or Disagree-1 (8.3%), Agree-5 (41.7%), Strongly Agree-4 (33.3%), and Agree Strongly-1 (8.3%).
Table 2:1 Test of Hypothesis Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Chi Square Critical Value</th>
<th>Obtained Value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.487</td>
<td>5.399</td>
<td>Accept H₀</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis

The Chi Square Test of Independence was utilized to test whether the null hypothesis was tenable or untenable. The null hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the perspective of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of teaching experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. The demographic data on years of experience teaching special education (0-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-10, 11+) was compared with the responses on the TATIS questionnaire item #7 which stated that “All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classroom with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent.”

The results of the Chi Square (X²) Test of Independence yielded an obtained (X²) value 5.399. When the obtained (X²) value of 5.399 was compared to the critical value of 9.487 at .05 alpha level of significance and 4 degrees of freedom, the obtained value was significantly less than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis was tenable and was accepted. In conclusion, there is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of teaching experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting (Accept H₀).
Research Question 1

How do special education teachers with various years of experience respond to having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

Table 3:1 Responses to Questions 14 and 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree Very Strongly</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Very Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the academic skills necessary for success.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 14 stated, “I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the academic skills for success”. Question 15 stated, “I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is
effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success”. To determine the various years of experience among special education teachers who had students with disabilities in an inclusion setting, responses to items 14 and 15 were analyzed from the survey. Based on the analysis, there was 1 (8.3%) respondent who had between 2-3 years of experience teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting who taught middle school. There were 4 (33.3%) respondents who had between 4-5 years of experience teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting who taught in elementary and middle schools.

Furthermore, there were 4 (33.3%) respondents who had 6-10 years of experience teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting that taught in an elementary school. Moreover, there were 3 (25%) who had 11 or more years of experience teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting that taught in an elementary and middle school. Based on the responses to Question 14, there were 3 (25%) participants who responded disagree very strongly, 1 (8.3%) who responded neither agree nor disagree, 7 (58.3%) who chose agree and 1 (8.3%) who answered agree strongly. Question 15, 6 (50%) respondents replied agree with the effectiveness of social skills necessary for success in an inclusion setting, 3 (25%) replied strongly agree and 3 (25%) chose agree very strongly. It can be concluded that the majority of participants responded with agree on this question.
**Research Question 2**

How do the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?

**Table 3:2 Responses to Questions 8, 9, 11, 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Very Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. It is seldom necessary to remove students with mild to moderate disabilities from regular education classrooms in order to meet their educational needs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Inclusion is a more efficient model for educating students with mild to moderate disabilities because it reduces transition time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to determine how the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding students with disabilities in an inclusion setting, responses to the following items were analyzed from the survey: 8, 9, 11, 12.

Question 8 stated, “It is seldom necessary to remove students with mild/moderate disabilities from regular education classrooms in order to meet their educational needs”. There were 5 (41.7%) respondents who selected agree two of these respondents were elementary special education teachers and three respondents were middle school special education teachers. There were 2 (16.7%) respondents who chose disagree nor agree and both respondents were elementary special education teachers. There were 4 (33.3%) who responded disagree. Three respondents were elementary and one was in middle school. There was 1 (8.3%) participant who chose very strongly disagree and was a middle school special education teacher. Among elementary and middle school special education teachers, both had the same number of responses for agree. More elementary special education teachers said they disagree when compared to middle school special education teachers. Also, more middle school special education teachers selected neither disagree nor agree to the question when compared to elementary school special education teachers.

Question 9 stated, “Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated”. There was 1 (8.3%) respondents who selected disagree very strongly and was a middle school special education teacher. There was 1 (8.3%) who answered strongly disagree and it was an elementary special education teacher. There were 5 (41.7%) who selected disagree. Three of the respondents were elementary and two were middle school special education teachers. There were 3 (25%) respondents who selected neither disagree nor agree. Two respondents were elementary and one respondent was a middle
school special education teacher. There were 2 (16.7%) respondents who selected agree. One was elementary special education teacher and the other was a middle special education teacher. Based on the analysis, more middle school special education teachers responded disagree when compared to elementary special education teachers. Elementary and middle school special education teachers’ responses were the same. The majority of the respondents chose agree for Question 9.

Question 11 stated, “Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms”. There were 2 (16.7%) respondents who selected disagree. They were elementary special education teachers. There were 4 (33.3%) respondents who chose neither agree nor disagree and it was two elementary and two middle school special education teachers. There were 4 (33.3%) respondents who chose agree and it was three elementary and one middle school special education teacher. There was 1 (8.3%) respondent who answered strongly agree and 1 (8.3%) respondent who selected agree strongly, all were middle school special education teachers. Based on the analysis, more elementary special education teachers selected agree to Question 11 when compared to middle school special education teachers.

Question 12 stated, “Inclusion is a more efficient model for educating students with mild to moderate disabilities because it reduces transition time (i.e. the time required to move from one setting to another)”. More elementary special education teachers answered agree when compared to middle school teachers. It was the same response among elementary and middle school teachers for neither agree nor disagree. Also, it was the same response among elementary and middle school teachers for disagree. There were 2 (16.7%) respondents who replied disagree. One was elementary special education teacher and the other was a middle school
special education teacher. There were 4 (33.3%) respondents who replied neither agree nor disagree. They were two middle school and two elementary special education teachers. There were 5 (41.7%) respondents who selected agree. Three were elementary and two were middle school special education teachers. There was 1 (8.3%) respondent who answered agree strongly and it was one middle school special education teacher. According to the analysis, more elementary special education teachers selected agree when compared to middle school special teachers. It was the same among elementary and middle school teachers who chose neither agree nor disagree.

Question 13 stated, “Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classrooms with non-disabled students, because they will not require too much of the teacher’s time”. More elementary special education teachers responded disagree when compared to middle school special education teachers. Furthermore, more elementary special education teachers and middle school special education teachers chose neither agree nor disagree according to the question. There were 6 (50%) respondents who replied disagree and were all elementary special education teachers. There were 5 (41.7%) respondents who answered neither agree nor disagree, and it was the same among elementary and middle school special education teachers. There was 1 (8.3%) middle school special education teacher who replied agree.

Focus Group Results

The researcher chose the focus group to add reliability and validity to this study. According to Beck, Trambetta, and Share (1986), a focus group is an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics relevant to the situation at hand. The researcher also preferred the focus group method, such groups can be most efficient when
endeavoring to identify issues in areas where little research has been previously done (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Additionally, the focus group method gave participants the opportunity to react to their fellow participants’ responses, which may often trigger each participant to more profoundly consider their own responses, consequently eliciting more information.

The focus group allowed the participants to remain in control of the knowledge of what inclusion meant to them and the significance of how it works within the school system and its operation. The approach gave participants the opportunity to express values, perceptions, and attitudes about an issue in a way that was emergent. The qualitative aspect of emergence in the focus group provided the most precise data about the experiences of inclusion within the research setting. Through sharing of information, participants offered experienced perspectives into the issue in a way that was current and related to the context of inclusion.

Fontana and Frey (2005), also mentioned the downside of this methodology questioning the mode of correction and interpretation in the measurement of individual responses. They warned that the social nature of the group and the type of question being asked by the moderator could have a detrimental effect. Therefore, they recommended that even as individual responses are tallied, wider themes with supporting evidence should ensure a wider range more representative, of the ideas and issues, raised by the group. A further disadvantage of focus groups is that sometimes one participant may provide irrelevant information, and therefore no response can be coded. A previously mentioned disadvantage common to focus groups methodology is that a participant may provide irrelevant information and therefore no response can be coded. This strategy was generally but not always successful.
Open coding was used to categorize the data. According to Corbin and Strauss (2007), open coding is the process of examining data, breaking them down, comparing them, and categorizing them. The concepts are closely examined and compared for similarities and differences. Merriam (1998) stated coding is simply the transmitting of some form of shorthand to segments of information for later use. After transcribing the information collected during the focus group discussion by an audio recorder, I looked for themes in the data and categorized accordingly. Patterns emerged among the coded data. These patterns or common themes were the core of the theoretical framework (Patton, 2002). Common and or uncharacteristic themes were then organized for collaboration. The themes noted were: structure of inclusion, time, training/experience, and collaboration from the focus group with participant responses. A summary of the findings and conclusions are presented here as they relate to the hypotheses, two research questions, and focus group followed by further research.

The data gathered from the focus group resulted in themes that emerged and remained constant throughout the discussion. Data were constantly compared as the coding process was conducted. Themes were convergent and re-emerged often throughout the focus group discussion. Themes from the focus group discussion resulted in four categories: (a) structure of inclusion, (b) time, (c) training/experience, and (d) collaboration.

**Theme: Structure**

The structure of inclusion in a general education classroom relies upon a heavily developed schedule. Effectiveness is determined by the ability of the teacher to serve students in a differentiated manner, and with the functionality of an everyday routine (Valiandes, 2015). Teachers in the focus group identified inclusion structure as a place where students
with disabilities are able to get the content being taught by the general education teachers that include modifications and accommodations to meet IEP goals. Currently, inclusion students are placed in the general education setting with pullout by special education teachers. Within the structure, student performance is nurtured in the regular education setting, and ideally, the special education teacher is available to support general education teachers during the instructional process. However, special education teachers perceived structure of the day does not support the ability to service students with disabilities due to meetings such as IEP, S-Team, etc., behavior among students with disabilities, conferences with parents either in person, phone or email, and other responsibilities that may be given by the administration. This does not allow special education teachers to fully serve students with disabilities.

**Theme: Time**

When teachers were asked about the methodology of current inclusion, three teachers discussed what prevents inclusion from being a successful process in the classroom. The methodology of inclusion and the time to work within the structure were discussed within the context of barriers, as it was perceived that they could not be separated. The structure of inclusion is perceived to be a holding place for students to spend all day with no reprieve from the issues that plague the setting.

One teacher reflected:

“To be honest, we don’t have the time set up within our day…when are we going to meet with them? We don’t have that set up in our day, we just don’t…I hate to just focus on the barriers, but I don’t feel like that we have the other, what did you say it was the facilitators or whatever. I feel we have more barriers than we have the positive stuff”. Honestly…think it does not serve the special child…our model…our system…it doesn’t serve the special ed children or doesn’t serve the regular ed children that are, you know, in the classroom” [referring to time for employing the model of inclusion].
Two teachers summarized their thoughts:

“Unable to service students fully because of safety concerns and time consumption”.

The first participant stated perceptions as follows:

“I felt like all my attention was focused on them [other general ed students] and not the rest…so I just felt like I just didn’t service, because I was just worried about safety and it was true inclusion. They did not go anywhere else, they stayed there”.

The second teacher shared:

“That efforts in the classroom with inclusion students take her time away from the remaining members of the class, I spend most of my time working with those children…” (speaking about students with disabilities in her classroom).

Additional thoughts offered as teachers considered further about the barriers they had experienced involved expressing frustration with the lack of strong structure for the inclusion process. Perceptions were communicated that the inclusive students were disruptive and made the instruction a burdensome task; therefore, they desired a different option for inclusion students. It was stated that it would be really nice if the special education teacher would come into my classroom and collaborate with me at once a day or a couple times a week. Additionally, they could pull those kids to a table, and work on what I’m working on to help them get to where they need to be in academics.

Another respondent stated:

“They’re in my classroom all day long disrupting. I barely get through even a lesson without having to, you know, either send them to another classroom for a little while so I can get though it, because of all the interruptions or um just do what I can to keep them on task. Those who just simply shut down and don’t do anything and throw papers all over the floor so this is what we deal with …and you can’t just focus on that one because you’ve got all the others that need you and are here for a purpose, and you have to get them ready for testing…I think we are doing them a disservice”.

Another participant added,

“I was thinking a few years ago I had a student who was throwing chairs in the classroom and of course all the paperwork and stuff, but I wish there was a safe place where
the student could have gone. I mean my students had to go out in the hall while the student was throwing chairs so you know I have to consider my students’ safety. Attitudes toward inclusion were positive in theory, but one teacher maintained a sense that inclusion is not operating in a manner that it should. “In theory, inclusion is the greatest; I mean it takes a village to raise a child right? But it’s not working the way it is now and I, I don’t know why.”

The structure of inclusion affects time when so much paperwork is required to track students. Teachers perceive they are unable to fulfill their primary function as educator. Villarreal, Rodriguez, and Moore (2014) found the time spent in managing paperwork leaves teachers feeling that they need specific time set aside to complete documentations without requirement to manage a classroom or use so many after school hours. One participant echoed the frustration in reference to paperwork as part of the inclusive structure, and stated:

“That barrier of time revolves around the paperwork to complete, “and the paperwork to me is a barrier…the length of time it takes to fill out the paperwork.”

Lindqvist, Nordänger, and Carlsson (2014) supported the reflection that increased accountability or documentation provided frustration in education with teachers who left or considered leaving the profession.

Theme: Training/Experience

Olinger (2013) found teachers perceive training is a factor beneficial to successful inclusion. Throughout the focus group, the lack of knowledge was stated in areas where attitudes about inclusion were reflected upon. When asked to describe attitudes toward inclusion, and why the attitude exists, one teacher responded that teachers really do lack training when it comes to teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

Teachers also state:
“If training were provided, then, when will we have the time to be trained. Time has been a major factor in analyzing inclusion as a whole”.

Another teacher stated:

“There was enough training on how to effectively modify classroom. This may be due to the teaching style of the teacher, the administration, and not enough time to look over the IEP.”

Two other teachers stated:

“Special education teachers do not have the experience to increase the academic levels of students with disabilities” and that they felt like some general education teachers do not fulfill duties for students with IEPs, so students cannot meet goals”.

Another participant stated that:

“Training is much needed to tailor inclusion to the needs of students with disabilities.”

The teachers’ response referenced the lack of training and experience, which aligns with Fuch’s (2010) identified theme of training. Fuchs reported the consistent need for teachers to receive training for making instructional adaptations, so they could meet the needs of IEP students. The insufficient preparation relates to the overall problem that despite inclusion efforts, barriers to implementing successful inclusion still remain and student achievement is lacking.

**Theme: Collaboration**

Horne and Timmons (2009) reported that teachers perceive collaboration as necessary to serve special needs learners. Special education teachers believed the time required to service inclusion students is disruptive to the general class needs (Horne & Timmons, 2009). In this focus group, a desire to spend more time in collaboration was expressed as a possible way to attend to the instructional demands of inclusion learners.
Special education teachers perceived they could receive valuable input from the collaborative process with the general education teachers with whom they service students in the classroom. The focus of the collaboration was not only on more interaction with the special education teacher, but with other teachers from other classrooms who serve students in an inclusion setting. Furthermore, the participants discussed the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities.

One teacher stated that:

“Collaboration works well when the special education and general education teacher are on one accord.”

In analyzing this statement, the participant felt that it is important because the needs of the student have to be met. Collaboration is very important because it involves “thinking outside the box”. This philosophy allows all teachers to be able to share experiences, instructional strategies as well as resources that make the student academically successful.

Another teacher stated in discussing the benefits of inclusion:

“Academics is a benefit when the curriculum is modified to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Also, the social aspect allows students with disabilities to interact with their non-disabled peers which involve the social and emotional learning within the inclusion setting.”

The statements of the special education teachers outlined the desire for increased interactions among general education teachers. The special education teachers emphasized that there is a crucial need to inform general education teachers about the learning style of students with disabilities in the inclusion process. Special education teachers also desired the opportunity to build a network of relationships with general education teachers and others who possess the expertise they feel they lack among their peers.
Summary

In this chapter, data obtained from special education teachers in elementary and middle schools from Lebanon Special School District in Wilson County, Tennessee were presented and analyzed. There was one hypothesis and two research questions. All data were collected through an online survey and a focus group was held.
Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of special education teachers on students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. The sample for this study was 12 special education teacher teachers on elementary and middle school levels. This study used the TATIS survey to receive feedback regarding inclusion. Furthermore, a focus group was held to discuss the responses of the samples.

There was a null and alternative hypothesis along with two research questions guiding this study. The hypotheses were H₀: There is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. H₁: There is a significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. This was used to determine the validity of the statistical claim to define both the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was used access whether the null hypothesis should be accepted or rejected. Measures of Central Tendency were used to determine the mode and percentages from the sample responses.

There were two research questions guiding this study. Research Question 1 was: How do special education teachers with various years of experience respond to having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting? Research Question 2 was: How do the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting?
Special education teachers from a small district in Wilson County, Tennessee participated in this study. To answer the hypotheses, special education teachers completed the demographic questions from the online survey. To answer Research Question 1, special education teachers completed the online survey (Appendix A) consisting of 14 questions that consisted of special education teachers feelings about inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities. The data were analyzed using Google Docs and Microsoft Excel. To answer Research Question 2, the researcher used the online survey as well (Appendix A). To further understand the special education teachers’ perspectives on inclusion, the researcher held a focus group to discuss the participant’s overall perspectives of inclusion, and what they considered to be the benefits and barriers of inclusion for students with disabilities. A summary of the findings and conclusions is presented here as they relate to the hypotheses, two research questions, the focus group, and the recommendations for further research.

Discussion of Conclusions

Hypothesis

The Chi Square Test of Independence was utilized to test whether the null hypothesis was tenable or untenable. The null hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of teaching experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. The demographic data on years of experience teaching special education was compared with the responses on the TATIS questionnaire item #7 which stated that “All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classroom with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent.” It was concluded that years of experience among elementary and middle school
special education teachers did not make a significant difference in their perspective on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. The range of teaching experience was from zero to 11 or more years of experience.

The results from Chi Square ($X^2$) Test of Independence yielded an obtained ($X^2$) value 5.399. When the obtained ($X^2$) value of 5.399 was compared to the critical value of 9.487 at .05 alpha level of significance and 4 degrees of freedom, the obtained value was significantly less than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis was tenable and was accepted. In conclusion, there is no significant difference in the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers with various years of teaching experience on having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

**Research Question 1**

An analysis of questionnaire items 14 and 15 were used to provide the conclusion for Research Questions 1. Item 14 stated, “I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the academic skills for success”. Question 15 stated, “I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success”. The responses from participants for these two questionnaire items were analyzed, and the preponderance of the replies were for agree. Based on an analysis of the responses, it was concluded that the respondents were in agreement with both items 14 and 15, and this indicated that they were comfortable with having students with disabilities in the inclusion setting.
Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was concerned with how the perspectives of elementary and middle school special education teachers differ regarding students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Responses to questionnaire items 8, 9, 11, 12 were analyzed. Question 8 stated, “It is seldom necessary to remove students with mild/moderate disabilities from regular education classrooms in order to meet their educational needs”. Among elementary and middle school special education teachers, it was concluded that both had the same number of responses for agree. More elementary special education teachers said they disagree when compared to middle school special education teachers. Also, more middle school special education teachers selected neither disagree nor agree to the question when compared to elementary school special education teachers. Question 9 stated, “Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated”. Based on the analysis, the conclusion was that more middle school special education teachers responded disagree when compared to elementary special education teachers. Elementary and middle school special education teachers’ responses were the same. Question 11 stated, “Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms”. Based on the analysis, it was concluded that more elementary special education teachers selected agree to Question 11 when compared to middle school special education teachers. Question 12 stated, “Inclusion is a more efficient model for educating students with mild to moderate disabilities because it reduces transition time (i.e. the time required to move from one setting to another)”. More elementary special education teachers answered agree when compared to middle school teachers. It was the same response among elementary and middle school teachers for neither agree nor disagree. According to the analysis,
it was concluded that more elementary special education teachers selected agree when compared to middle school special teachers. It was the same among elementary and middle school teachers who chose neither agree nor disagree. Question 13 stated, “Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classrooms with non-disabled students, because they will not require too much of the teacher’s time”. More elementary special education teachers responded disagree when compared to middle school special education teachers. Furthermore, more elementary special education teachers and middle school special education teachers chose neither agree nor disagree according to the question.

**Focus Group**

It was concluded that the data gathered from the focus group resulted in themes that emerged and remained constant throughout the discussion. Data were constantly compared as the coding process was conducted. Themes were convergent and re-emerged often throughout the focus group discussion. Themes from the focus group discussion resulted in four categories: structure of inclusion, time, training/experience, and collaboration. These themes concluded that there needs to be more training such as professional development that needs to be implemented to help students with disabilities in an inclusion setting to be academically and socially successful.

**Recommendations for Practice**

As a result of this study, as a special education teacher, the researcher, or other members of the special education department, could develop a schedule at the schools where teachers will be given extra time to collaborate and to plan with other teachers for their students. For example, in our school we have a day each month with extra time for Professional Learning
Communities. This time could also be utilized to work together to develop strategies for coping with issues that are peculiar to inclusion and to develop instructional strategies to accommodate the needs of students. Meetings such as this could also provide special education teachers with opportunities to address the student’s personal issues that come up as a result of the inclusion model. The special education teachers could identify problems and discover among themselves how to better use the resources available to address these problems. At times, the researcher could also provide structured professional development to help other special education teachers in the elementary and middle school settings if they desire.

Based on the findings of this study, these are some examples of areas in which the researcher could help:

- Engaging the faculty and staff in professional conversations that help them identify specific needs of students and how to appropriately address these needs. As the data in this study suggested, special education teachers have a strong sense of the needs of their students when they participate in an inclusion setting.

- Engaging them in planning together and how to appropriately identify and to address these specific needs of students. There are a variety of levels of disabilities in a classroom. Some of these disabilities are identified for students with IEPs, but other students have similar although less severe learning needs. Special education teachers can develop and/or learn strategies to implement instruction for the multiple needs of particular students. General education teachers can also implement these strategies in their classrooms. Initially, it may be necessary to provide training for the faculty and staff in communication and teamwork strategies.
Potential outcomes of professional community conversations and encouraging teamwork among the faculty and staff would likely be modifications in how students are placed in classrooms and how variations in instruction is delivered to various groups of students. These professional conversations would likely improve both the quality and efficiency of services delivered to students. They would also better illuminate the needs for any additional services needed by the faculty and staff to meet students’ needs. This could be more educational assistants or paraprofessionals to help the students with special needs in the general education classroom or this can be highly qualified special education teachers.

The researcher would like to use the results of this study to engage the special education director in the district where I completed the research to discuss the inclusion model. I would like to engage the district in professional development activities that enable them to improve learning opportunities for both students with disabilities and general education students in the inclusion classroom.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The results of this study, indicated that overall, the perspectives of special education teachers was positive toward having students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. There appeared to be increased awareness among participants of the hurdles involved in putting into practice in an inclusion setting.

Recommendations for further research as follows:

1. It is recommended that studies of this nature be replicated to contribute to the breadth and depth of this topic and for comparative analysis. This could be accomplished through qualitative
studies focusing on the perspective of administrators, parents, and/or students and by expanding the study to special education teachers in other school systems. A quantitative study might expand into multiple regions measuring the prevalence of special education teachers’ perspectives regarding students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

2. This study was limited to inclusion of elementary and middle school settings in a small district in Tennessee. It is recommended that a study investigating the dynamics of inclusion from the special education teachers’ perspectives be expanded into high schools, and preschool settings. Focusing on barriers and facilitators may provide data that could contribute to an improvement in service delivery and potentially positively impact student performance.

**Summary**

The results of this study suggested that overall special education teachers in elementary and middle school have a positive perception of students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Participants in the study indicated that they have a positive perception of their ability to help students with disabilities be comfortable academically and socially in an inclusion setting. The participants also indicated that they all students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in a regular classroom with their non-handicapped peers. The study results also suggested that most or all regular classrooms can be modified to meet the needs of all students with mild to moderate disabilities that will be effective for academic and social skills necessary for success. Lastly, results indicated that respondents had a positive perception of the responsibility of educating students with mild to moderate disabilities in the regular classrooms. The results also indicated that the responsibility of educating students should be shared between
general and special education teachers and teachers should be allowed the opportunity to participate in a consultant teacher model.

This study used a qualitative research design to examine the perspectives of special education teachers of students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Chapter 1 included the introduction and background, research of the problem, significance of the study, hypotheses, research questions, definition of terms, and overview of study. Chapter 2 provided a review of literature, providing a summary of the history of special education, current changes in education, inclusion, benefits of inclusion, and strategies of effective inclusion. Chapter 3 was a description of the research methodology and procedures that were used in completing this study. Chapter 4 provided an analysis of the data to this study. Chapter 5 included a summary of findings, conclusions about this research, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future study.
References


doi:10.1177/002221949703000404


Daniels, V. I. (1998). How to manage disruptive behavior in inclusive classrooms. The
Council for Exceptional Children, 386.


http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues43.html.


Appendices
Dear Teacher:

You are invited to participate in a research study I am conducting to analyze the perspectives of special education teachers on students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. I will be answering my research questions and hypothesis. My hope is that, by participating in this research, you will have the opportunity to candidly share and reflect on your experiences with teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting.

Taking approximately twenty minutes, your participation involves completing a structured online survey from Google Docs consisting of 14 Likert-scale questions with six demographic questions. This study has no foreseen risk involved. You may choose not to answer any question at any time, and you may stop at any time or chose not to submit the survey without penalty. You may refuse to participate. Your participation in this study will be completely anonymous with no way for me or Google Docs to connect you with your responses. Survey responses will be analyzed in aggregate, or group form, which also ensures that all information provided remains confidential. Survey data will be stored on a secure computer file to which only I have access.

All aspects of your participation in this study are voluntary and confidential. If you have any research-related problems or questions about the research, you may contact me at wcboyd@cn.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the researcher, you may call the Carson Newman University Institutional Review Board at 1-800-956-8903. Click on the following link to complete the survey. Please complete the survey no later than Friday, April 12, 2017. Thank you for your participation.

Respectfully,

Waldrian Coleman-Boyd
Doctoral Candidate
Curriculum and Instruction
Carson Newman University
Jefferson City, Tennessee
wcboyd@cn.edu
Appendix B

Appendix A: Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (TATIS).

Directions: The purpose of this confidential survey is to obtain an accurate and valid appraisal of your perceptions of the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities in regular classrooms. It also contains questions pertaining to your beliefs about professional roles, attitudes toward collegiality, and perceptions of the efficacy of inclusion (i.e., whether or not you believe that inclusion can succeed). Because there are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these items, please respond candidly.

Definition of Full Inclusion: For the purpose of this survey, full inclusion is defined as the integration of students with mild to moderate disabilities into regular classrooms for 80% or more of the school day. Under federal special education law, mild to moderate disabilities include Learning Disabilities; Hearing Impairments; Visual Impairments; Physical Handicaps; Attention Deficit Disorders; Speech/Language Impairments; and mild/moderate Emotional Disturbance, Mental Retardation, Autism, or Traumatic Brain Injury.

Use the following scale for all items:
1=Agree Very Strongly (AVS), 2=Strongly Agree (SA), 3=Agree (A), 4=Neither Agree nor Disagree (NAD), 5=Disagree (D), 6=Strongly Disagree (SD), 7=Disagree Very Strongly (DVS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible.</td>
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<td>2. It is seldom necessary to remove students with mild to moderate disabilities from regular classrooms in order to meet their educational needs.</td>
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<td>3. Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated.</td>
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<td>4. Most or all regular classrooms can be modified to meet the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities.</td>
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<td>5. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms.</td>
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<td>6. Inclusion is a more efficient model for educating students with mild to moderate disabilities because it reduces transition time (i.e., the time required to move from one setting to another).</td>
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<td>7. Students with mild to moderate disabilities should not be taught in regular classes with non-disabled students because they will require too much of the teacher's time.</td>
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<td>8. I have doubts about the effectiveness of including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms because they often lack the academic skills necessary for success.</td>
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<td>9. I have doubts about the effectiveness of including students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms because they often lack the social skills necessary for success.</td>
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<td>10. I find that general education teachers often do not succeed with students with mild to moderate disabilities, even when they try their best.</td>
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<td>11. I would welcome the opportunity to team teach as a model for meeting the needs of students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms.</td>
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<td>12. All students benefit from team teaching; that is, the pairing of a general and a special education teacher in the same classroom.</td>
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<td>13. The responsibility for educating students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms should be shared between general and special education teachers.</td>
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<td>14. I would welcome the opportunity to participate in a consultant teacher model (i.e., regular collaborative meetings between special and general education teachers to share ideas, methods, and materials) as a means of addressing the needs of students with mild/moderate disabilities in regular classrooms.</td>
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Appendix C

Letter of Permission

To Whom It May Concern:

As a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Carson Newman University, I am requesting to conduct research through an online survey with the special education teachers in your district. The purpose of this qualitative study is to analyze the perceptions of special education teachers of students with disabilities in an inclusion setting in the district.

With your permission, teachers will receive an email link to an online survey consisting of four demographic questions and 14 statements that ask the respondents to indicate their degree of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale. The survey will not be sent until approved by district. Participation is strictly voluntary and all results are completely anonymous. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. I have attached a copy of the survey. Please respond by email at your earliest convenience, if you have questions.

Thank you,

Waldrian Coleman-Boyd, Ed. S
Special Education Teacher
Metro Nashville Public Schools
Carson Newman University Doctoral Student
wcboyd@cn.edu
Email from Special Education Director to Conduct Study

From: Lynn Cable <lynn.cable@lssd.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 28, 2017 1:42:51 PM
To: lssd inclusion@lssd.org
Cc: Waldrian C Boyd
Subject: dissertation study

All,
Waldrian Boyd will be contacting you shortly to complete a quick survey regarding inclusive practices and beliefs for her Dissertation/Doctorate. Please be sure to complete the survey and submit just as quickly as possibly. You will be contacted by email. If you do not see the survey by early next week, check your spam folder!
thanks in advance
Lynn

Lynn Cable
Director of Special Education
507 Coles Ferry Pike
Lebanon Special School District
Lebanon, TN 37087
615-444-6073
Appendix E

Open Coding

This is an example of the Open Coding system that was utilized with the focus group participants. This open code system has themes, properties, and examples of participants’ responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Code</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Examples of Participants’ Words</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>More time</td>
<td>• Special education teachers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>perceived structure of the day</td>
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<td>does not support the ability</td>
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<td>to service students with</td>
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<td>disabilities due to meetings</td>
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<td>such as IEP, S-Team, etc.</td>
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<td>behavior among students with</td>
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<td>disabilities, conferences with</td>
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<td>parents either in person, phone</td>
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<td>or email, and other responsibilities that may be given by the administration.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional learning communities (PLCs)</td>
<td>• Does not allow special education teachers to fully serve students with disabilities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Place where content is being taught</td>
<td>• Students with disabilities are nurtured in the general education setting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effective and efficient environment</td>
<td>• Currently, inclusion students are placed in the general education setting with pullout by special education teachers.</td>
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<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
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<td>Pull-out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Push-in</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>• “To be honest, we don’t have the time set up within our day…when are we going to meet with them? We don’t have that set up in our day, we just don’t…I hate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Safety concerns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Too much consumption</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Employ model of inclusion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Unable to service
Focused on other students
Revolves around paperwork
Not consistent
to just focus on the barriers, but I don’t feel like that we have the other, what did you say it was the facilitators or whatever. I feel we have more barriers than we have the positive stuff”. Honestly…think it does not serve the special child…our model…our system…it doesn’t serve the special ed. children or doesn’t serve the regular ed. children that are, you know, in the classroom” [referring to time for employing the model of inclusion].

- “Unable to service students fully because of safety concerns and time consumption”.
- “I felt like all my attention was focused on them [other general ed students] and not the rest…so I just felt like I just didn’t service, because I was just worried about safety and it was true inclusion. They did not go anywhere else, they stayed there”.
- That efforts in the classroom with inclusion students take her time away from the remaining members of the class, I
spend most of my time working with those children…” (speaking about students with disabilities in her classroom).

- That barrier of time revolves around the paperwork to complete, “and the paperwork to me is a barrier…the length of time it takes to fill out the paperwork.”

| Training/Experience | Modifying classrooms | “If training were provided, then, when will we have the time to be trained. Time has been a major factor in analyzing inclusion as a whole”.

- There was enough training on how to effectively modify classroom. This may be due to the teaching style of the teacher, the administration, and not enough time to look over the IEP.”

- Special education teachers do not have the experience to increase the academic levels of students with disabilities” and that they felt like some general education teachers do not fulfill duties for students with IEPs, so students cannot meet goals”.

- “Training is much needed to tailor
Collaboration works well when the special education and general education teacher are on one accord. 

Academics is a benefit when the curriculum is modified to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Also, the social aspect allows students with disabilities to interact with their non-disabled peers which involve the social and emotional learning within the inclusion setting.