PERCEPTIONS OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

TOWARDS INCLUSION: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

by

Charity L. Kinneer

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Carolyn McCreight, Committee Chair

Scott B. Watson, Ph.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

This study examined the attitudes of general education teachers and special education teacher of the inclusion classroom in the middle and high school levels. Using casual- comparative and survey methodology, the level of agreement or disagreement of these teachers' attitudes towards the inclusive procedures was assessed in four areas: Planning, Classroom/School Environment, Collaboration/Team Partners, and Resources/Supports/Professional Development. The survey measured general education teachers and special education teachers in the middle and high school levels using a 19- item, five-point Likert scale. To address the research questions, an ANOVA was initially proposed. However, due to the low sample size of administrators and large sample size of participants having multiple positions, an independent sample t-test was proposed as an alternative. The independent sample t-test was then used to test for differences in attitude toward inclusion scores between general educators and special educators. The findings of the independent sample t-test were not statistically significant, $t(58) = -0.05$, $p = .958$, $d = 0.02$, indicating that there were not significant differences in attitude toward inclusion scores between general educators and special educators. General educators and special educators both had a mean score of 3.93 for attitude toward inclusion. The findings of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test were also not statistically significant, $Z = -0.30$, $p = .765$, further providing evidence of non-significant differences in attitude toward inclusion scores between general educators and special educators.

Keywords: inclusion, perceptions, special education, middle school, high school, administrator.

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Dedication

This dissertation has truly been the culmination of a lifetime of learning and practicing my teaching skills on those that would allow me to do so. You know who you are. But ultimately, I did not give up during the process because I knew I had two sets of little eyes watching me. I want my boys to see the value in hard work and the importance of education. May you never stop learning and growing. You are both amazing and my favorite. I am so proud of the men you are both becoming.

Acknowledgments

I would be remiss to not mention all of the teachers that have influenced me during my life. I especially want to thank the many that saw the potential in this bossy, headstrong, and opinionated girl. You taught me to channel all of that into something worthwhile and it is because of you that I ever dreamed I could step into a leadership role.

Without my chairs, especially Dr. Watson, I would still be sitting in an entirely different program. He saw something in me that stood out and because of him, I completely changed the trajectory of my educational career. Dr. McCreight, thank you for constantly checking in on me and praying for me. You kept me on track and I am forever grateful you did not allow me to give up on myself or my dreams.

I want to thank all of the many students that I have had along the way. When you step foot in my classroom, you know you become my kids forever.

I would like to thank my family for their support. My younger sister who constantly listens to me complain during our afternoon phone calls; my dad who continues to show me not to be afraid of doing the hard things; and my boys for putting up with their crazy busy mom. I will not force you to call me doctor.

To my tribe, thank you for praying for me at every single juncture. I could not do life without you ladies. Stand in the wind.

To my man- you believe in me when I have nothing left to give. You forgive freely and you are not intimidated by a strong-willed woman. You are my favorite.

Finally, I want to honor God. This life that I am so fortunate to have is all because of Your sacrifice.

You can have all this world. Just give me Jesus.

Micah 7:8 – Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. Though I MAY stumble, I WILL arise.

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List of Abbreviations

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)

Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Public Law (PL)

Race to the Top (RTT)

Teachers Keys Evaluation System (TKES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of general education teachers, special education teachers and administrators to successful implementation of the inclusion classroom. Chapter one will discuss the background information related to the process of including students with a disability into a general education setting. The purpose of this study will be discussed, as well as the significance of this quantitative study. Finally, the research questions will be shared and any definitions pertinent to the study will be disclosed.

Background

Multiple studies (Banks, C.M., 2018; Bennett, D.J., & Fisch, A.A., 2013; Boyle, 2013; DaFonte, M.A., 2017; Garnes, T., 2017) have been implemented that show that perceptions of teachers within the inclusion classroom directly relate to teacher instruction, implementation and student performance. Very few of these studies focus on the perceptions of middle and high school teachers within the inclusion classroom. (Fedor, M., 2019; Gryskiewicz, 2019; Kempf, E.A., 2018) Even fewer of these studies portray how the role of administration supports those perceptions.

The addition of students with a disability in the general education classroom is not a new concept. In 1954 *Brown vs the Board of Education* argued that individuals with a disability should have equal access to the public-school setting (Obiakor, Harris, Muta, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Since 1954, many new laws have been implemented that require educational facilities to create environments that are conducive to the learning of all individuals. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004, continued to contribute to the changes in education of this population of individuals. Due to this,

classrooms and the ways in which teachers disseminated instruction, also changed. The reauthorization of IDEA provided a new concentration on academic achievement, admittance to the general education curriculum, and a drive for educators to become highly qualified. These new focus areas only strengthened the move towards an inclusive environment within the school system. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (2019) laid out and made clear some of the major changes. Among these were the terms:

- *Highly qualified teachers.* "Special education teachers who teach core academic subjects (as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act) to students with disabilities must be considered 'highly qualified' in special education and also be highly qualified within the academic subject areas that they teach."

- *Individualized education programs (IEPs).* Each IEP must contain annual goals that can be measured and are based on "peer-reviewed research criteria."

- *Specific learning disabilities.* The educational system no longer uses the criteria of a severe incongruity between achievement and intellectual ability to conclude if a child has a specific learning disability. Schools must now use other determining factors such as inadequate yearly progress or achievement based on the general age-level expectations, insufficient progress with the use of research-based interventions, and "evidence of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both."

Alongside the laws requiring the least restrictive environment for all students, another initiative regarding how teachers are evaluated began making its way into the public education system within the state of Georgia. In 2011, Georgia began the Race to the Top (RTT) initiative (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). The implementation of RTT was aimed at evaluating

teachers and their use of the Teacher Keys Evaluation System or TKES. Administrators began using TKES to measure and evaluate educators on three key elements. The components included educator evaluation on performance standards, degree of student growth and achievement, and instructional procedures and systems. School systems across Georgia use this platform to evaluate whether a teacher is successful within the classroom and it can have implications on their continued employment or ability to increase their salary through salary step increases. With the stressors of knowing that an educator's employment or salary might be contingent on how well a student performs within the classroom, the practice of inclusion, especially at the middle and high school levels began to receive more scrutiny and push back from educators. General educators specifically began to question the effectiveness of the inclusion setting and many were less willing or perceptive to the idea of working with students with a disability. Perceptions of ability to educate these students is a strong judge of classroom actions as well as the triumph or breakdown of the inclusion classroom (Sharma & Sokal, 2015). Administration perception of the inclusion classroom and how administrators use the TKES to evaluate teacher implementation and effectiveness, can influence perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom for both general education teachers and special education teachers. In turn, Sokal and Sharma (2017) found that the perception educators hold of students with learning disabilities play a vital role in student success within the education system.

Problem Statement

This quantitative study was designed to investigate the perceptions of general education teachers, special education teachers and administrators to successful implementation of the inclusion classroom. Most studies regarding the achievements of the inclusive classroom, focus

on elementary level settings. In these settings, it is much easier to design a collaborative environment in which both the special education teacher and general education teacher feel valued and a contributor to the success of all students. Examining the perceptions of middle school and high school teachers and administrators towards the idea of successful inclusion will contribute to the current research and knowledge regarding individuals with a disability within the general education classroom.

It is often difficult to not only design inclusion at the secondary level, but it is also difficult to effectively employ inclusion within the classroom when the staff is resistant to the practice. This opposition often stems from perceptions of proficiency of teaching in the inclusion setting (Gebharddt, Schwab, Karmmer, & Gegenfurtner, 2015). For middle and high school teachers, the lack of appropriate time and interaction with these learners with a disability is also a contributing factor (Mackey, 2014). Preconceived ideas regarding inclusion (Dias, 2015; Monsen, Ewing & Kwoka, 2014) and whether administration values the collaborative nature required of the inclusion team are instrumental in the success of the inclusion classroom. The results of this study will indicate if there is a statistically significant difference between general education teachers, special education teachers and administrators towards inclusion. The problem is that the literature has not fully addressed the perceptions of these groups in the middle and high school settings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this causal-comparative quantitative study is to research the influences of leadership as perceived by both special education teachers and general education teachers towards the successful implementation of inclusion practices within a general education setting. This research will investigate the possible challenges and will identify solutions that leadership

can implement for effective management of inclusion education in their schools by using a 22 question 5-point Likert Survey. The Independent Variable of this study includes current teaching position (general education or special education) and/or administration position. The Dependent Variable studied is attitudes or perceptions of the participant towards inclusion.

Significance of the Study

While there are many studies that have been carried out regarding the inclusion classroom, very few delve into the administrative piece and how administration affects the perceptions of successful inclusion (Fedor, M., 2019; Gryskiewicz, 2019; Fedor, M., 2019). By examining this information, administrators and teachers can identify components that need of improvement so that teachers can be better prepared to implement a successful inclusion classroom. There are also gaps in existing research on how perceptions and attitudes of general education teachers, special education teachers and administrators at the middle school and high school levels affect the inclusion classroom by promoting academic success. A study completed in 2012 by Brown and Chu, found that teachers' mindsets and opinions about the importance of diversity were echoed in their students' experiences. It was found that teachers who valued varied classrooms and considered them an occasion for enhancement rather than an encumbrance, had a classroom of students with more affirmative characteristics who perceived less peer discrimination (Brown & Chu, 2012). There is a theory in business economics called the "Trickle Down Effect." Essentially whatever the leadership does directly affects the culture within the organization. If the leader is constantly blaming others when something goes wrong, the organization is likely to develop a culture in which passing blame is acceptable (Ruiz & Martínez, 2011). This is directly applicable to the inclusion classroom. If a teacher feels like administration does not value the time, effort, etc. that goes into creating the collaborative

environment that is the inclusion classroom, their implementation of the inclusion classroom might not be perceived as being successful.

Another reason that this study is extremely important, is the absence of studies completed on inclusion within the middle and high school settings. Classically, inclusion is easier to implement within the elementary classroom due to scheduling and the nature of instruction at this level. There is also less assistance at the high school and middle school levels as the student-teacher quotient is, higher than at the elementary level (Satterwhite, 2015). It is vital that effort is given to close this achievement gap so that these schoolchildren can be more productive and equipped for life after high school (Satterwhite, 2015).

This quantitative study will focus on three small districts within South Georgia. Each of the districts has only one middle school and one high school. At each school, there are approximately fifty teachers (or more) that teach inclusion throughout the school day. Each school also has an administrative staff of at least four administrators. Since there are not many administrators to study within these three districts, the researcher will contact a national leadership in education organization in hopes of sharing the survey with more administrators. The respondents will reply to a twenty-two question, 5-point Likert Survey.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a difference among general education teachers and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools?

Definitions

1. *Accommodations:* changes that allow a person with a disability to participate fully in an activity. Examples include extended time, different test format, and alterations

to a classroom (retrieved from

http://www.understandingspecialeducation.com/special-education-terms.html).

2. *General Education Teacher:* A teacher who is well versed in the general education curriculum and provides feedback related to programming issues (Eccleston, 2010, p.10).

3. *Inclusion:* There is no legal definition of inclusion or inclusive education. Inclusive education/inclusive practices, according to its most basic definition, means that students with disabilities are supported in chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools and receive the specialized instruction delineated by their individualized education program (IEP) within the context of the core curriculum and general class activities (Conderman & JohnstonRodriguez, 2009, p. 235)

4. *Least restrictive environment (LRE):* LRE is an environment where children with disabilities are educated along with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible (NICHY, n.d.).

5. *Special education teacher:* Special education teachers adapt the general education curriculum to meet the needs of students with disabilities and monitor their progress (Eccleston, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review provides a theoretical understanding and includes related literature on the perceptions of general education and special education teachers towards the inclusion of students with special education needs in the general education classroom. The literature reviewed for this study clearly highlights a gap that is existent when concerning the role of leadership on perceptions of general and special education teachers towards the inclusion setting. It will also hope to shed light on a greater insight into how teacher's perceptions guide and effect the inclusion classroom and whether it is viewed as successful. Thus, this study is necessary to further review and discuss how teacher perceptions, beliefs and leadership guides and effects the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom.

There are several guiding theories to consider when writing this study. The first theories helping to frame this study are Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and Howard Gardner's 1983 Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Both theoretical frameworks mentioned suggest how perceptions of general education and special education teachers might be formed when working in the inclusion setting. A third theory that helps to drive this literature review is the Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Icek Ajzen in the 1980's.

The theory of Social Learning by Albert Bandura is directly applicable to the integration of those with learning and behavior disabilities into the general education population and inclusion setting. Finally, the theory of Flow and the newer studies regarding Mindset will also be discussed with their application to the inclusion setting.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

The purpose of a theoretical foundation or framework is to make connections within the following theories regarding special education and the perception of the inclusion classroom at the middle and high school levels. A framework devised of theory is extremely important when developing a research inquiry and process. This theoretical framework demonstrates and explains how the phenomena observed in the inclusion setting relate to the perceptions of both general education teachers and special education teachers towards the idea of an inclusive classroom. These constructs, so defined as, "descriptive labels that refer to phenomena of interests" (Gall et al., 2007, p.36) will connect the theories of Zone of Proximal Development, Planned Behavior, Social Learning and Multiple Intelligences, as well as a few other applicable theories. The connections between these theoretical foundations and conceptual framework will be evident within the research studies relevant to the theories within this study. Through this research, one will be able to see how perceptions of educators and administrators might influence the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom.

The theory of multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner, Ph.D., Professor of Education at Harvard University developed from his early work in psychology and later through studies in human cognition and human potential (Armstrong, T., 2017). Gardner first outlined his theory in his 1983 book "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences," where he suggested that all people have different kinds of "intelligences." He then proposed that there are eight intelligences, and later made an addition of a ninth known as "existentialist intelligence."

To capture the full range of abilities and talents that people possess, Gardner theorizes that people do not have just an intellectual capacity, but have many kinds of intelligence, including musical, interpersonal, spatial-visual, and linguistic intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

While a person might be particularly strong in a specific area, such as musical intelligence, he or she most likely possesses a range of abilities. An inclusion classroom is the perfect atmosphere in which to utilize Gardner's theory. Gardner himself asserts that educators should not follow one specific theory or educational innovation when designing instruction but instead educators should employ customized goals and values appropriate to their teaching and student needs (Armstrong, T., 2017).

An inclusion classroom is built upon the premise that all students can learn, they just may need adjustments or different modes of education. Students with disabilities are lacking in their basic physiological needs. Many schools are under-resourced to meet these needs. The inclusion classroom provides a place that should be conducive, if done correctly, to meeting these basic learning needs. Many schools though are operated in a way that students with special needs receive the same curriculum and assessments.

The "zone of proximal development" refers to what a learner can do without help and what he or she can achieve with the help and guidance from a skilled partner (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory was introduced in Russia in the 1920s, but Vygotsky's works were only translated and made available to the Western World after the late 1950s (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996). According to Vygotsky's (1978, 86) original definition, the ZPD: ' … is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

This concept is often applied in research that explores facilitated collaboration of children in a classroom setting. Vygotsky recognized that ideas have social origins: 'they are constructed through communicating with others' (Oxford, 1997, p. 448). When an inclusion classroom is

implemented effectively, it is done so with the understanding that both educators have something meaningful to contribute. A special education teacher is the expert regarding accommodations and modifications while the general education teacher should be the expert regarding content and curriculum. Together these teachers should be able to meet and anticipate the needs of all learners.

The Theory of Planned Behavior is a widely supported model for predicting actual behavior from attitudes and behavior within inclusion research (Freitag & Dunsmuir, 2015). The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1987, 1991) was developed from the theory of reasoned action and is more applicable when the probability of success and actual control over performance of a behavior are suboptimal. The theory proposes that behaviors can be predicted by behavioral intentions which are influenced by three main components. These three components include the person's own "behavioral attitude", in the form of the positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior in question (Freitag & Dunsmuir, 2015).

According to Bandura (1977), teacher perceptions directly facilitate belief. This theory also guides the perception that social relations and the setting or environment help to foster what is determined to be socially acceptable. Bandura alleged that learning, particularly observational wisdom, transpires when an individual can imitate others. According to his theory, there are four elements to this type of learning.

The first element is Attention. In this element, the spectator must acknowledge the behavior as it is being modeled. The second element states that once the experience has been acknowledged and joined, the spectator must then retain or show retention of the knowledge delivered in memory. Then the spectator must be able to replicate the behaviors in the third

element. Finally, the spectator must have the drive to replicate the behaviors that have been observed.

Self-efficacy also helps the reader to understand the notion that teachers know how to impact their students in learning by understanding how well students learn. Self-efficacy can be linked to teacher energy and determination when facing occasions to consider academic performance, embrace new teaching modules or practices, and in using constructive or boosting words when working through student difficulties (Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Studies have shown that low levels of self-efficacy influence formation of teachers' attitudes about instructing students with disabilities within their classrooms. This often leads to an unfavorable attitude towards the inclusion process and classroom (Bruno, 2020). In the same manner, researchers have shown that encouragement given as promising supervisor feedback, highlighting classroom success, and colleague backing can have a substantial affirmative impact on a teacher's self-efficacy. This in turn results in the success and effectiveness of the inclusion classroom (Bandura, 2012; Bruno, 2020).

Related Literature

With the introduction of the federal mandate and laws stating that students with disabilities must receive their education alongside their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent and that special education students are not to be removed from regular classes unless, even with supplemental aids and services, education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily, many educators found themselves working in collaboration with other teachers when traditionally they had worked in isolation (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), 1994). Students in an inclusive classroom continue to be generally placed with their chronological age-mates, regardless of whether the

students are working above or below the typical academic level for their age (McGovern, 2015). Conceptually, inclusion offers students with an IEP access to the grade-level curriculum and the same educational occasions as their peers.

The term *inclusion* is not explicitly stated in the federal laws however; school systems have implied the term inclusion throughout the use of language that dictates that schools create an environment conducive for all students learning. The decision to employ co-teaching in an inclusive setting is not one that is always met with enthusiasm. Placement should be a decision based on the individual needs of each individual with a disability in the classroom setting. But it often seems counterintuitive if that placement causes disruption or detriment to the student's peers and teachers. It seems unfair or unlikely that a student will derive appropriate benefit from the Individual Education Plan and its services at the expense of those around them.

It is a model that should be organized, supported and methodically executed. This model of educational delivery has evolved over the last four decades wherein the past, students with disabilities were educated in a separate school, completely separated from peers (Gordon, 2006).

With the reauthorization of NCLB Act in 2002 and then in 2004, inclusion was once again brought to the forefront. The law states that schools must include "access for [all] children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content." (NCLB Act of 2001: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, 2004). Most educational entities interpret this setting as being in the general education classroom. The educational verbiage for the interpretation of this law became known as Least Restrictive Environment.

Public Law (PL) 94-142, also called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) came into play during the year 1975. This law was based upon FAPE or Free,

Appropriate Public Education. During FAPE, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were established. These plans were designed to ensure that children in the special education program received a plan that focused on attainable goals and objectives that were designed based on their unique and individual needs. With this law, the federal government began its control of special education (Answers.com, n.d.).

In 1990, Public Law (PL) 94-142 was retitled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or (IDEA). Then in 1997, IDEA was reauthorized. The reauthorization strengthened the rights of students with learning disabilities. This became known as the No Child Left Behind act. The NCLB act required that educational outcomes should be supported by measurable standards based on student improvement within the program of study and assessment of that progress.

The goal of NCLB was that the achievement gap for students who are struggling within school should be closed through data-based interventions. This required teachers to be held accountable for their students' performance within the classroom and on high stakes testing (Conover, 2010). A key theory of IDEA is that incorporating these students in the regular classroom will subject them to grade-level, general-education curriculum. Simply exposing the student to grade level curriculum is not the same thing as making progress.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB in December 2015; ESSA is a reauthorization of the federal K-12 education law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The ESEA is the national education law providing a time-honored guarantee to equal opportunity for all students. The law states that each individual should have equal access to the general education curriculum (Marita & Hord, 2017). ESSA is different from NCLB in that it gives each state's department of education the control and power to plan their educational systems instead of the Federal Department of Education. ESSA

necessitates each state to employ stimulating standards for language arts, mathematics, and science but does not allow the U.S. Secretary of Education to decree or promote for those standards (Bruno, 2020). While the Federal Government adopted a Common Core set of standards, ESSA allows for each state to determine if they choose to adopt and use these standards. However, there are accountability measures in place should the specific state decide to forgo Common Core (Fennell, 2016).

Before Least Restrictive Environment laws came into play, most special education students included in the general education setting were included or mainstreamed for selected classes or only part of the school day (McGovern, 2015). With the introduction of these mandates, many teachers found themselves sharing a classroom and other roles that had before traditionally been an individual task. As such, to effectively serve these students, teachers began to realize that they must learn how to work together to ensure that individual needs are being met with fidelity and consistency. A well performing inclusion model incorporates the strengths while compensating for the weaknesses of both teachers.

When creating a school to be truly inclusive, the presence of students with a disability must be a way of thinking, a philosophy of how educators eliminate obstacles to learning and value all members of a school population (McLeskey et al., 2013). Inclusion refers to the personal permission or right of an individual to actively participate and achieve justness through engagement throughout all areas relative to their everyday life (Hyde, Carpenter, & Conway, 2013). The notion of daily inclusion originated in the human rights principles that is apparent in international literature, policies, and documents that govern our world today (Hyde et al., 2013).

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2019), in 2015 stated that 62.5% of students with learning disabilities were served within the general

education classroom for 80% or more of the school day. School districts across the nation no longer use the traditional classroom structure of separating students with mild to moderate disabilities. Now, for a certain amount of time spent in school, these students are taught in classrooms with their non-disabled peers.

Major challenges remain regarding the addition of students with special needs in the general education classroom, despite updated policy and support for these students. Among these challenges there remains the fact that opportunities are not extended to all students with disabilities equally. Many students are excluded from participating in the general education setting simply based on factors other than their learning needs. When these students are included, the intensity of intervention and support is not always adequate for them to access the general education curriculum. There are many reasons for this, one being that teachers in the middle and secondary setting have limited time for collaboration, training and resources. So, while the students may be "included" in the general education setting, they are not truly accessing the general education curriculum.

The full inclusion term was first applied in special education to describe how all students with disabilities should be included in general classrooms for the entire school day (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; McLeskey & Waldron, 2011).There continues to be lengthy debate about whether this method achieves the most encouraging learning and social results or whether a more specialized, targeted program executed in other settings, such as a special education classroom or in a special school, is more successful (Maclean, 2017). Some research proposes that students with special learning needs or disabilities are commonly overlooked or disregarded in the mainstream classrooms and schools or teased and bullied. This can adversely impact their self-image (Carter & Abawi, 2018).

Inclusion refers to a more comprehensive education practice in which students learn exclusively in the regular classroom and "involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students) (McGovern, 2015, pg.124). Inclusive classrooms might contain several students with special needs who are mainstreamed full time into the general classroom, or one or two students who spend time each day in both a special education classroom and a general classroom (Support, 2019). The special education students can have an assortment of needs extending from learning disabilities to behavior impairments.

Responsibilities of the Teacher

After a student is tested and they meet the qualifications for special education, an IEP is then developed. The IEP team, consisting of the special education teacher(s), general education teacher(s), a representative of the local educational agency (LEA), parent and student are required attendees, meet to develop the IEP. When a student is initially placed in the special education program and when any new eligibility testing is completed, a school psychologist must be involved. Anyone else involved within the students' education are invited in the decision making process also (IDEA Regulations, 2004).

During development of the IEP, a decision is made regarding placement in the educational setting most appropriate for the individual student. Services available to the student range from the student joining in the general education setting the entire school day with non-disabled counterparts to the self-contained setting in which the student participates with disabled peers for most of the school day. IDEA regulations outline what this means in terms of the least restrictive environment. The IEP team defines the most appropriate version of least restrictive

environment needed for each student that participates in the special education program. There is no explicit regulation from NCLB in the assignment of special education students. Often the team interprets the law as endorsing the inclusion of more students in general education courses to the degree that it opposes the guidance that is offered by IDEA.

> Section 300.114: (2) Each public agency must certify that—(i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. [20 United States Code (U.S.C.) Sec. 1412(a)(5)(A); 34 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Sec. 300.114].

Even though a student may be served in an inclusion or collaborative setting, they may receive very little in terms of special education support. The team may determine that the student only need consultative services. When a student receives consultative services, a special education teacher consults with the general education teacher to provide services. Typically, the general education teacher works with the student while the special education teacher only provides indirect services through the general education teacher. One of the vital aspects of interpreting the IEP is to recognize specially designed instruction, including the accommodations and modifications required, so the students can gain access to the general curriculum and make the progress desirable to meet the standards (Bruno, 2020).

In an inclusive classroom, both the general education teacher and special education teacher share the responsibilities as equal partners in all aspects of learning, planning, teaching,

assessment, and classroom management. Usually a general education teacher is a teacher that has been trained to deliver academic content and standards in a classroom with typically developing students (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). In comparison, a special education teacher must receive additional training to meet the varying needs of students with disabilities.

Developing IEPs, generating goals and objectives, composing behavior plans, directing student re-evaluation forms, consolidating manifestation determination review materials, and continuing progress reporting are many of the duties required by the special education teacher (Grant, 2017). There is typically common consensus that instructing students with disabilities in the inclusive setting result in constructive academic and learning outcomes, social acceptance, regular exchanges and friendships for students with disabilities, and heightened understanding of diversity for their fellows (Constantinescu & Samuels, 2016). These benefits also enhance the learning of students without a disability by conveying a consciousness of students with disabilities. Both groups of students are able to recognize more of what they might share rather than focusing on how they are different.

Teachers in an inclusive setting must have a variety of teaching skills represented. They must have the ability to vary and differentiate their teaching while also understanding the learning needs of their students. They must track goals, accommodations and modifications of all learners; especially knowing which have an IEP and what their specific services and accommodations are. Most general education teachers do not receive an extensive amount of training regarding meeting the needs of a student with an IEP. College preparatory classes vary in the amount and type of information presented within their education classes.

There remains a lack of research relating to inclusion within the middle and secondary levels. Within these levels, there are different challenges than what one would find in the

elementary setting. Elementary classrooms tend to be more student centered and the timing of instruction can be modified. This allows for the opportunity to use more research-based training and instruction. In the high school setting, classrooms must focus more on delivering content relative to academic state and federal standards. Teachers in the secondary setting have a tendency to be less likely able to provide the differentiated instruction and strategies that would be beneficial to the learning needs of those with special needs due to the burden of attempting to cover an immense amount of content within a shortened period of time. The greater class sizes in both the middle and high school settings may also limit the ability of teachers to address the accommodations and individualize instruction for the students.

Due to the enhanced burdens to govern behavior and other responsibilities (i.e., standardized testing, record keeping requirements, and observations), special education teachers are unable to effectively meet the necessities or wants of the varied learners. Special education teachers who work in the inclusion setting are being held accountable to devising the means for increasing student academic success within the secondary level. All schools that receive federal funding for special education students must display that these students are producing adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP is measure by the mastery of standards.

The reauthorization of NCLB included an emphasis on student achievement specific to students that were deemed disadvantaged due to poverty and/or minority status. This meant that schools were now being held accountable for improvement, including teaching through training and professional development. They also had to provide options for families seeking support or information regarding caring for a student with special education needs.

Even with the new emphasis, teachers remained unprepared to work with students that had a disability. They began to ask for specific training relevant to functioning with students in

the general education setting. In response, the U.S. Government provided inclusion training to better support teachers while working with students with disabilities. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized and became the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a law committed to equal opportunity for all students (Hier, 2018). This law replaced NCLB but in regards to standardized testing, the provisions from NCLB remained.

Testing accommodations are being scrutinized at all three levels of education- local, state, and federal (Conover, 2010). NCLB and the ESSA delegated equal opportunity for all students including students with special education needs to have access to the general education program. Though, at that period, these students' scores on standardized tests had no effect on teacher reviews (Marita & Hord, 2017). Recently though, with recent federal and state funding cuts, many states have turned to grants to make up the difference in funding, and now these students' scores do have an impact (Boser, 2012). Districts must now teach all students grade level material, including students with special education needs, because all students will be tested at their age specific grade level.

According to testing data, students with special education needs continue to perform on poorly on grade level achievement assessments (Fuchs, et. al., 2015). Schools rely on the results of classroom and state testing to create verdicts that can lead to serious penalties for students with disabilities regarding remediation.

Since NCLB was put into place requiring teachers to be highly qualified, the need for general education teachers and special education teachers to work collaboratively in an inclusion setting has increased (Cooper et al., 2008). Most states previously did not require special education teachers to be certified in specific content areas. Most special education teachers are certified K-12 (either learning disabilities, behavior disabilities or adaptive) and typically do not

have the necessary requirements to be considered highly qualified in each specific subject area. In an inclusion classroom, the general education teacher fulfills the highly qualified requirement, and the special education teacher contributes to requirements outlined in IDEA. This increased need for instruction in the least restrictive environment or the inclusion classrooms translates into the need for more training for general education teachers regarding special education services.

With the push to mainstream or include students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, these teachers became partners, tasked with developing a classroom environment that promotes collaboration and a well-rounded instruction. These teachers are significant to the accomplishment or failure of accommodations assigned to these students with individual education plans. Administrators can support these co-teachers by providing training, incentives, and time for planning, resources and financial consideration.

Regrettably, most teacher preparation programs only prepare teachers to run their own classroom, not anticipating the need to incorporate strategies that may benefit them in the need that they will be collaborating with another professional on a day to day basis. Learning to co-teach and setting up an inclusive environment is a process that requires both teachers to be effective within their disciplines for the students to benefit from the experience.

There is often a lack of time in which these teachers can collaborate to plan for instruction. Previous research of the subject has found that teachers often feel unprepared to implement inclusion practices successfully for this very reason. This lack in preparation and insecurity may have a significant impact on the mindsets and views of both the general educator and the special education teacher.

Often, best practices within the classroom are disregarded when teachers have a poor report or working relationship in the inclusion classroom. In turn, poor communication and

planning result from the negative working relations. The students, both special education and general education, suffer. Academic success has been shown to be directly tied to whether the students experience a positive or negative experience within the inclusion classroom (Shoulders & Krei, 2016). The upsurge in job stressors has led to an escalation in special education fatigue (McDowell, 2017). Research also continues to demonstrate that teacher perceptions of their effectiveness with both sets of students, may be a critical component of achievement.

Perspectives of Inclusion

For the inclusion classroom to be thriving, it is imperative for teachers to foster beliefs and attitudes that support inclusive instructional models. Classical management theories are those that exist to develop ways to predict and control the behavior of its workers. The chain of command in an organization typically dictates who oversees them. For a business or organization to function properly, there must be a clear delineation of duties and understanding of the organizational structure. This understanding allows for a smooth and effective management. Leadership providing support in the general education inclusive classrooms is an essential characteristic of inclusive schools. In fact, research has shown that for the inclusion classroom to be successfully implemented, the attitudes of those educators and administrators are extremely important. The way that teachers react to the inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom setting has been shown to directly affect the effective execution of inclusion procedures (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017).

Often one of the most critical roles or support in successful inclusive schools is the role of the principal. The school principal's active participation is the single most important predictor of success in implementing change, improving services, or setting a new course (Inclusive Schools, 2019). The school principal is central to facilitating systemic change and leading faculty

to adopt new attitudes and new practices. Administrators must have knowledge of laws regarding special education and best practices to successfully implement co-taught classes. They need to know about effective teaching practices, including the variety of co-teaching approaches to better understand what is being observed in the classroom (Murawski & Bernhardt, 2016).

With responsibilities widening each year, today's principal must create the conditions for a positive learning environment, academic rigor, and set the standard for shared ownership across the entire faculty (Inclusive Schools, 2019). Teacher perception of their principals' expectations was identified as the only significant predictor of teaching behavior in relation to children with special needs according to several studies (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). This implied that school principals have a crucial role within their school to communicate their expectations regarding inclusive practices clearly to their teaching staff (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). In communicating these expectations, they must be knowledgeable of inclusion practices, including the variety of approaches in order to better understand what should be observed within the inclusion classroom.

Among the responsibilities of an administrator include the pairing of co-teachers. It is the duty of administration to identify teachers that would work well together in hopes of facilitating an atmosphere that is able to best meet the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom. Administrators often hold the key to creating a successful environment that is conducive to creating an inclusion classroom where both teachers feel valued. Administrators can do this by making sure there are enough resources, planning time, and adequate training for the teachers within these classrooms. However, many educators often feel that administrators are unaware of how inclusion occurs within the classroom. Selection of co-teachers often is based on the

constraints of the master schedule in the secondary levels. Master schedules, along with the availability of staff, can be hindrances towards effective inclusion classrooms.

The impact of inclusive classrooms on regular education teachers has not always been a positive one. Rigorous testing and instruction are required for students accessing the general education curriculum and those projected to earn a regular high school diploma. With these requirements, pressure for all students to meet high standards because of the Common Core Standards Initiative that aims that all students should graduate "college and career ready" (Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, & Kiely, 2015, p. 26) cause some teachers to express apprehensions and even adverse outlooks toward this process and at times, even the students themselves.

Findings of recent studies indicate that not all teachers are prepared, or feel that they are prepared, and that negative attitudes about the practice contribute to reduced self-efficacy leading to teacher stress as they seek to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). For example, in a study in Australia, classroom teachers were branded as the most vigilant professional group in expressing the professed benefits of inclusive procedures in their schools. In the same school system, the Australian principals, resource teachers and psychologists showed a somewhat more optimistic view towards the inclusion classroom (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). These findings tend to be mostly true for teachers in secondary schools, as confirmed by De Vroey, Sruyf and Petry (2016) who piloted a review of literature on inclusion in secondary schools, and determined that secondary teachers, being mostly involved with subject matter, are commonly least in favor of inclusion, when associated with other teachers.

The results of most studies reviewed indicate that teachers who were in their first year of their teaching careers are more inclined to be positive towards inclusion than colleagues with

more years of teaching service (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013).The data regarding the effect of the length of teaching service on a teacher's attitude to inclusion indicates that the teachers start out as being fairly inclusive, but for the majority of teachers, there is a significant subsequent drop in this positive attitude (Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013). Most early childhood and early childhood special education teachers perceive their preparedness more favorably than their elementary counterparts. This causes questions regarding whether the culture of early childhood is simply more inclusive than that of elementary and upper grades or is early childhood teacher preparation different in some fundamental way from elementary teacher preparation? (Stites, et.al., 2018).

Because of their importance, teachers' attitudes towards integration or inclusion have been studied extensively for decades (Saloviita, 2018). Many studies find that teachers who hold more positive beliefs and higher levels of perceived behavioral control (teaching self-efficacy) have a higher level of behavioral intention to engage in inclusive practices in working with children with special education needs (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). This type of self-efficacy behavior directly relates to the Theory of Planned Behavior. Positive teacher attitudes are essential for success when children with special educational needs are placed into mainstream classrooms (Saloviita, 2018). Investigation has also revealed that teachers account a more affirmative working arrangement if they are able to choose their co-teaching partner (Marcellus, 2016).

Wall (2002) found that both general education and special education teachers at the elementary level felt more comfortable providing inclusion than those teachers in middle school and high school. There are many explanations for this level of confidence or comfort at the elementary level. One reason could be because planning for the elementary level is more flexible

than at the secondary level. Teachers, particularly at the high school level, feel a pressure to prepare students for mastery of content in anticipation of earning high school credits required for graduation.

When teachers are not able to collaborate on instruction within the classroom, there becomes an imbalance within the classroom, most of the time resulting in one teacher delivering the most instruction. This can lead to one of the educators in the classroom with a feeling of not being respected. wall also reported that teachers felt more comfortable with providing accommodations and instruction to exceptional students when they had knowledge and prior familiarity regarding the student's disability.

Type of Inclusion

Legally, there is no specific definition of Inclusion (NASBE, 1992). According to a particular study completed by John Hopkins University, there are four types of or general methods for assisting students through inclusion. They include collaboration, full inclusion, supported inclusion and social inclusion. In the collaborative method, the special education teacher and general education teacher team teach and collaborate throughout the day. In this setting, both teachers work with both sets of students; not just the special educator working with students with special needs and vice versa. The students with an Individual Education Plan work on specialized instruction that is related to the curriculum for the general education population.

In the full inclusion model, the student is considered a part of the class and not just an observer. The student works within the general education curriculum but with modifications that fit the student's needs and level of functioning. In this model, the special educator provides consultation for the general educator in terms of curriculum modifications.

In the supported inclusion model, students with special needs are participants within the general education classroom but are not considered liable for the general education curriculum. The student works on a focused curriculum. The special education teacher is only there for up to half of the day to assist the student. Both teachers should be active participants in the planning for the class.

The last type of inclusion involves students with special needs only participating in the non-curricular dealings with the general education population. These events include activities such as school-wide assemblies, health and personal fitness, lunch, electives, homeroom, and recess. In this scenario, the special education teacher simply helps the students with exceptional needs acclimate to each event.

Strategies of Inclusion

An insignificant amount of training and research have been exclusively dedicated to helping general education teachers, special education teachers, and administrators handle the amount of challenges that come with implementing an inclusive classroom. Teamwork and collaboration are essential to an effective inclusion program. Most teachers that have been studied regarding inclusion in the general education classroom state that regularly scheduled planning time is extremely important. This collaboration first begins during an initial Individual Education Plan meeting.

The team must first consider all placement options for the student with disabilities. If they determine that the student can benefit from an inclusive program, a plan is developed to provide the support and services needed for academic success. Some students may benefit from a program incorporating inclusion for some special education instruction, and traditional "pull-out" services for other educational needs (Support, 2019).

With the introduction of special education mandates, many teachers found themselves sharing a classroom and other roles that had before traditionally been an individual task. As such, to effectively serve these students, teachers must learn how to work together to ensure that individual needs are being met with fidelity and consistency. A well performing inclusion model incorporates the strengths while compensating for the weaknesses of both teachers. In a collaborative classroom, both the general education teacher and special education teacher share the responsibilities as equal partners in all aspects of learning, planning, teaching, assessment, and classroom management. By utilizing techniques that are suited to Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, students can explore important concepts using a range of domains, and find information based on their own abilities (Gardner, 1983).

There are many strategies that assist in making a classroom run smoothly and effectively. With these strategies, there are several different models of inclusion that are seen within the educational system. The tasks and the responsibilities in each teaching example can vary significantly. The most common type of inclusion is the collaborative model in which two teachers, a general education teacher and a special education teacher, share a classroom. Collaborative teaching or co-teaching can be done in many ways. There are several methods that are effective. Among these are parallel teaching, one teach-one assist, tag-team teaching, etc. In this model, it is essential that the instructors work together to provide the best education possible for all students within the classroom by also meeting the individual needs of each learner. This model also has the potential to cause conflict amongst educators.

Many co-teaching approaches have been identified and defined by educational authorities. Cook and Friend defined several listed below.

One teach-one assist. In this approach, one teacher takes the lead while the other circulates the room and provides basic support (Cook & Friend, 1995).

One teach-one observe. Teachers divide the instructional time and content into segments. They present in separate locations within the classroom. In this model, each teacher is delivering content and instruction (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Parallel teaching. This approach promotes teachers working with smaller numbers of students so that individualized instruction and hands-on learning can take place.

Alternative teaching. One teacher works with the small group while the other teaches the larger group. This approach however, has the potential to stigmatize the students with a disability by identifying them as their pulled to for specific instruction and testing.

Team teaching. Both teachers share the responsibility of teaching the students. They plan together and take turns delivering content. According to Cook and Friend, "This approach requires a high level of mutual trust and commitment" (Cook & Friend, 1995).

One of the most important steps teachers can take in the inclusion classroom for ensuring a team philosophy is, carving out time for collaborative planning. The highest success rate is evident when the special education teacher and general education teacher have common planning and common goals (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2017). This is typically easier said than done. The biggest issue is time for planning, development, and for evaluating.

Research clearly shows though that without careful co-planning, co-teaching may not be any more advantageous than having one general educator delivering the content (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011). With the advances in technology today, it is not necessarily important that teachers collaborate in person. If it is not possible for the co-teachers to meet during a time period

regularly, they can collaborate online. Teachers should try though to carve out at least one planning period in person bi-weekly.

It is extremely important that both classroom and special educators are viewed as the classroom teachers, rather than one as a teacher, the other as a helper. When roles are not clearly defined, it is easy for the students to be confused and teachers may be made to feel resentful towards or overlooked by their teaching partners. One of the most common causes of conflict is miscommunication (Barsky, 2017). Teachers can effectively communicate and show a team approach within the classroom by using multiple co-teaching methods such as: interactive teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching. Teachers should also decide who will be responsible for what part of the workload. This can and should change regularly so no one teacher is seen as only being the disciplinarian or grade giver. How a classroom is planned, determines student perceptions.

It is important for teachers in an inclusion classroom to stay motivated and committed to the inclusion process. Just as with any relationship, the collaborative teaching relationship will grow and develop with time. Students in the inclusion setting should have an advantage over other classrooms that only utilize the expertise of one teacher. They have the advantage of learning according to their individual intelligences, interests, and learning styles from two highly skilled professionals. One of the most powerful things teachers can do within the inclusion setting is to emphasize the value of a community of unique individuals. Inclusive education teaches the value and support of a community and can be a huge benefit to all parties involved.

Mindset in the Classroom

Mindset is defined as, "a fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person's responses to and interpretations of situations…. an inclination or a habit" (Farlex, 2013,

p. 1). Mindset is demonstrated by the convergence of beliefs, feelings, values, and attitudes, which influence decisions, behavior, and actions. Research continues to be implemented regarding how important a person's mindset is when it comes to achievement.

Mindset within the educational setting has recently been highlighted due to the studies of leading experts such as Dr. Carol Dweck. She is an American Psychologist that is known for her work and studies spanning over twenty years regarding the mindset psychological trait. Dr. Dweck proposed in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* the idea that intelligence is malleable and can grow. Growth mindset is defined as, "a belief system that suggests that one's intelligence can be grown or developed with persistence, effort, and a focus on learning" (Ricci, 2013).

Growth mindset, a term coined by Dweck (2010), concerns a person's views about the nature of intelligence. Educators who have a growth mindset appreciate that the brain is like a muscle that grows to be stronger with use. Individuals with a growth mindset are more probable to see academic difficulty or blunders as an opportunity in which to learn and to develop their brains (Dweck, 2010). Those with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence is something that cannot be transformed. People that adopt this attitude are more likely to give up when a situation becomes difficult because they assume that their situation cannot be changed or altered.

Dr. Dweck recognized that a person's mindset has implications on their psychological health. Her research, combined with other leading experts on growth mindsets, produced the following conclusions: (a) there are connections between mental health and mindsets; (b) growth mindsets impact a person's use of strategies to regulate emotions; and (c) growth mindsets motivate individuals to engage (Schroder et al., 2017). It was also found that the impact of

stressful life events (such as depression, stress, substance use) was weaker if someone had a growth mindset (Schroder et al., 2017).

Psychological research throughout the past decades have delivered detailed evidences on how parties looking at the same thing might see it differently. The way teachers' beliefs sort out their perceiving of inclusive classroom methodologies might hinder or inspire the successful implementation of these methodologies (Jensen et al., 2018). In the inclusive classroom, study suggests it is especially valuable for teachers to be able to study classroom practices in new ways because it leads to a serious analysis of teaching exercises or practices (Rodgers, 2002, Van Es and Sherin, 2008). This examination might involve examining the classroom and emphasizing those characteristics that are important for or hindering inclusion.

This process of recognizing classroom exercises that are noteworthy for effectual instruction, is defined as noticing (Stürmer et al., 2013, Van Es and Sherin, 2002, Van Es and Sherin, 2008). Educational research continues to show how a teachers' noting of their classroom is often colored by their encounters, backgrounds, and beliefs. The confidence teachers have involving students with special education needs often correlates to their attitudes.

There have been many studies that highlight the negative beliefs that some teachers hold regarding instructing students that have a greater chance of academic failure (Vervaet et al., 2016). Most of these students are either in a low socio-economic situation or those with a learning disability (Boone, Thys, Van Avermaet & Van Houtte, 2018). Many studies highlight that for a classroom and school to be viewed as fully inclusion, educators and administrators must have faith in the value of working with all individuals regardless of their ability level. The skills of both the teachers should be continually acquired and changed to connect the varying needs of all of the students.

Teachers are integral in a child's development and achievement. While the mindset of a student is extremely important, if the teacher's mindset is not where it needs to be, it hinders the growth and development of those students. In the long run, the objective is for teachers to aid students in their capacity to set demanding academic goals, understand learning as a process rather than an end destination, and receive failure as part of learning (D'Souza, 2020). Teachers are unable to accomplish those goals if their own mindset is lacking.

Within the disability community, students are often seen first for their disability and not as an individual. The universal symbol for disability is a wheelchair. It implies a physical disability. "Disability studies can focus on the external variables; social, political, and intellectual possibilities that mold both meaning and behavior" (Hier, 2018). When an educator or administrator applies such a blanket statement or identification to students with a disability, their individuality gets lost. Teachers often attribute previous experiences and behaviors to the new individual students within their classrooms. The previous experiences shape their viewpoints regarding the inclusion of students with a disability in their classroom.

The original research of Dr. Dweck focused on students within the middle school classroom. She and her fellow researchers conducted several studies set in scenarios that required the students to face multiple setbacks. In these setbacks, the students were educated to persist. The findings of the research showed that increased perseverance meant that the students gained a greater sense of control over both their learning and the ability to achieve higher academic performance (Romero et al., 2014).

In a classroom that values supportive instruction, students are more likely to takes risks and risk failure in front of their peers. To accomplish this, teachers must be taught to promote a growth mindset within the classroom. Increased understanding from teachers regarding growth

mindset can lead to better understanding and learning experiences for their students. Mindset is particularly important within a diverse classroom such as one with varying disabilities and learning challenges. An educator's mindset plays a significant role in how they educate their students (Ramirez, Hooper, Kersting, Ferguson, & Yeager, 2018). When an educator has a "fixed" mindset, they believe that a student or situation cannot be changed through effort.

Often little expectation is set for students with a disability. These students often face many setbacks in the inclusion classroom or school in general and with these setbacks, they might start to internalize these exertions or struggles and acquire a fixed mindset (Nelson, Benner, & Boharty, 2014). If a student feels incompetent or lacking in some way because of societal stereotypes regarding disabilities, it can have damaging effects the play out in their confidence and performance within the classroom. The inclusion classroom should be a place where all individuals feel included and challenged. Often, students with disabilities are segregated within the classroom setting by their disability instead of their ability. This segregation often takes place even in the inclusion setting. It is easy to group students regarding their data and definition of eligibility criteria.

It is often difficult for an educator to have a positive and growth mindset if they themselves, do not feel supported or valued in the classroom. Research has shown that teachers have a variety of perceptions regarding sharing a classroom with another teacher. Most research studies regarding the inclusion classroom and co-teaching reveal perceptions that general education teachers do more work than special education teachers do and there is inconsistent practice when it comes to co-planning (McCaw, 2019). Teachers in an inclusion classroom sometimes report a discrepancy among the workload of the general education teacher and the special education teacher. Teachers in these classroom studies also consistently reported that the

support of administration was significant to the achievement of their classroom inclusion model (McCaw, 2019).

Administrators can structure their schools, classrooms, teachers and students in a way that can pair teacher ability and personality with student need. This also allows for them to provide resources and direction regarding education in the inclusive environment. The beliefs of the administration guide the way in which teachers engage in their work and these beliefs are revealed in the patterns of activity and inactivity within the classroom. Consequently, administrator decision-making directly impacts the environment, culture, and climate of a classroom, as well as intended outcomes (Beard, 2018).

When an educator feels valued or feels like their classroom and time is respected by their administration, they are more likely to show the same amount of value and respect to their students. Ultimately, it is the teachers who must execute the theoretical parts of the inclusion policy, therefore the outlooks of teachers, their response to inclusion and their attempts to support children with special needs in general education classes is extremely important. It could be hypothesized that if the teachers do not feel supported within the classroom setting, there may be difficulties with the execution of the inclusion classroom. A school environment, culture and leadership that prioritizes the building and continuing of positive relationships is fundamental to a school's inclusive environment. Leadership style, belief and practice enable an inclusive school culture.

Flow within the Classroom

Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow is widely used when discussing the student experience within the classroom. This theory of flow is a defined as a state of deep absorption in an activity that is intrinsically enjoyable (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When the

activity is recognized as worth doing it for its own sake, and individuals perceive their performance to enjoyable and positive, individuals are in the state of flow. Based on the theory, concentration, interest and enjoyment in an activity must be experienced at the same time in order for flow to occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). In the educational setting, meaningful engagement in activities has been shown to promote ideal learning experiences.

Many opponents of the inclusion classroom argue that the students with special needs might detract or hinder the flow of those without special needs within the classroom setting. Research has shown however that when Flow is achieved within the academic setting, even the most at risk students can feel both levels of testing and excitement that exceed or rival "favorite" activities outside the classroom (Whalen, S., 1998). The evidence also suggests that teachers matter to the accomplishment of Flow.

When a teacher communicates care for their students and enthusiasm regarding learning through high standards and expectations with a constant guarantee to the support of all students, they are conveying a sense of reassurance. These teachers are actively demonstrating the concept of a Flow mentality. Students are taught the value of trying one's best and to their full potential and worth.

When a teacher is moving in Flow, they are modeling enthusiasm for academic achievement and learning. These teachers are pursuing knowledge related to teaching. It is obvious that they enjoy what they do, feel supported and valued within their profession. When both teachers within the inclusion classroom are moving in Flow, they spend time considering the unique challenges of their students and how they can best meet those challenges with rewards intrinsically motivating towards the students.

Summary

Education today has many challenges. Teachers face obstacles every day regarding effective instruction. Classrooms are increasingly diverse, and educators are often tasked with meeting the needs of a variety of learners and ability levels. When incorporating students with special education needs, there has been an important response to provide a high-quality education for all students regardless of their behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs and disorders (Marin, 2014). Collaboration amongst colleagues could be one of the most valuable tools in the arsenal of an educator. Effective collaboration, however, requires that both teachers have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility within the classroom.

It is important for teachers in an inclusion classroom to stay motivated and committed to the inclusion process. Just as with any relationship, the collaborative teaching relationship will grow and develop with time. Students in the inclusion setting should have an advantage over other classrooms that only utilize the expertise of one teacher. They have the advantage of learning according to their individual intelligences, interests, and learning styles from two highly skilled professionals. One of the most powerful things teachers can do within the inclusion setting is to emphasize the value of a community of unique individuals.

Just as the relationship between educators is important, so is the relationship between administrators and educators. Without the trust and freedom that an administrator can give, the inclusion classroom will not thrive. An administrator that is committed to ensuring all students have an environment that is conducive to learning, can truly be the difference in an inclusion classroom's success.

Current literature details the relationship of the inclusive classroom. There is an existing gap in the current literature. There is not enough research that exists to discuss the role of

leadership and support on perceptions of general and special education teachers towards the inclusion setting. Thus, this study is necessary to further review and discuss how leadership guides and effects the perceptions of these teachers within the inclusive classroom. This study will be a valid addition to the current research that is already available regarding perceptions of teachers in the inclusion classroom. Information that gained will be invaluable and can be used in the planning and implementation of staff development, educator and administrative training, and in-service instruction that can be beneficial for the teachers, parents, and students within the community.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this causal-comparative study is to compare the perceptions of administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers towards the idea of inclusion within the middle and high school settings. Data will be collected through a web-based survey and then an independent sample t -test will be completed to compare the amount of between-groups variance in individuals' scores with the amount of within-groups variance. This chapter will discuss the study's design, research questions and hypotheses, study participants and setting, as well as data analysis and procedures.

Design

The design chosen for this research study is a causal-comparative research design. This design was chosen because the researcher is comparing three groups of individuals by examining preexisting differences in the variable to determine the effect on another variable (Gall, M. et. al., 2007). Quantitative data collection and analysis (independent sample t-test) will be used to measure the attitudes of the three groups of participants towards the inclusive practice within middle and high schools. The independent variables will be the positions of the participants and the dependent variables are their perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education setting.   A 22-item 5-point Likert scale survey will be utilized to measure perceptions.

Research Question(s)

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RQ1: Is there a difference among general education teachers, and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools?

Hypothesis(es)

The null hypotheses for this study is:

H_01: There is no statistically significant difference among general education teachers, and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools as measured by the *Attitudes Towards Inclusion Survey*.

Participants and Setting

The participants for the study will be drawn from three middle schools and high schools located in southwestern Georgia during the 2020-2021 school year. The school districts are all a mixture of low income to high income suburbs. Another sample will be drawn from voluntary participants that respond to a request through an administrative organization. Only teachers that have taught or are teaching in the inclusion setting will be surveyed. Only administrators from middle school and high school settings will be surveyed.

For this study, the number of participants to be sampled will be 00 which exceeds the required minimum for a medium effect size. According to Gall et al. (2007), 66 participants is the required minimum for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha

level. The sample will come from three different districts within southwestern Georgia. Within each district, general education, special education teachers, and administrators will be selected from three middle schools and three high schools. The specific teachers chosen will include only teachers that have taught or are currently teaching within the inclusion setting. These teachers' ages range from twenty-four years old to sixty-five years old and their experience in the classroom ranges from brand new teachers to veteran teachers. Administrators from each school will also be surveyed as well as administrators who respond to a request from an outside organization.

Instrumentation

This study will utilize a survey adapted from a previous study regarding teacher and administrator attitudes towards inclusion. The researcher developed and adapted questions from a previous survey (Satterwhite, 2015). The original survey questions were altered to reflect four areas associated with the Boundless Learning co-teaching model through Johns Hopkins University. The previous researcher also had open-ended qualitative questions as part of her survey. For this study, there will not be qualitative questions. Permission has been obtained to use the survey and modify it as seen fit.

The first part of the survey consists of demographic information. The second part of the survey contains questions set in a five-point Likert scale. These questions involve questions pertaining to planning instruction, classroom/school environment, collaboration/team partners and resources/supports/professional development. Higher values will indicate more positive attitudes (Strongly Agree) towards inclusion and negative values will indicate more negative attitudes (Strongly Disagree) towards inclusive practices. The original researcher determined the reliability of the survey through Cronbach's alpha. On the Co-Teaching Scale alpha reliability

was given at α= .883, and for the Inclusion Scale it was α= .874. Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistency among items on an instrument. It is an appropriate measurement for items scored as continuous variables such as the five points (strongly agree to strongly disagree) on a Likert scale (Creswell, 2005).

Procedures

The first step towards completing this research is to obtain IRB approval. The researcher will complete the online process through Liberty University's IRB approval board. Approval to conduct research within the three districts will be sought as well as approval from administration at each school. The researcher will reach out to a few outside professional organizations to get permission to share the survey in hopes of getting more participation especially from administrators.

The researcher will send out an initial introductory email to each of the districts, administrators, and teachers. This email will give background information of the researcher and the study. This will include information on the researcher, title, position, district, and affiliation with Liberty University. Once approval is given from the three districts and administrators, the researcher will send out an email requesting participation from all teachers at the middle and high school levels that have taught in the inclusion setting. An explanation of the survey and the amount of time needed to participate will be given. The goal and the benefits of the study will be given and described. When teachers and administrators agree to participate in the survey, they will do so voluntarily and anonymously. No identifying information will be kept or shared. The survey will be conducted most likely through an online survey program like Survey Monkey. This program has tools that allow the user to manipulate survey questions and to determine the layout/format for each survey question. The survey questions each have a possible

value range from one to five. Responses are coded as 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree somewhat, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree somewhat, and 5= strongly agree. Email addresses will be collected through the districts participating. The researcher will send out a mass email to each school that requests participants with the link included. A follow up email will follow if not enough respondents contribute. The survey will remain open for four to six weeks.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis will be used for this research study. Data will be analyzed using an independent sample *t*-test. An independent sample *t*-test is appropriate when testing for differences in a continuous dependent variable between two groups (Pallant, 2020).

. Descriptive and inferential will be utilized to study the data results. Attitudinal measures assess affect or feelings toward educational topics such as assessing positive or negative attitudes towards inclusive practices (Creswell, 2005). The results will be studied to determine if there are differences between the three groups of people responding to the survey. When describing trends in a population or describing the relationship among variables, surveys are useful (Creswell pg, 149, 2005). The survey methodology was a Likert-type survey that described beliefs relative to inclusion practices. The teachers and administrators surveyed have experience implementing inclusion practices within the collaborative inclusive classroom. The sample, because it seeks a specific population of educators, is nonrandom.

The survey software for Survey monkey will collect the raw data and import it into a spreadsheet for further data analysis. Data will then be downloaded into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to examine the relationships between respondent's variables. Categorical data will be collected to show demographic information and grouping.

The demographic data including current position, number of years as a teacher, mandatory or voluntary selection to co-teach, number of years as an administrator, highest degree held, gender and race will be collected. Frequency and percentage of responses per group will be analyzed.

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), a statistical procedure that compares the amount of between-groups variance in individual's scores with the amount of within-group variance (Gall, Gall, & Borg, pg. 318, 2007), was initially proposed. However due to low sample size an independent sample t-test was utilized to test for differences in attitude toward inclusion between general educators and special educators. An independent sample t-test is appropriate when testing for differences in a continuous dependent variable between two groups (Pallant, 2020).

Each of the survey items will be cross tabulated with educational position. The researcher will look for outliers and extreme outliers by using a Box and Whisker plot for each group and/or variable. An outlier is an observation in a set of data that is inconsistent with most of the data (Warner, 2013). In statistical analysis, all parametric tests assume some certain characteristic about the data, also known as assumptions. To test the assumption of normality, the researcher will use Shapiro-Wilks, a way to tell if a random sample comes from a normal distribution. If normality is not being supported with the Shapiro-Wilk test, the independent sample t-test will be examined and a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test conducted as an alternative.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this causal-comparative quantitative study is to research the influences of leadership as perceived by both special education teachers and general education teachers towards the successful implementation of inclusion practices within a general education setting. In this chapter, the findings of the data analysis will be presented. Frequencies and percentages will be used to examine the trends of the demographic and nominal-level variables. Cronbach alpha will be used to examine the internal consistency of the attitude toward inclusion scale. To address the research question, a one-way ANOVA was initially proposed for the data analysis. An independent sample t-test was utilized to test for differences in attitude toward inclusion between general educators and special educators. Statistical significance was reported at the generally accepted level, $\alpha = .05$.

Research Question(s)

RQ1: Is there a statically significant difference among general education teachers and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools?

Null Hypothesis(es)

H$_0$1: There is no difference among general education teachers and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools as measured by the *Attitudes Towards Inclusion Survey*.

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 150 participants were invited to complete the survey questionnaire. A total of 42 participants did not meet the inclusion criteria or did not complete the questionnaire. These participants were removed from further analysis. The final sample consisted of 108 participants.

The sample consisted of 86 females (78.90%) and 23 males (21.10%). A majority of participants identified themselves as White (n = 96, 88.07%). Many of the sample had a Master's degree (n = 43, 39.45%). A majority of participants indicated that they had been a general education teacher in a middle or high school inclusion classroom (n = 84, 77.06%). Most participants indicated that they had not been a special education teacher in an inclusion middle or high school classroom (n = 60, 55.05%) or an administrator in the middle or high school setting (n = 83, 76.15%). Collectively, most participants were either in a general education position (n = 42, 38.53%) or multiple positions (n = 44, 40.37%). Multiple positions corresponded to participants who had been employed for a combination of at least two positions: general education and special education, general education and administrator, special education and administrator, or all three positions. Most of the participants had at least nine years of experience as a teacher. Many of the sample were currently in general education positions (n = 50, 45.87%). Most participants indicated that the selection process to co-teach at their schools was mandatory (n = 54, 49.54%). Frequencies and percentages of the nominal-level variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency Table for Nominal Variables

Variable	n	$\%$
Gender		
Male	23	21.10
Female	86	78.90
Race		
White or Caucasian	96	88.07
Black or African American	11	10.09
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	1.83
What is the highest degree that you hold?		
Bachelor's Degree	22	20.18
Master's Degree	43	39.45

Ed. Specialist	34	31.19
Doctoral Degree	8	7.34
Other	2	1.83

I am (or have been) a general education teacher in a middle or high school inclusion classroom.

Yes	84	77.06
No	25	22.94

I am (or have been) a special education teacher in an inclusion middle or high school classroom

Yes	49	44.95
No	60	55.05

I am an administrator in the middle or high school setting

Yes	26	23.85
No	83	76.15

Position (current or past)

General Education	42	38.53
Special Education	18	16.51
Administrator	5	4.59
Multiple groups	44	40.37

How many years, including this year, have you been a teacher?

0-1 year	2	1.83
2-3 years	7	6.42
4-5 years	11	10.09
6-8 years	7	6.42
9-12 years	13	11.93
13-17 years	25	22.94
18-23 years	21	19.27
24+ years	22	20.18
Other	1	0.92

Identify the selection process to co-teach in your school

Mandatory	54	49.54
Voluntary	34	31.19
Other	21	19.27

How many years, including this year, have you been an administrator?

Other (please specify)	22	20.18
0-1 year	59	54.13
2-3 years	2	1.83
4-5 years	1	0.92

6-8 years	9	8.26
9-12 years	5	4.59
13-17 years	8	7.34
18-23 years	3	2.75

Note. Due to rounding errors, percentages may not equal 100%.

Composite scores were developed for attitude toward inclusion by taking an average of the 18 Likert-scale items comprising the scale. Cronbach alpha was used to examine the reliability of the survey. The strength of the alpha value was interpreted with guidelines suggested by George and Mallery (2020), in which $\alpha > .9$ Excellent, $\alpha > .8$ Good, $\alpha > .7$ Acceptable, $\alpha > .6$ Questionable, $\alpha > .5$ Poor, and $\alpha < .5$ Unacceptable. The Cronbach alpha value for attitude toward inclusion ($\alpha = .762$) met the acceptable threshold for internal consistency.

Table 2
Cronbach Alpha for Attitude Toward Inclusion

Variable	Number of items	α
Attitude toward inclusion	18	.762

Attitude toward inclusion scores ranged from 2.28 to 4.78, with $M = 3.90$ and $SD = 0.47$. The mean scores of 3.90 indicates that in general, participants had positive perceptions regarding attitude toward inclusion. Descriptive statistics for attitude toward inclusion are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Toward Inclusion

| Variable	*N*	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*SD*
Attitude toward inclusion	109	2.28	4.78	3.90	0.47

Results

Hypothesis

To address the research questions, an ANOVA was initially proposed. However, due to the low sample size of administrators and large sample size of participants having multiple positions, an independent sample *t*-test was proposed as an alternative. The independent sample *t*-test will be used to test for differences in attitude toward inclusion scores between general educators and special educators. An independent sample *t*-test is appropriate when testing for differences in a continuous dependent variable between two groups (Pallant, 2020).

Assumptions of an Independent Sample *t*-test

Prior to examining the independent sample *t*-test results, the assumptions for absence of outliers, normality, and homogeneity of variance will be tested. Absence of outliers was verified with a boxplot of attitude toward inclusion scores. Once participant was identified as having a low score. There were no stars in the boxplot, indicating that there were no extreme values for attitude toward inclusion. Therefore, no reductions were made to the spreadsheet due to outliers.

Figure 1

Boxplot to identify potential outliers in attitude toward inclusion scores.
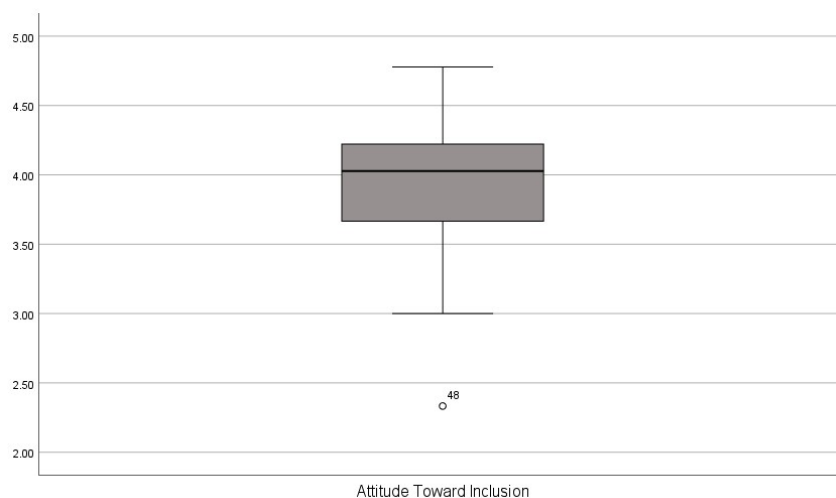
The assumption of normality was assessed with a Shapiro-Wilk test. A Shapiro-Wilk test compares the test data to a bell-shaped distribution. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test were statistically significant (Shapiro-Wilk Test Statistic: 0.96; p = .038), indicating that the assumption of normality was not supported. Howell (2013) indicates that violations of normality are not problematic when the sample size exceeds 50 cases.

The assumption for homogeneity of variance was tested with a Levene's test. A Levene's test assesses for differences in variance between groups. The result of the Levene's test was not statistically significant (Levene's test statistic = 1.27; p = .265), indicating that the assumption for equality of variance was supported. Due to normality not being supported with the Shapiro-Wilk test, the independent sample t-test was still examined and a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was conducted as an alternative.

Inferential Analysis

RQ1: Is there a difference among general education teachers and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools?

$H_0$1: There is no difference among general education teachers and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools as measured by the *Attitudes Towards Inclusion Survey*.

The findings of the independent sample t-test were not statistically significant, $t(58)$ = -0.05, p = .958, d = 0.02, indicating that there were not significant differences in attitude toward inclusion scores between general educators and special educators. General educators and special educators both had a mean score of 3.93 for attitude toward inclusion. The findings of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test were also not statistically significant, Z = -0.30, p = .765, further providing evidence of non-significant differences in attitude toward inclusion scores

between general educators and special educators. Table 4 presents the findings of the

independent sample *t*-test. Figure 2 presents a bar chart of the attitude toward inclusion scores
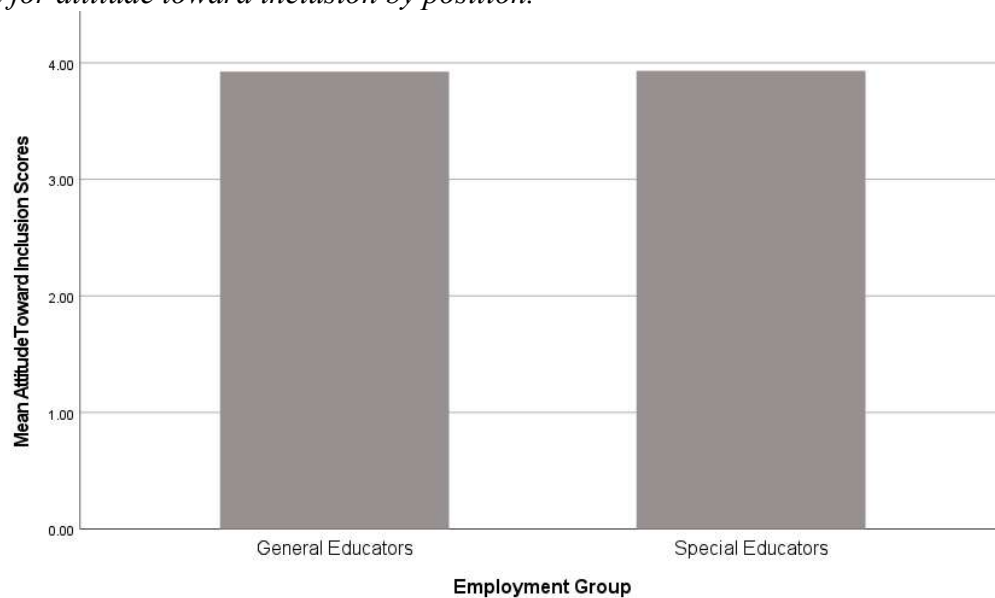
between the groups.

Table 4

Independent Sample t-test for Attitude Toward Inclusion Scores between General Educators and Special Educators

Variable	General Educators			Special Educators			*t*(58)	*p*	*d*
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*			
Attitude toward inclusion	42	3.93	0.50	18	3.93	0.41	-0.05	.958	0.02

Figure 2

Bar chart for attitude toward inclusion by position.

Summary

The purpose of this causal-comparative quantitative study is to research the influences of leadership as perceived by both special education teachers and general education teachers towards the successful implementation of inclusion practices within a general education setting. Frequencies and percentages were used to examine the trends of the demographic and nominal-level variables. The attitude toward inclusion scale had acceptable reliability based on the Cronbach alpha value. The overall findings of the independent sample t-test were not statistically significant, indicating that there were not significant differences in the attitudes toward inclusion between general educators and special educators. The null hypothesis (H_01) for the research question was not rejected

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This final chapter is a discussion of the study findings in relation to the empirical and theoretical concepts included within the literature review section. Additionally, this chapter presents implications based on the research study findings. Lastly, limitations and recommendations for future research are provided regarding inclusion within the middle and high school settings.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine attitudes relative to inclusive practices of general education teachers and special education teachers and to compare it to previous research studies. At times, people have individual perspectives and presumptions regarding individuals with disabilities. These attitudes may evolve from exposure, lack of knowledge, ignorance, or past experiences. These differences are why it is vital that administrators and educators build an environment that is beneficial to addressing these uncertainties and opinions.

The responses gathered from the survey were studied and then comparisons were made between the attitudes of participants. The study focused on the attitudes of teachers and administrators through administration of an electronic survey of quantitative questions. Using casual- comparative and survey methodology, the level of agreement or disagreement of these teachers' and administrators' attitudes towards the inclusive procedures were assessed in four areas: Planning, Classroom/School Environment, Collaboration/Team Partners, and Resources/Supports/Professional Development. The survey measured general education teachers and special education teachers in the middle and high school levels using a 19- item, five-point Likert scale. Participant status including gender, educational level, years of teaching experience,

years of administrative experience, and whether the decision to co-teach to support inclusion was mandatory or voluntary were included in the summary of results. The populations surveyed came from a mixture of rural and suburban school systems. Both teachers and administrators had varying experience within the school system and collaborative classroom.

This particular study had only one research question:

RQ1: Is there a difference among general education teachers and special education teachers regarding their attitudes towards inclusion in middle or high schools?

The findings of the independent sample t-test were not statistically significant, $t(58) = -0.05$, $p = .958$, $d = 0.02$, indicating that there were not significant differences in attitude toward inclusion scores between general educators and special educators. General educators and special educators both had a mean score of 3.93 for attitude toward inclusion. Administrators, as well as the multiple position group, had a mean score similar to that of the other two groups. Administrators mean score for attitude toward inclusion was 3.70 and the multiple position group had a mean score of 3.89. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis (H_01) for the research question was not rejected.

Implications

The implications of this study were comparative to previous research in this field. This study's findings strongly supported the findings of the two previous studies that utilized the same 5 point Likert scale. The findings were what the researcher expected to see represented. The overall perceptions of both groups of teachers and administrators towards inclusive practices were found to be positive. While each group saw the inclusion classroom as a positive unit, simply acknowledging the merits of the inclusion classroom are not enough. Both teachers and administrators within the inclusion classroom must take responsibility for their part in educating

the whole child as well as the whole classroom. By understanding that each group view the collaborative classroom as a positive one, teachers and administrators can then move towards utilizing strengths and weaknesses to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners.

Administration must begin supporting both groups of teachers by creating an environment conducive to collaboration. Common planning time is vital to the success of an inclusive classroom, especially in the middle and high school settings. Administrators should also consider the number of classes and subjects in which they are expecting collaboration to occur. When teachers are spread out among several different settings and with several different partners, it is impossible for true collaboration. In cases such as this, one teacher tends to then become the primary decision maker for each classroom out of necessity. Administration has also been known to pull the inclusion teacher to cover other classes in the event in which a substitute teacher cannot be found. These types of decision making by the administration team can leave teachers with resentment regarding the collaborative classroom and each other.

Colleges must also do a better job of preparing teachers to teach within the inclusion classroom. Challenges of the inclusion classroom can often make teachers feel less supported within the school system and this can make their job seem more difficult. This frustration can lead to burnout and significantly impact the teacher retention rate. The growing popularity of the inclusion classroom though is requiring that more teachers buy into the success of teaching in this manner. Research clearly highlights the benefits of students receiving education in an inclusive classroom. In order for that to happen, school systems and colleges must begin to more strongly support the implementation of these classrooms.

Limitations

There were many limitations regarding this study that possibly had an effect on the outcome and results of the survey. Complications arose surrounding COVID-19 shutdowns. Many school systems asked that outside research be halted in light of the difficulties and extra stress brought on by the demands presented on teachers while trying to teach during the pandemic. Another limitation might be that teachers perhaps were burnt out with online demands of teaching during COVID-19 and one more survey might have seemed "too much."

Because of these demands by the school systems, the survey did not reach as many districts, administrators, or teachers as the researcher had hoped for. The sample sizes for each group were not as robust as the researcher had hoped for. While the sample size was within the minimum required for a bivariate linear regression to be conducted, a larger sample size would have been preferred (Gall et al., 2007). There were no concerns regarding the instrument used for research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study make evident the fact that teachers' and administrators' attitudes are important for successful execution of inclusive practices. Multiple studies could be implemented using the information gathered from this study, as well as previous studies using the Attitudes Toward Inclusion Survey. Below is a list of those recommendations for future research.

1. A further study could be completed that measured the full impact of support or lack of support by administration on the successful implementation of the inclusion classroom.

2. Studies could be further broken down to discuss the importance of maintaining collaborative pairs versus spreading inclusion teachers throughout many different general education classrooms.

3. A study could be completed to examine in detail the level of agreement or disagreement for each quantitative item based on the background information of each contributor to determine whether teachers' and administrators' attitudes towards inclusion are affected by various characteristics.

4. A study making comparisons between the attitudes of educators implementing co-teaching with those with no co-teaching experience or limited specified training in co-teaching could also be a suggestion for future research.

5. Finally, a study could be completed that conducted research on parents' and students' attitudes towards inclusive practices.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

January 19, 2021

Dear Administrator or BOE Member,

A research project is being conducted by Charity L. Kinneer from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. The study will focus on General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers and Administrators' Attitudes Towards Inclusion in the Middle and High School Levels. All administrators and inclusion teachers (past and present) are invited to participate in this research study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes relative to inclusion within the middle and high school classrooms. The goal of this study is to examine the impact these attitudes have on the outcome of an inclusive classroom and to determine effective strategies and information that may influence further inclusion within the middle and high school classrooms.

The research procedure involves completing a attitudinal survey through Survey Monkey. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. It will address each participant's knowledge and experience relating to the inclusion classroom. The survey is anonymous and does not contain information that may personally identify any respondents. There are no known risks with participating in this project. Participation is voluntary. Participants may choose not to take part or withdraw at any time. There are no consequences if the respondent should choose not to continue.

Responses are important to the success of this research study. Potential benefits from participation with this study might include an increased awareness of attitudes towards inclusive practices with the understanding that the participants voice is being heard regarding their perceptions of what happens within the inclusion classroom.

I appreciate the time that each participant sets aside in order to complete and electronically submit the survey. If there are any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Charity L. Kinneer, Ed.S.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INFORMATION SHEET

Survey Informational Sheet for Participants

Study Title:
PERCEPTIONS OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS
TOWARDS INCLUSION: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Basis for Research:
This is a research study being conducted by Charity L. Kinneer as part of a doctoral dissertation for Liberty University Ph.D. in Special Education requirements. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a current or past administrator or inclusion teacher in the middle or high school. The purpose of this study is to survey special education teachers, general education teachers, and administrators regarding their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education setting. It is critical to develop a foundation of understanding of perceptions relative to the inclusion classroom. The goal is to identify the effects of inclusion through the use of co-teaching as it is one model that is being implemented in middle and high school classrooms.

What am I being asked to do?
The study involves being asked to complete a survey through Survey Monkey. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and it addresses knowledge and experience related to inclusion.

What are the benefits?
The results should help administrators and district level employees learn more about the attitudes of educators and administrators regarding the inclusion classroom in the middle and high school classrooms. It is our hope that in the future, other schools and districts will benefit from this study through improved understanding of the impact of inclusion.

What are the risks of this study?
There are no perceived risks inherent in this research study.

Do I have to be in this study? May I stop participating at any time?
Your participation within this study is completely voluntary. The survey is anonymous and does not contain identifiable information. There are no known risks with participating in this study. You may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. There are no consequences if you choose not to participate or if you withdraw from the study.

What about confidentiality?
All data collected from this survey will be kept confidential. Your responses will not be identified with you personally. No individual information will be shared and all information will be incorporated into group data.

While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of each individual and their transmissions regarding this survey. To further protect your confidentiality, it is recommended that participants close the internet browser used to open the survey after completing the survey.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Charity L. Kinneer from Liberty University.

APPENDIX C

SURVEY

Attitudes of Teachers and Administrators Towards Inclusion

Part 1: Background Information

Please select one response that identifies you best.

1. How many years, including this year, have you been a teacher?

   ◯ 0-1 year   ◯ 9-12 years

   ◯ 2-3 years   ◯ 13-17 years

   ◯ 4-5 years   ◯ 18-23 years

   ◯ 6-8 years   ◯ 24+ years

   ◯ Other (please specify)

   [   ]

2. Identify your current position

   ◯ General Educator

   ◯ Special Educator

   ◯ Administrator

   ◯ Other (please specify)

   [   ]

3. Identify the selection process to co-teach in your school
4. How many years, including this year, have you been an administrator?

   ◯ Mandatory

   ◯ Voluntary

   ◯ Other (please specify)

   [   ]

◯ 0-1 year   ◯ 9-12 years

◯ 2-3 years   ◯ 13-17 years

◯ 4-5 years   ◯ 18-23 years

◯ 6-8 years   ◯ 24+ years

◯ Other (please specify)

┌───┐
│   │
└───┘

5. What is the highest degree that you hold?

◯ Bachelors Degree

◯ Masters Degree

◯ Ed. Specialist

◯ Doctoral Degree

◯ Other (please specify)

┌───┐
│   │
└───┘

6. What is your gender?

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Other (please specify)

┌───┐
│   │
└───┘

7. What is your   ◯ Asian or Asian American
   race/ethnicity?   American Indian or Alaska Native

◯ White or Caucasian   ◯   Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

◯ Black or African American   Another race

◯ Hispanic or Latino   ◯

Attitudes of Teachers and Administrators Towards Inclusion

Part 2: Co-Teaching and Inclusive Practices

for the purpose of this study, co-teaching refers to a general education teacher and a special education teacher working in the same classroom consisting of both students with and without disabilities. Inclusion is defined as the process of integrating students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Co-Teaching is one means of inclusion.

Attitudes of Teachers and Administrators Towards Inclusion

Planning Instruction

Please use the following scale to respond to the statements below based on your attitude towards inclusion:

1- strongly disagree
2- disagree somewhat
3- neither agree nor disagree
4- agree somewhat
5- strongly agree

8. Delivering instruction to the whole class is a shared responsibility of both the general education teacher and the special education teacher.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- agree somewhat

○ 2- disagree somewhat   ○ 5- strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

9. Both students with and without disabilities have equal learning opportunities in a co-taught classroom.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree Somewhat

○ 2- disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

10. Students without disabilities receive an appropriate education in an inclusion classroom.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

11. Inclusion of a student with disabilities impacts a teacher's ability to meet other students' needs.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

12. Adequate time and support to modify instructional strategies and teaching styles to meet the needs of students with disabilities is essential.

◯ 1- Strongly disagree　　　　　　　　　　　　◯ 4- Agree somewhat

◯ 2- Disagree somewhat　　　　　　　　　　　◯ 5- Strongly agree

◯ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

13. Inclusive settings help students academically.

◯ 1- Strongly disagree　　　　　　　　　　　　◯ 4- Agree somewhat

◯ 2- Disagree somewhat　　　　　　　　　　　◯ 5- Strongly agree

◯ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

Attitudes of Teachers and Administrators Towards Inclusion

Classroom/School Environment

Please use the following scale to respond to the statements below based on your attitude towards inclusion:

1- strongly disagree
2- disagree somewhat
3- neither agree nor disagree
4- agree somewhat5- strongly agree

14. Students with disabilities benefit socially from including them in the general education setting.

◯ 1- Strongly disagree   ◯ 4- Agree somewhat

◯ 2- disagree somewhat   ◯ 5- Strongly Agree

◯ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

15. Students without disabilities benefit socially from a co-taught classroom.

◯ 1- Strongly disagree   ◯ 4- Agree somewhat

◯ 2- Disagree somewhat   ◯ 5- Strongly agree

◯ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

16. The co-teaching environment positively affects students.

◯ 1- Strongly disagree   ◯ 4- Agree somewhat

◯ 2- Disagree somewhat   ◯ 5- Strongly agree

◯ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

17. Students with special needs make more friends in inclusive settings.

◯ 1- Strongly disagree   ◯ 4- Agree somewhat

◯ 2- Disagree somewhat   ◯ 5- Strongly agree

◯ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

Please use the following scale to respond to the statements below based on your attitude towards inclusion:

1- strongly disagree

2- disagree somewhat

Collaboration/Team Partners

3- neither agree nor disagree

4- agree somewhat

5- strongly agree

18. Behavior management is the shared responsibility of both the general education teacher and the special education teacher.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

19. The support of administrators is essential to the success of co-teaching.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

20. School administrators provide adequate time for planning for the co-taught classroom.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

21. Students with and without disabilities work collaboratively in the inclusion classroom.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

Please use the following scale to respond to the statements below based on your attitude towards inclusion:

1- strongly disagree

2- disagree somewhat

3- neither agree nor disagree

4- agree somewhat

5- strongly agree

22. Students with disabilities in a general education classroom impact the academic progress of the general education students.

Attitudes of Teachers and Administrators Towards Inclusion

Resources/Support/Professional Development

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

23. Students with disabilities are best served by including them in instruction in the general education classroom.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

24. Most general education teachers have the skills necessary to teach students with disabilities.

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree not disagree

25. Most special education teachers have the content knowledge necessary to teach general education students .

○ 1- Strongly disagree   ○ 4- Agree somewhat

○ 2- Disagree somewhat   ○ 5- Strongly agree

○ 3- Neither agree nor disagree

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 20, 2021

Charity Kinneer
Carolyn McCreight

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-537 PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATORS, GENERAL EDUCATION, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSION: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

Dear Charity Kinneer, Carolyn McCreight:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office