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Sara Ann Sposaro

Grand Valley State University

Julie Mara Lensink

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BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION PRACTICES

Sara Ann Sposaro

Julie Mara Lensink

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MASTERS THESIS

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Chapter 1

Providing special education services to students with mild disabilities has been a topic of interest in many school districts recently. Since the passing of The Education for all Handicap Children Act (PL 94-142) in 1975, now called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education services must be provided to students with mild disabilities in the least restrictive environment. As a result of this law, both special and general educators play a vital role in placing students appropriately. Research studies and other articles have indicated that an effectively-adapted curriculum and appropriate services can be offered to students with disabilities within the general education classroom (Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities, 1995; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). However, many general educators are not eager to include these students in their classrooms. As a result of this resistance, capable students are not being educated with their general education peers when effective strategies and instruction could be implemented by special and general education teachers within the general education classroom. Situations exist where specific strategies are best implemented in small groups by a special education teacher, but if school districts knew how to meet the needs of general education teachers more effectively, quality inclusion could be happening more often in schools. Research has indicated that general education teachers are often left out of topics and discussions dealing with inclusion (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). In reality, they are one of the most important components for effective and successful inclusion to occur. If school districts are moving toward more inclusive
programming, then more attention should be given to general education teachers' wants and needs regarding including students with mild disabilities into their classrooms.

Resistance to Inclusion

Attitudinal Concerns

The research is fairly consistent in suggesting that many changes need to take place in the current educational system in order for successful inclusion to occur. One research study determined that positive inclusion and successful education for students with mild disabilities would require that everyone associated with schools begin to make changes not only in the way these students are taught, but also in how these students are valued and viewed as successful learners (Pearman, Bamhart, Huang, & Mellblom, 1992). Changes in mind-sets or belief systems are necessary. Educators need to begin addressing the individual needs of students and realize that all students are unique, have different needs, and have individual learning styles (Pearman et al., 1992). Before successful inclusion can take place in any school system, all staff members have to see their responsibility in educating all students. In schools today, often students with disabilities are separated as "those kids" by some and accountability for their learning is pushed off on special education staff only. In order to change some of these attitudinal and belief systems, extensive training and retraining of classroom teachers as well as all other members of a school community must be considered (Pearman et al., 1992).

Even though restructuring and changes in attitude need to take place
in regards to educating all students, both general and special education teachers generally believe that students with mild disabilities have a basic right to an education in the general classroom (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). One study found that general educators may be willing to accommodate students with mild disabilities in their classrooms if substantial modifications are made in the general education setting (Myles & Simpson, 1992). Inclusion is happening everywhere with and without specific modifications, but whether or not it is successful tends to be questioned. Throughout the research, educators want and need inclusion parameters that differ from their current, actual settings (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995).

Before any discussion about the inclusion of students with disabilities should begin, the negative attitudes towards inclusion by some should be taken into account. Placing students with mild disabilities in the general education classroom may not result in positive experiences if teacher perceptions and expectancies of the students abilities and behaviors are negative. If general education teachers perceive the additional time that students with disabilities spend in the general class as a burden, then an inclusive approach may have overwhelming negative effects (Semmel et al., 1991). In their research, Semmel and his colleagues (1991) listed many issues and concerns that cause negative attitudes toward inclusion by general educators. They include:

(a) Teachers do not see improvement in achievement levels for general students or students with disabilities as a result of inclusion.
(b) More emphasis is being placed on higher achievement scores by students which dampens enthusiasm for inclusion.

(c) Some teachers believe that placement of students in general education rooms could negatively effect the distribution of instructional classroom time.

(d) Teachers feel that the rate at which district curriculum objectives are met may be decreased as a result of inclusion students.

(e) Teachers contend that the general class program is inadequate for addressing the instructional needs of students with disabilities.

(f) Teachers believe that including students with disabilities will not result in positive social benefits for the students.

These issues and concerns show that some teachers view inclusion as an undesirable means of service delivery. Proponents of an inclusive model face a struggle in trying to change mind sets and attitudes to help them see the positive benefits of inclusion.

**Staff Collaboration/Communication Concerns**

Special educators need to work with general classroom teachers in order for changes to begin. Together, they have a shared responsibility for educating students with mild disabilities. The research shows that this collaboration and sharing does not take place as it should. In a recent study, Schumm & Vaughn (1995) learned that even though general classroom teachers value the resources that special educators can provide, like help in planning and making adaptations for student learning, these human resources are limited. These researchers suggested that students in inclusion situations, particularly at the middle and high school levels, cannot
expect a high degree of collaboration and coordination between their special education and classroom teachers. Similarly, Downing, Simpson, & Myles (1990) found that communication between general and special educators is a key factor in the success of inclusion. The results of their study indicated that without communication between general and special educators, a student may appear to have adequate skills in the special education room, but be deficit in specific skills crucial to the inclusive environment. Lack of appropriate communication and collaboration could result in negative academic and social effects for students with mild disabilities. Even though inclusion should be a team effort, the research shows that general classroom teachers assume the primary responsibility for students with mild disabilities who are placed in their classes (Semmel et al., 1991). Together, regular and special educators must together maintain ownership and a responsibility in educating students with disabilities in order for successful inclusion to begin and/or continue.

Teacher Preparedness Concerns

Another concern of general educators is that they feel unprepared to make modifications and implement adaptations for effective inclusion. One research study stated that successful inclusion must begin with the application of individualized programs, use of structured routines, and implementation of special education methods (Downing et al., 1990). Frustration begins when teachers are unsure as to how to effectively implement specialized strategies and still meet the academic needs of all the other students in their classroom (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). Many general education teachers are actively and willingly involved in inclusion
situations, but they are overwhelmed and frustrated with how to make it work. General education teachers report that they lack the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need in order to make instructional adaptations for students with disabilities (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995; Semmel et al., 1991). General education teachers also report that they find few specific suggestions in state or district curricular guides or textbooks and are "on their own" in developing instructional strategies for teaching inclusive students. They are unaware of the methods or procedures used in special education rooms and how they are alike or different from what they implement in their own classrooms (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). General education teachers' abilities to adapt classroom programs to meet the instructional needs of students with mild disabilities are clearly questioned by the research (Semmel et al., 1991). These results hold many implications for teacher preparatory programs at the university level.

Instructional Concerns

The real and desired availability of certain inclusive adaptations and modifications is another concern of general educators. One study found that significant differences existed between actual and preferred modifications including support services, class size, paraprofessionals, planning time, and inservice programs (Myles & Simpson, 1992). The results imply that although some schools are implementing modifications, they are either ineffective and/or need to be increased. This study also noted that teachers are less supportive of innovations and modifications that suggest impact on their present job definitions, classroom practices, and instructional time allocations (Semmel et al., 1991). In two studies, personalized learning
plans or individual instruction was not viewed as feasible and effective in a general education classroom possibly as a result of the time constraints they imply (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995; Semmel et al., 1991).

Instructional adaptations are not implemented in the classroom as frequently as students or teachers would like. In one study, Schumm and Vaughn (1995) indicated reasons for the lack of implementation including:

(a) **Teacher workload responsibility** - some general education teachers don't believe it is their responsibility.

(b) **Adaptation Implementation** - barriers include class size, access to materials, and physical environment of the room.

(c) **Content Coverage** - some adaptations consume too much class time.

(d) **Concerns about students** - they don't want students to be singled out--special modifications don't promote student autonomy.

The reality of the research indicated that adaptations for students with mild disabilities are “incidental and inconsistent” (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). Even though the results of the research seems to place much blame on general education teachers negative attitudes, much more can be done to begin to make some changes. In order to effectively make appropriate changes, the attitudes and perceptions of educators must be clearly identified and defined.

**Effects of Resistance**

As a result of the resistance to inclusion, many students with mild disabilities are not being served appropriately. With the passing of PL 94-142, students were assured educational services in the least restrictive
environment, however, this law did not require a separate, "pull-out" educational system. Recently, educators have questioned the effectiveness of such non-inclusive programs (Pearman et al., 1993). In her research, Will (1986) contended that the currently used model of special education services has not worked due to the categorical nature of the services and the presumption that students with mild disabilities do not benefit from the instruction delivered in general education classrooms. A move toward an inclusive system has the potential to provide a more effective education for all students. The authors of a related study contend that inclusion would lead to the integration of all students and with better coordination of programs lead to a more powerful general educational system (Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986). Research goes on to suggest that all students with learning difficulties, including those with and without documented disabilities, could benefit without the stigma of association with segregated programming (Houck & Rogers, 1994). Although the research questions the effectiveness of programs that segregate students with mild disabilities from the general education classroom setting, non-inclusive programs continue to be a common special education placement.

Purpose

We are interested in finding out what support, modification, and training is needed to motivate general education teachers to be more willing to include students with mild disabilities in their classrooms. The purpose of our efforts is to survey one district's elementary general and special education teachers and administrators to identify the barriers to implementing inclusion practices. By compiling the results of the surveys,
the specific attitudes and perceptions that surface will allow us to make conclusions and recommendations to be made regarding what the district needs in order to make inclusion more effective and widespread.
Chapter 2

Appropriate placement and service for students with disabilities has been an issue of concern in school districts for many years. Since 1975, special education law has indicated that students must be educated in their least restrictive environment. For many students with disabilities, this environment should be in a general education classroom with collaboration between general and special educators. However, the research has shown that many teachers are resistant to inclusive programming and services for students with disabilities. As a result, many of these students are being segregated from their general education peers into pull-out programs with a special education teacher. Researchers have been interested in investigating reasons for teachers' resistance to inclusion. Much of the relevant information on this topic is found in the form of teacher surveys.

In this paper, three main areas of research will be discussed. First, many studies have been conducted regarding existing barriers to inclusion. As a result of these barriers, adaptations and modifications are needed for successful inclusion to occur. A second area will focus on educators' attitudes and perceptions regarding inclusion. Negative attitudes toward inclusion have an impact on the success of the inclusive services. The third area of research involves investigating appropriate and effective teacher roles for both general and special education teachers. Combined, the results of past research allows conclusions to be made regarding present and future research on the topic.

Barriers/Modifications

One area of consideration when planning for inclusive programming
for students with disabilities is investigating existing or potential barriers that cause teacher resistance to inclusion. Many barriers can be addressed through the implementation and use of effective modifications and adaptations.

In the first study, Myles and Simpson (1992) examined which modifications would persuade general educators to include labeled and unlabeled students with mild disabilities in their classrooms and investigated general educators views on inclusion decision-making. The purpose of the study was to investigate general educators perceptions of modifications, services, and factors that would facilitate the inclusion of students with mild behavior disorders and learning disabilities. Specifically, the study sought to determine which modifications would persuade general educators to include students with mild disabilities and to reveal the importance that teachers place on their involvement in decisions related to inclusion.

The subjects consisted of 194 general education teachers (grades 1-6) who were employed by a midwestern suburban public school district. These educators were distributed across many demographic variables including sex, experience, and training. The study involved assessing general educators’ acceptance of students with behavioral learning problems in the general education classroom through the use of a survey. The survey included a vignette, describing a student with a behavior disorder or learning disability, to provide a common reference point regarding such students with disabilities for the respondents.

The results of this survey indicated that support services and consultation were the modifications most selected as necessary for
managing inclusion. Inservice training was selected less than other modifications which indicated that teachers do not believe it is as necessary for successful inclusion as other modifications. The results also showed that the type and quality of the support services offered to the general educators was more important than the quantity of services. Respondents also indicated that actual and preferred preferences for class size, planning time, and inservice training existed. None of the demographic variables proved to be significant predictors of teacher willingness to accept included students. Overall in the study, 75% of the educators responded that participating in the decision making process regarding inclusion was more important than having mandatory inclusion modifications. This data suggests that general education teachers are willing to accommodate for inclusion with modifications that differ from their actual settings.

In a similar study, Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) examined and compared the perspectives of elementary principals, general education teachers, and special education teachers who were at various stages of inclusion programming. The goal of their research was to examine strategies needed to promote the transition from self-contained classrooms to full inclusion.

The sample surveyed was compiled of 27 elementary school principals, general education teachers (K-6), and special education teachers at different levels of inclusive educational programming. Structured interviews were conducted to determine their perceptions toward inclusion for students with severe disabilities. The respondents were asked to respond to four major issues: (a) supports needed for inclusion, (b)
benefits of inclusion, (c) necessary teaching strategies, and (d) barriers to inclusion.

The most frequently mentioned barrier to inclusion was negative attitudes of general education teachers, special education teachers, or parents. Other barriers receiving high response were concerns that the needs of all students would not be met and that individualized education plan objectives could not be met in general education classrooms.

The majority of the respondents commented that one benefit of inclusion was the rich learning environment, including positive language exposure, that the general education classroom provided. More than half of the respondents also said that students with disabilities learn appropriate behaviors modeled by general education peers. The respondents also commented that general education students acquire an appreciation and acceptance of diversity as a result of inclusion.

The respondents stated many important supports needed for successful inclusion. Over half felt the need for a full-time, highly skilled support person to be in the classroom. A majority also stated the importance of training general and special educators and aides. Other needs mentioned by the respondents included planning time for collaboration, additional support staff, administrative support, teaming, “good” general education teachers, general education ownership, funds for appropriate materials, and parental support.

The most important teaching strategy mentioned for successful inclusion was the use of adaptations. Several respondents discussed multi-modal or hands-on instruction, peer tutoring, and one-on-one instruction. All
of the findings in this study provide specific implications when planning for successful inclusion.

In a third study, Karge, McClurge, and Patton (1995), looked at how inclusion was being implemented at the middle school level. The purpose of the study was to examine the dynamics of students in an inclusion setting. A goal of the study was to determine ways to better meet the needs of middle school students with disabilities.

The subjects were 69 middle/junior high resource teachers (grades 6-8) in southern California. Out of 128, ninety-eight surveys were completed and returned. The investigator-designed survey had two sections. One section asked questions about respondents demographics and questions about respondents resource programs and students. The next section asked questions specific to the types of programs and problems that were faced.

The results of the survey indicated that resource teachers were involved in both pull-out and inclusion programs. Inclusive practices were viewed positively. The teachers indicated a high level of administrative support for inclusion. They also ranked teacher attitude and personality higher than the severity of a student's disability as factors related to successful inclusion.

The respondents ranked teacher attitude toward inclusion and lack of time as problems hindering inclusion. The teachers reported that inclusion practices were expected by administration, but adequate time for collaboration to be effective was not provided. Many teachers reported large caseloads and increased responsibilities that they considered "work
overload" as a result of inclusion practices. Others stated that their students were not getting the adequate small-group instruction they needed. The authors speculated that these constraints hindered teachers' attitudes toward inclusive programming.

In a fourth study, Baker and Zigmond (1990) examined educational practices in general education classes in grades K-5 to determine changes required to facilitate a full-time inclusion program for students with disabilities. This research was conducted as part of the planning year of a three-year study of full-time inclusion for elementary level students with learning disabilities.

One elementary school was targeted in a very large urban school district. In this school, the students with learning disabilities were assigned to one of two full-time, self-contained classrooms. The only integration occurred during art, Physical Education, music, and library. A case study design was used to obtain information about the school itself including demographics and climate and the instructional program. Data was collected by using formal and informal observations, interviews, and questionnaires; surveys of students, parents, and school staff; and examination of school records.

The results indicated that this was a "nice" school. All observers were comfortable and happy with it. The school was neat and clean and routines were well established. Teachers stressed orderliness and quiet behavior and on-task behavior was high. Instructionally, this was a place with uniform procedures and expectations for all students. Teachers taught "by the book" to whole or large groups and made no professional decisions about how to
best educate their students. Classes were quiet and controlled, and teachers spent much time on managing class routines. There was almost no interactive instruction and nobody seemed excited about learning.

The authors suggested that in light of these results, substantial changes needed to occur to make this school ready for inclusion. They went on to suggest that teaching activities needed to include interacting and actively engaging students in their learning. Teachers need to vary the size of their instructional groups to give students opportunities to get more actively involved in the learning process. Such changes would require alternative routines and instructional techniques in order to meet the needs of all students. The authors suggested that inservice training and ongoing technical assistance in effective instruction would be necessary for changes to occur.

In one additional study, Schumm and Vaughn (1995) summarized a series of investigations in order to gain descriptive information on the predicted success of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. The investigations addressed teacher and student perceptions of instructional adaptations for students with diverse learning needs.

Both qualitative and quantitative informational sources were used from over 1,000 teachers and over 3,000 students in elementary, middle, and high school. The overall results of these studies suggest that classroom teachers are not ready for inclusion practices. The authors stated several issues that must be addressed to assure successful inclusion.

First, teachers reported that they “lack the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to plan and make instructional adaptations for
students with disabilities" (p. 172). Second, classroom teachers reported that special education teachers and support staff are valuable for collaborative planning and making adaptations, but they are not readily available. Third, students and some teachers reported adaptations are preferred, but were not often used by teachers. The authors stated conclusions regarding why this occurs. One reason was that general education teachers did not feel making adaptations was their responsibility. Other reasons were that large class size, access to materials, and physical environment of the classroom were all barriers toward adaptation implementation. Also, teachers said some adaptations required too much class time. Additionally, teachers felt that students would not be receptive to certain adaptations. Lastly, the adaptations were viewed as "incidental and inconsistent" (p. 175) and not part of an overall systematic plan for individual students.

The authors suggested that research on effective instructional strategies for all students must continue. Also, research on ways to plan and make adaptations for students with disabilities within planning for the class as a whole is needed. They also implied that all people involved in inclusion practices voice their opinions.

The authors also made recommendations for teacher education. They recommended that pre-teachers learn how to effectively use instructional strategies. Also, teacher preparatory programs should provide opportunities for teachers to plan interactively and work in collaborative roles. Additionally, pre-teachers should be trained on process rather than product issues related to content coverage and on developing appropriate
planning routines to meet the needs of all students.

Summary

Combined, each of these studies focused on identifying barriers that exist in schools which prevent teachers from offering an inclusive setting to students with mild disabilities. They also focused on what modifications could be implemented for successful inclusion to occur.

First, Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) found that the most frequently mentioned barrier to inclusion among educators is negative attitudes of teachers and/or parents. Similarly, in their study, Karge, McClurge, and Patton (1995) found that teacher attitude ranked high as a hindrance to inclusion. The study also reported lack of time and high workloads and responsibilities as being barriers to inclusion. Teachers' negative attitudes toward inclusion has been a topic in and of itself in the research recently and will be discussed further in this paper.

Another barrier to inclusion in the general education teachers' lack of skills and knowledge about teaching students with disabilities (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). In their study, these authors found that general education teachers need help from support staff which is not always available. They also are not using instructional strategies often. Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) also found that some teachers believe the needs and individualized education plan goals of students with disabilities will not be met by a general education teacher in a general education classroom.

The needed modifications mentioned in the studies described seemed to directly correlate to these barriers. Myles and Simpson (1992) and Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) both found that qualified
support staff are mentioned by educators as the most important modification for successful inclusion. Training teachers on effective instructional techniques for students with disabilities is another requested modification (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Downing et al., 1997; Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). If general and special education teachers were better trained to work collaboratively in inclusion settings, negative attitudes toward inclusion by teachers could improve. Other modifications mentioned in the research include small class sizes and opportunities to plan collaboratively (Downing et al., 1997; Myles & Simpson, 1992). Over and over, teachers in these studies were requesting more time to plan, collaborate, and learn strategies (i.e., inservice training) in order to make inclusion successful.

Teachers' Attitudes

The attitudes of general and special education teachers are an integral factor in the success of inclusion programs. Teachers' negative attitudes towards including students with disabilities in general education classrooms have an important impact on programming decisions for those students.

In the first study, Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) assessed general and special educators' and administrators' attitudes and beliefs about educating all students, including those with moderate and severe disabilities, in general education classrooms. The researchers focused on questions involving educators' roles, background, and experience as it related to their attitude toward inclusion.

The study was conducted in 32 schools in the United States and Canada which worked to provide heterogeneous educational opportunities
for all students. All staff members in the schools were surveyed. They were asked questions regarding background and experience followed by questions from the Regular Education Initiative Teacher Survey - Revised (REITS-R) (Semmel et al., 1991) and the Heterogeneous Education Teacher Survey (HETS).

Overall, the data collected indicated that all educators generally believe that inclusion results in positive outcomes for changes in attitudes and responsibilities. Elementary educators were noted to be more positive in their responses. The researchers suggested that differences in attitude of educators at various levels may exist because in middle and high school, scheduling time for multiple classroom teachers to collaborate is difficult.

The authors found four main attitudinal results: (a) general and special educators share a responsibility for meeting the needs of all children, (b) general and special educators are able to work together as co-equal partners, (c) the achievement level of students with disabilities does not decrease in general education classrooms, and (d) team teaching arrangements of general and special educators results in enhanced feelings of competency for both teachers.

These results contradict attitudinal research in the past which concluded that general and special educators favored a pull-out model for special education (Semmel et al., 1991). The authors also noted further contradictions to prior research regarding lack of initial positive attitudes toward inclusion. This study concluded that initial attitudes can and do change with actual experience with inclusion situations.

General education teachers identified three main factors that
contributed to their attitude toward inclusion. They were administrative support, time to collaborate, and experience with students with severe disabilities. Special education teachers identified administrative support and amount of collaboration by participants as factors influencing their attitudes.

The findings also suggest 3 areas where action is necessary. First, administrators need to understand that their support and commitment is crucial for successful inclusion. Second, teachers need priority time for collaboration and shared decision making regarding inclusive programs. Lastly, teacher education programs need to develop training to better prepare general and special educators for their collaborative and teaming roles.

Second, in a similar study conducted in one school district, Pearman, Barnhart, Huang, and Mellblom (1992) wanted to determine the attitudes and beliefs regarding inclusion. The authors investigated differences in attitudes and beliefs between different groups within the districts personnel.

The staff of a mid-sized Colorado school district was surveyed on their views of inclusion. The survey used was called the Schools and Education for All Students (SEAS) and was developed as a result of collaboration between special education directors, university personnel, administrators, and teachers. The staff, including elementary, middle, junior high, and high school teachers and central administrators was included in the study and 246 surveys were returned and used.

The results of the survey concluded that the secondary staff members surveyed did not view inclusion as an issue affecting them, but as an
elementary issue. The authors suggested that these attitudes need to change in order to provide a continuum of inclusion services for students with disabilities. They went on to suggest that educators from all levels - elementary, middle, junior high, and high school - need to communicate and collaborate with each other to improve the delivery of services across the district. Another conclusion of the survey was that staff members need proper training to effectively work in inclusion settings. Higher level institutions may need to make changes to better equip teachers to work in collaborative roles. The authors suggested that as institutions begin to restructure, they should allow more opportunities for pre-teachers to observe and work in classrooms. Also, the regular and special education teacher training programs should begin to communicate on how to better prepare future teachers to educate all students.

Ninety-one percent of staff surveyed disagreed that general and special education teachers had collaborative planning time. These results indicated that inclusion caused tension within the buildings. The respondents also stated that inclusion is supported by the district, central office, and building administrators. The authors concluded that in order for inclusion to be successful in this district, supports must be provided by not only changing beliefs about inclusion across levels, but providing teachers with the necessary time and training.

In a third study, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reviewed and synthesized existing literature related to teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion. Twenty-eight investigations were used in which educators were surveyed regarding their perceptions of including students with
disabilities in their classes. The sample included 10,560 general and special education teachers and other school personnel across the United States, Australia, and Canada. Common topics of relevance across the research was identified and compiled.

The results of this collection indicated that teachers' support of inclusion varies according to the "degree of intensity" of the inclusion and the "severity level" of the included students. Teachers' willingness to teach students with disabilities depended on the severity of the disability and the amount of additional teacher responsibilities it would require.

About half of the general education teachers and two-thirds of special education teachers agreed that inclusion is beneficial. However, few teachers thought the general education classroom was the best place for students with disabilities. Many teachers also felt that inclusion would create problems for them and require them to make unwanted changes in their classroom procedures, instruction, and curriculum. They also reported that more time would be needed to effectively plan for inclusion, but additional time was not available. Most of the teachers in this investigation indicated that they were not adequately trained for inclusion. They also did not agree that sufficient material and personnel resource support needed for successful inclusion were available.

The results imply that in order for successful inclusion to occur, teachers need support in many areas including time, training, personnel and material resources, small class sizes, and consideration of severity of disabilities. Teachers' concerns regarding inclusion relate to the extent that these supports are available.
In a fourth study reviewed, Bender, Vail, and Scott (1990) investigated the types of instructional strategies used in inclusion classrooms. Another purpose of their work was to look at the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and the instructional strategies they used. Finally, the authors wanted to identify correlations between teachers' background or class variation and inclusion attitude.

The subjects consisted of 127 general education teachers of grades 1-8 in three school districts in Georgia. Each teacher was asked to complete a questionnaire including questions regarding background information and questions about their teaching and inclusion experiences. A 6-question Likert-like scale was used to assess teachers’ specific attitudes toward inclusion. Also, the researchers used the Teacher Effectiveness Scale, a 16-item Likert-like scale assessing teaching efficacy. Finally, the Bender Classroom Structure questionnaire (BCSQ) was used to evaluate the teachers' use of instructional strategies that facilitate inclusion.

The results indicated that over one third of inclusive teachers did not support inclusion or felt no strong commitment to it. The authors suggested that if these teachers felt that strongly, successful implementation of inclusion in their particular classrooms may be problematic. Inclusive teachers reported that they used many instructional strategies that facilitated inclusion like individualized instruction, alternative testing options, and varied instructional level. They also used alternative instruction like peer tutoring, cooperative instruction, and strategic principals. Conversely, they also reported that there were many strategies that were not being utilized like specialized grading systems, token economies, advanced organizers,
direct/daily measurement, and behavioral contracts, all of which are known to be effective to use with students with disabilities. The authors contend that this and other research (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991) support the consensus that teachers will make some adaptations for students with mild disabilities in their classrooms, but are reluctant to make substantive modifications necessary for successful inclusion.

The results of this study also indicated that "teachers with less positive attitudes toward their own effectiveness utilized fewer effective instructional techniques than did the teachers with more positive attitudes" (p. 94). This data showed that teachers who support inclusion report more consistent use of effective inclusive strategies than do teachers with less positive attitudes. Finally, the study also suggested that teachers in larger classes have less positive views about their own effectiveness. Also, teachers with more related coursework had more positive attitudes. All of these results hold implications for teacher training programs.

In the last related study, Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) assessed professional opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of teachers concerning critical issues of the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The sample used in the study included 381 regular and special education teachers from California and Illinois. The REI teacher survey (REITS) was used to assess teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding current practices used with students with mild disabilities in pull-out special education programs. It also assessed attitudes toward a more inclusive model.

The results indicated that respondents were satisfied with the
currently used pull-out model of special education delivery that is currently being used. They also believed that special education resources need to be protected and not be redistributed in general education as a result of inclusive practices. The educators interviewed did not predict increases of achievement for either general or special education students as a result of REI. They also suggested that increased emphasis on higher achievement scores may lessen the enthusiasm for providing service for students with mild disabilities in an inclusive model. A high percentage of respondents also believed that full inclusion could negatively effect the distribution of instructional classroom time, therefore decreasing the rate of mastering district curriculum goals.

Teachers surveyed do not think general education classrooms would adequately meet the instructional needs of students with disabilities and general education teachers do not perceive themselves as having adequate skills for adapting instruction. They also believed that inclusion will not have positive social benefits for students.

Overall, the majority of the teachers believed students with disabilities have the right to an education in general education classrooms and would take on some responsibility for them as long as their present job definitions, classroom practices, and instructional time allocations were not impacted.

Summary

Teacher attitudes are an important factor in the success of inclusion programs. The first two studies focused on what could be done to improve teacher attitudes. In their study, Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) found that administrative support, collaboration time, and experience with
students with disabilities were all factors contributing positively to teachers' attitudes about inclusion. In a similar study, Pearman, Bamhart, Huang, and Mellblom (1992) found that communication, proper training, and collaborative planning were important factors leading to positive attitudes toward inclusion. Many teachers surveyed are willing to be involved in inclusion if their needs could be met. The factors needed may vary from school to school and should be investigated before implementing inclusion practices to head off some negative attitudes.

Three other studies investigated looked at causes of negative teacher attitudes. Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995) found that the teachers they surveyed had no real commitment to inclusion. They also stated they do not use effective instructional strategies like they should and do not see social benefits for students as a result of inclusion. Large class sizes also affect the willingness to participate in inclusion settings. The teachers in Scruggs and Mastropieri's (1996) investigation believed inclusion is beneficial, however it caused more problems and unwanted changes for them. These authors also found that teachers felt they were not properly trained, did not have necessary materials or personnel, and needed more time for inclusion to be effective.

In the last study, Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) also found lack of training to be a factor contributing to teachers' negative attitudes. Their results also concluded that teachers felt too much instructional time would be taken with students with disabilities in their classroom and these students' needs would not be met in general education classrooms.
One study concluded that teacher attitudes can and do change and improve with actual experiences with inclusion students (Villa et al., 1996). If factors leading to negative attitudes and needed modifications are investigated and acted on in each school district prior to inclusive programming, actual experience with appropriate support may be helpful to improve teacher attitudes and lead to successful inclusion.

Teacher Roles

Collaborative roles between special and general education teachers play an important part in inclusion settings. To alleviate uncertainty between the teachers that are working together, teachers must identify their necessary roles and responsibilities for successful inclusive programming.

In a study done by Voltz, Elliott, and Cobb (1994) general educators promotion of collaboration with special educators and barriers to collaborative roles were investigated. The purpose of the study was to analyze and compare the perceptions of general and special educators in regard to actual and ideal collaborative teacher roles. The researchers also examined special education teachers perceptions of constraints on their performance of collaborative roles.

The subjects in this study included both elementary special educators and general educators. One hundred teachers from each group were randomly selected from a national pool. The teachers selected had been teaching from 4 to 17 years and were distributed across 42 states. Packets, including a cover letter and survey materials for both a resource teacher of students with disabilities and general educator who served such students, were sent to the selected elementary schools that housed learning
disabilities resource programs. The survey used was called the Special
Education Teacher - General Education Teacher Interaction Scale (SET-
GETIS). Both groups of teachers rated both teacher roles on their
perceptions of how often the roles were actually performed and how often
the roles should ideally be performed. Also, resource teachers were asked
to rate a list of seven constraints on the collaborative resource teacher role.

The results of this study indicated that the teachers surveyed believed
that most of the collaborative roles included on the survey should be
performed often or always. Very few of these roles were actually happening
that frequently. The teachers also showed that they believe teacher roles
involving a teachers physical presence in the general education class were
rated lower which means they should be performed less often than other
roles. The role ranked lowest by both groups of teachers involved the
general education teachers physical presence in the resource room. These
findings indicated that the teachers involved “desired to collaborate on an
information exchange or problem-solving level, but were apparently
reluctant to actually occupy the same classroom at the same time or to jointly
embark upon the learning process” (p. 531).

Another trend in the results revealed that the roles that were currently
prformed to a high degree were supported by both groups to continue to
such degree. The opposite was also found to be true. The authors
contended that this pattern suggested that the teachers surveyed supported
more collaboration, but did not necessarily support any changes in the type
of collaboration (i.e., team teaching).

The results of this study finally suggest that the main constraints to
moving from performance of actual collaborative roles to ideal roles was lack of time for general and special education teachers to collaborate. Many write-in comments from the teachers surveyed indicated that lack of time was a significant barrier to the performance of ideal roles. These findings implied that some time provisions must be made to support the performance of collaborative teacher roles.

In a second study done by Wood (1998), the purpose was to provide information regarding the development of a collaborative team in one school district and the expectations of its teachers. Specifically, the researcher looked at teachers' feelings of responsibility and commitment to specific goals for inclusion students and identified the barriers and facilitators of collaboration between teachers.

The study was done in elementary inclusive classrooms in a middle-class central California coastal school district. Individual interviews, over the course of one year, were conducted with 3 educational teams; each including a general education and special education teacher of an included student.

The results first indicated the specific roles designated to each team member to promote successful inclusion. All teachers interviewed agreed that the special education teacher should be responsible for the development of individualized academic and behavior programs and supervising classroom paraprofessionals. As a result of these specific roles, general education teachers were excused from individualized education plans and decision-making responsibilities such as homework, grades, discipline, and reinforcement. The specific roles for general education
teachers were identified as responsibilities related to the students social goals and maintaining appropriate classroom functioning. The general education teacher also should promote interaction between the included student and general education peers.

As the year progressed, the roles of teachers overlapped and teaming became more cooperative. The identified barriers to positive inclusion efforts included special education teachers pushing certain special education techniques or materials on general education teachers who were not comfortable using them. One general educator also wanted more input in the responsibilities of the students goals. Also, one team experienced ownership struggles for the full responsibility of the education of the included student. They had unclear perceptions of each others responsibilities which caused problems.

The author contended that understanding specific roles and role overlap between team members may have critical implications in the service delivery of appropriate education to included students. The researcher concluded "if educators responsible for the implementation of restructuring efforts have unclear perceptions of their roles, it may seriously undermine the efforts and maintenance of inclusion programs" (p. 192).

In the last related study, Houck and Rogers (1994) explored a statewide investigation to provide an overview of educators views regarding issues related to increased integration efforts for students with learning disabilities in Virginia and to document factors supporting or creating resistance toward such efforts. Mail surveys were instruments given to special and general education supervisors, building principals, general
secondary and elementary education teachers, and learning disabilities teachers. The survey addressed eight questions that the researchers were given specific responses. These surveys were sent to schools that used some form of inclusion with their learning disabled population.

The researchers had indicated that the findings had limitations due to using only one state, a few schools, and limiting individuals actually surveyed. However, the results clearly documented active efforts, based on sound research, to increase the amount of time students with learning disabilities spend in general education classrooms. There were many aspects to increased integration the educators agreed on and they reported positive outcomes.

However, respondents expressed doubt regarding the adequacy of the general education teachers skills for making needed instructional adaptations for students with learning disabilities. Also, more than half of the educators felt that general educators were not willing to make needed instructional adaptations for these students. They reported that although inclusion efforts should be shared between the special and general educators, much of the responsibility for making inclusion classrooms successful was falling on general education teachers. The educators identified constraints to overcome to meet success: difficulty meeting all students needs, insufficient time to plan with special education teachers, and insufficient access to the special education teachers who are expected or needed in other classrooms.

**Summary**

When planning for inclusion programming in a school, teachers need
to understand the roles of each person involved on the collaborative team. Teachers need a clear perception of each others roles, otherwise overlapping of roles or ownership problems may occur (Wood, 1998). Voltz, Elliott, and Cobb (1994) found that teachers should be performing many collaborative roles that are not actually happening. One major constraint discussed that prevents teachers from performing ideal collaborative roles is lack of collaboration time. In a study done by Houck and Rogers (1994), the results were similar. They found that even though responsibility for inclusion efforts should be shared between general and special educators, general education teachers indicated there was no time to plan together and the special education teachers were not available because of needs in other classrooms.

Houck and Rogers (1994) also indicated that much of the responsibility for the success of inclusion classrooms is falling on the general education teacher. The general educators surveyed did not feel they had the necessary skills for making instructional adaptations and were not willing to make needed adaptations. The general educators in a study done by Wood (1998) stated that even though responsibility for inclusion efforts should be shared between general and special educators, general education teachers indicated there was no time to plan together and the special education teachers were not available because of needs in other classrooms. The teachers in this study agreed that general education teachers were responsible for special education students’ specific goals and appropriate classroom functioning. Problems could occur if general educators are responsible for successfully educating students with
disabilities but do not feel they have skills necessary to effectively make adaptations.

In order for inclusion to be successful, the roles of the teachers and others involved on collaborative teams must be defined and understood by all involved. Identification of these roles allows collaborative team members to know what is expected of them before participating in inclusive settings.

Conclusions

Many factors should be considered by school districts when planning for inclusive programming for students with disabilities in general education classrooms. First, research has shown that certain barriers cause resistance to inclusion by teachers. One barrier noted in the research is negative teacher attitudes (Downing et al., 1997; Karge et al., 1995). Schumm and Vaughn (1995) also found that general education teachers lack of specialized skills, the unavailability of special education staff, and lack of time to collaborate are also barriers to effective inclusion. As a result of these barriers, modifications are necessary. Qualified support personnel is often mentioned by teachers as being necessary for successful inclusion (Downing et al., 1997; Myles & Simpson, 1992). Three studies also indicated that appropriate teacher training in collaboration efforts is a necessary modification for inclusion to work (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Downing et al. 1997; Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). This modification holds implications for teacher preparatory programs and inservice programming.

Second, negative teacher attitudes must be addressed by school districts before inclusion can effectively occur. Teachers in one study felt no commitment to inclusion and did not see student benefits as a result of it.
In their study, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that teachers' attitudes were negative because they were not properly trained, did not have personnel or material support, and did not have enough time to collaborate. Similarly, Semmel and his colleagues (1991) also found that teachers were not properly trained and they had instructional concerns for students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

Two studies focused on improving teacher attitudes. Administrative support, collaboration time, experience with students with disabilities were factors relating to more positive attitudes regarding inclusion (Villa et al., 1996). In a similar study, Pearman and her colleagues (1997) found that communication, proper training, and collaborative planning were factors leading to more positive attitudes. With appropriate modifications, support and experiences, teachers' negative attitudes can change to be more supportive of inclusive programming.

The last factor included as being necessary for successful inclusion was identifying appropriate teacher roles on collaboration teams. One study found that teachers' actual collaborative roles and ideal roles were different because of lack of time for collaboration (Voltz et al., 1994). Time to discuss and perform appropriate collaborative roles is necessary. In her study, Wood (1998) found that specific roles were identified for both the special and general education teachers. This author cautioned that without clear perceptions on roles, overlapping of roles and ownership problems could arise which would be detrimental to inclusive programming. A third study found that general educators assumed the primary role in making inclusion successful (Houck & Rogers, 1994). These authors found that general
educators lack the necessary skills and are unwilling to make appropriate adaptations necessary for effective inclusion. Time constraints prevent special and general education teachers to work together on appropriate roles.

Much of the research on teacher perceptions regarding inclusion overlaps. Throughout all of the factors discussed, major themes keep introducing themselves as barriers to successful inclusion occurring more in schools. If schools were able to identify existing and potential barriers to inclusion within their particular district, then steps could be taken to making appropriate changes and modifications so successful inclusion could become more widespread. The goal of schools is to educate students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment, which for many is an inclusive setting. Identifying barriers and adjusting modifications may allow districts to provide inclusive programing that is appropriate and necessary for many students with disabilities.
Chapter 3

As a result of teacher resistance to inclusion, many students with mild disabilities are not being provided special education services within their least restrictive environment. The goal of this study was to survey one district's general and special educators and administrators to identify existing and potential barriers to inclusion. The results of the survey determined what support, modification, and training was needed to motivate educators to participate in inclusion practices.

Methods

Subjects

Eighty-five elementary staff at the elementary level were asked to participate in the survey. Specifically, the targeted personnel included general education teachers (including art, music and physical education), Title One teachers, special education teachers, social workers and building principals. Teaching experience ranged from two to thirty-seven years.

Procedures

Approval to circulate the survey instrument among the five elementary buildings was obtained following an elementary principal’s meeting, during which the administrators reviewed the identified survey. In an attempt to solicit voluntary participation of the elementary staff in this suburban district, envelopes containing a cover letter and survey were mailed to individual participants. A small packet of M&M’s and a pencil were included to encourage participation. Individuals were requested to return completed surveys within one week of delivery. One brief reminder was mailed to the five building secretaries, who were requested to deliver them to the specified
participants (see Appendix A, B, & C).

Survey

The survey was developed following an extensive review of available literature which contained similarly structured surveys pertaining to the same topic (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Downing et al., 1997; Voltz et al., 1994; Wood, 1998). It consisted of five sections which addressed barriers to inclusion practices in the designated school district's elementary classrooms. Barriers were grouped into the following categories: Support, Teacher Training, Curriculum/Collaboration Issues, Student Concerns and Time/Classroom Issues. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each statement in the given section was an existing barrier, a potential barrier or not a barrier. Provided at the close of each section was a space designated for comments pertaining to that specific area. Five open-ended questions concluded the survey (see Appendix B).

Results

Of the 85 surveys mailed, 58 (68%) completed surveys were returned. Respondents included four principals, six special education teachers, forty-two general education teachers, two Title One teachers, two social workers and two unidentified participants. The results of these respondents’ surveys will be described in six areas: Support, Teacher Training, Time/Classroom, Curriculum/Collaboration, Student Concerns and a summary. The data from survey responses were organized by the calculation of percentages. Those figures are located in Tables 1-5.

Support

Participants were asked to determine to what extent there was a lack
of support from school personnel and parents.

**Existing Barriers.** Percentages in this area were lower than expected. Ten percent felt that a lack of parent support was an existing barrier, while 7% indicated a lack of paraprofessional and speech and language support were also existing barriers. One general education teacher noted an “unwillingness to communicate with regular education teacher and show flexibility in scheduling” on the part of the SPL (speech) teacher. Lack of special education teacher support and social work services ranked at 3%. A special education teacher expressed her frustration in being “‘open’ to the idea of Inclusion” yet “one of the biggest barriers is the numbers (of students) and logistics of one and one half special education teachers spreading ourselves among fifteen classrooms!”

**Potential Barriers.** Percentages were significantly higher under this heading. The high percentages could be due to the fact that there are few inclusion practices within the district, therefore limiting the knowledge base of a large portion of the staff. A special educator felt that “people are willing to try inclusion to some extent...but it varies from individual to individual and their ‘ideas’ about what inclusion really is!” Forty-one percent of respondents identified a lack of general education teacher support, paraprofessional support and overall building support. Thirty-eight percent indicated a potential lack of support from special education teachers, and 33% percent felt that support from social workers could also be a possible barrier. One first grade teacher commented, “I feel like I’m very frustrated because of students not receiving social work or other teacher support.”
**Teacher Training**

This section addressed the lack of undergraduate and graduate special education-related courses, related inservice/seminar training and building awareness and preparation for an inclusion-based special education setting.

**Existing Barriers.** Lack of undergraduate special education-related course work and lack of building awareness/preparation was noted by 36% of the respondents. Twenty-nine percent felt that currently there is a lack of graduate special education-related course work. Most likely, these responses refer to the belief that staff have not participated in the available courses in this area, rather than a lack of available classes. A kindergarten teacher (formal special education teacher) expressed, “This, to me, is the biggest barrier existing in the field of education today as far as teachers, and their ability to handle diversity among learners in the classroom context.”

One special education teacher noted that “when given the opportunity, teachers rarely choose to go to additional training for servicing special education kids. There is a real lack of ‘ownership’ for these kids.” A third grade teacher questioned, “Why are (special education) teaching strategies mostly taught in special education courses?! Why aren’t they routinely taught to general education teachers? I don’t think we should need more special education courses. However, the content in some of those courses should be taught to ALL teachers.” A fourth grade teacher stated “special education coursework or inservices would be valuable but unless mandated, they don’t seem to make it to the top of the priority list.”

**Potential Barriers.** Over half of the respondents, 57%, identified a
lack of related inservice/seminar training. In the past five years, intermediate school districts have offered more seminars featuring information about learning styles and multiple intelligences as related to students with special learning needs. These appear more user-friendly, and less intimidating, to teachers who have little experience in educating students with mild disabilities. Forty-seven percent agreed that their building lacked awareness/preparation, and that the lack of undergraduate and graduate specialized course work was indeed a barrier. A second grade teacher responded from personal experience:

"The Educable Mentally Impaired program was placed in our building without any discussion as to how to include these students within the general education rooms. There has been no real communicative effort with regard to this issue. We need to prepare staff as to what the expectations are and make sure they are following through."

**Time/Classroom Issues**

This area focused mainly on the issues of time, class size, coordination of schedules and availability of adaptive materials. Of all five sections, the existing barriers received by far the highest percentage of votes.

**Existing Barriers.** 64% of the respondents cited a lack of adequate planning time between general and special education. A teacher in a multiage classroom expressed her thoughts and gave a suggestion.

"Time is always an issue. There's never enough of it...it's the nature of our job. Time set aside
specifically to meet with special education personnel
would be great but outside our regular planning
time. (Perhaps) afternoon/half day release once
a month."

One special education teacher wrote of an attempt to do some teaming with
a general education teacher. The general education teacher would not
meet unless additional planning time was given. Therefore, teaming was no
longer an option due to the fact that they were turned down by
administration. Forty-seven percent found it difficult to coordinate schedules.
One fifth grade teacher noted her frustrations, "Common planning time is
non-existent! Scheduling was dictated by a half-time special education
position and the way our music, art, and physical education schedules were
done." In addition, a general education teacher commented, "Presently, I'm
working with a part-time resource room teacher. This has led to several
difficulties, even when just a pull-out program." Lack of time due to
instruction responsibilities was noted by forty-five percent. One fifth grade
teacher felt the "immense amount of content to teach makes adaptation a
necessity but there's too little time to do it." Approximately one third (33%)
felt that, currently, general education class sizes are too large to try inclusion
practices.

Potential Barriers. Nearly half (48%) of respondents perceived lack of
time due to instruction responsibilities as a potential barrier. One second
grade teacher exclaimed, "Teachers are already overwhelmed with current
standards and district/state expectations!" Forty-seven percent concurred
that the following issues could also be barriers: (a) lack of time due to non-
instruction responsibilities, (b) difficulty in coordinating schedules, (c) general education class sizes are too large, and (d) lack of appropriate adaptive materials. Noted one general education teacher, "(We) need more high-interest, low level reading materials, both fiction and non-fiction."

Curriculum/Collaboration

Teacher willingness and ability to adapt curriculum, along with the ability to collaborate were two key focal points within this section. The effectiveness of pull-out programs was also addressed.

**Existing Barriers.** Just over one half (55%) of respondents identified lack of time to create/implement an adapted curriculum as a barrier to inclusion practices. A fifth grade teacher responded to the difficulty of creating an adapted curriculum.

> "Each year brings students with unique needs. One year, adaptive materials may be produced for a set of students, and the next year, a whole new set of materials may be needed to meet different needs."

A special educator commented on the necessity of collaboration, "Adapting curriculum can be difficult. When teachers collaborate, adapting could be even more successful."

**Potential Barriers.** Approximately two thirds (66%) felt that general education teachers may feel that the pull-out model is most effective. A general education teacher with twenty-three years of experience in the classroom did "not feel pull-out programs are the most effective. The team teaching approach seems the most effective" in his opinion. Over one half
(55%) noted the same potential for special educators. One teacher commented that the "resource teacher has a specific program. If something doesn't fit her program, she's very inflexible." Many (57%) perceived a potential lack of general education teacher's ability to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students with special needs. Forty-seven percent thought general education teachers may not be willing to adapt for an inclusive curriculum. One kindergarten teacher indicated a need for a special education curriculum. She also noted that "teachers need to understand it is O.K. to adapt. Everyone doesn't have to meet all the (district/state) standards." This statement refers to the ever present issue of time. Close in numbers (45%) were those who saw a potential lack of time to create/implement an adapted curriculum

Student Concerns

The stigmas and benefits associated with students involved in inclusion were addressed.

Existing Barriers. Only 10% noted the existence of general education teacher perceptions that inclusion is not beneficial for general education peers. One first grade teacher expressed her valid feelings of guilt. "I feel terribly guilty and sorry that I am not able to teach general education students as I would like to...because my energy, time, focus goes to Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder, Emotionally Impaired-acting students." A close 8% identified students' disabilities as being too severe to include in the regular education classroom.

Potential Barriers. The percentages in this column were significantly higher. A solid 64% saw student disabilities as potentially being too severe
to include in the general classroom setting. A fifth grade teacher with nineteen years of experience commented on the same issue. “I would be against inclusion if a student who demanded and/or needed all of my attention. If we are to educate the majority of students, a highly disruptive child doesn’t belong.” Most likely she was referring to students with severe behavioral or health concerns. Fifty-five percent indicated that students with disabilities could have a negative effect on the classroom environment. Exactly half of the respondents thought general education teachers might feel inclusion would not benefit general education peers.

**Respondent Comments.** This particular section received an abundance of comments. A former special education teacher noted the “pragmatic issue of a *continuum* of services (i.e., Least Restrictive Environment) to best meet all learners’ needs: regular education and special education learners.” Many respondents expressed hesitation and concern over including students with severe behavioral problems or serious health concerns. Primarily, general education teachers felt that they could not effectively meet the needs of those students without the assistance of another adult in the classroom. Another former special education teacher stated her beliefs.

“...Inclusion has to have a purpose and *clear goals* in order to be successful. Too many times, inclusion is dictated by an Individualized Education Planning Committee or a hopeful parent. While I support the concept of inclusion, I strongly feel that the district needs to develop guidelines for inclusion as well as provide the necessary support a truly effective
One resource teacher stressed that “classrooms need to be prepared with how to deal with inclusion students.” This comment speaks to a crucial component in any integration plan. Regardless of the degree of severity of a student’s disability, lack of preparation could lead to unnecessary stigmas within the general education classroom. An art teacher provided this optimistic, concluding comment.

“There is no question that emotionally volatile Emotionally Impaired students can have a negative effect on the classroom environment. I feel much less of an influence by and on Learning Disabled students. Sometimes it feels as if the special education students do not benefit, and receive some negative stigma, but I feel that general education students benefit most often by learning tolerance, respect, and caring toward others who may need our help. Each individual is unique, and valuable.”

**Open-ended Questions**

Responses to the five open-ended questions were similar to responses found in studies that conducted surveys regarding the same, or similar, issue. A summary of responses as well as sample responses for each question are provided.

**What prior experience do you have with inclusion?** Responses ranged from no experience to the inclusion of students with Down’s Syndrome, hearing impairments, behavioral problems, visual impairments
and learning disabilities. The majority indicated that students with disabilities were part of the classroom for part of the day, but there was little explanation of any collaboration with special service providers. A small number of educators noted at least one experience in which they “teamed” with a special educator. One general educator reported that the “Resource room aide helps resource room students in science by working in the general education science class.” A comment from a general educator touched on the issue of working with “many unidentified needy students!” Another addressed the same reality, “Teaching kindergarten and first (grade) is inclusion from the start as many children are not identified yet...I have always had a few students with disabilities. When the curriculum was developmentally appropriate, it was easier to accommodate than with standards.”

What, if anything, would need to change to help you be supportive of inclusion? Many educators expressed that they are supportive of the idea/practice of inclusion under specific circumstances. The wish list included (not limited to) support from parents and administration, larger classrooms, collaborative planning time and in-class support/collaboration from special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The majority of statements indicated the need for common planning time.” One educator emphasized the importance of the awareness of different learning styles. She commented, “More teachers need to use learning styles materials to lessen the number of those kids who are labeled in the first place.” Another respondent stressed the need for “regular education teachers to be adequately trained and supported-especially with an additional
If inclusion practices are happening in your building, what makes them effective? Responses varied greatly here. Among the many positive comments were flexibility of all teachers, planning time, attitude of staff and students, and the availability of services to more than just the identified student(s) within the classroom. One teacher cited that “true inclusion is not yet happening.” The lack of a consistent definition of inclusion, combined with the reality of various types of inclusion settings, makes each individual’s perception of inclusion unique. A district social worker shared his philosophy, “Folks must first have the belief that it can and will work—both general and special educators. Part of this belief is we all are responsible for all kids. Then you need tons of communication.” A general educator with twenty-three years of experience felt that effective practices included “the understanding that all students have strengths and weaknesses and must be dealt with individually.” The discrepancy in responses from one elementary indicated that the lower elementary, when fewer students are identified as having a learning disability, felt there was adequate communication/collaboration from the special educators whereas the upper elementary wanted more communication and collaboration from special service providers to make inclusion more effective for students and teachers. One teacher shared her view of collaboration; “The special education teacher and I plan, and are both accountable for the students’ learning.”

If you are currently working with students who receive pull-out special education services, do you feel inclusion would be an effective alternative? The majority of survey participants responded favorably to this question.
One resource teacher stated that the students on her caseload “miss out on too much that goes on in the regular education classroom, while they are in my room.” Another general educator commented on the “positive peer interaction” that takes place, along with “special education adaptations (that) also work for many regular education students.”

What is the biggest barrier of inclusion for you? Responses were best summed up with this statement from a fourth grade teacher, “The biggest barrier for me is not knowing whether or not I would be given the time and help needed to make it a success.” Another respondent felt inadequately prepared to meet the needs of the special education student. She felt that she would benefit from more inservice relating to inclusion. The most often cited barrier was a lack of time, specifically for collaboratively planning, to effectively maintain an inclusion program. Participants indicated the need for administrative support provided in the form of additional planning time and additional staff within the general education classroom. Comments also referred to the necessity of inservicing for all staff, not only to learn adaptive methods of teaching but to create an awareness of specific requirements for each grade level. Without additional support in the general education classroom, one teacher felt that there were “too many expectations placed upon what one individual teacher can accomplish in the context of a school day.” Respondents also indicated that class sizes were often too large to consider inclusion practices. Others noted their fear of having an emotionally disturbed child in the room and not having the ability to meet the needs of the other students. One teacher questioned the assessment of grade level standards, “My student who is in a pull-out program should not
be expected to achieve second grade standards. Do I teach him first grade standards? Do I give him a first grade report card?” In this situation, appropriate in servicing on adapting the curriculum, as well as communication with the building special educator, would be a way to address this concern.

**Summary.** Overall, participants appeared willing to be an integral part of an inclusion setting, with the provision of necessary components that would facilitate effectiveness of the specific program. The few that stated they were currently involved in some type of inclusion program indicated a need for improvement in a variety of ways (i.e., planning time, additional staff, specific training). Clearly, there are students who are very capable of learning with their peers, yet the possibilities are limited due to the array of barriers that are a reality for many school districts. Lack of district funds is often misunderstood as lack of administrator support. Lack of planning time and feelings of inadequacy can be confused with the idea that staff are unwilling to explore alternative options for students with disabilities. Exploring the potential and existing barriers is one way to generate possibilities for students with the potential to effectively learn alongside their peers.

**Conclusions**

The overall findings of this thesis will be a useful tool for all professional educators who are involved in delivering educational services to students with mild disabilities. Results will be of particular interest to those who feel that students currently receiving pull-out services could benefit from participation in the general education classroom environment for a portion
of, or the entire school day.

The process of determining how to appropriately include students in the general education classroom can be intimidating, especially when the topic has never been addressed by a staff or district. The issues/barriers addressed in this survey are an effective tool for generating discussion in preliminary meetings to prepare for inclusion settings.

As noted in the cover letter to staff, copies of survey results are available upon request. Although only one request was submitted with a participant's completed survey, two copies will be sent to each building principal to be reviewed—one copy for the principal and the other to be posted for staff perusal. The Director of Special Education will also receive two copies to share with special education staff.
References


behavioral disorders and learning disabilities. Behavioral Disorders, 17 (4), 305-315.


2/24/98

Dear Colleague,

We are currently completing our final class for our Master's degrees in special education at Grand Valley State University. We are working on our final thesis project together. The focus of our project is to determine the existing and potential barriers to inclusion at the elementary level within the Kenowa Hills school district. We would appreciate your insight pertaining to this topic.

Your participation in completing the enclosed survey is solicited, but is strictly voluntary. Please be assured that confidentiality will be maintained. The results will be compiled and made available upon request.

We realize this is one more task for busy educators to do. We want to assure you that the information you will share is highly valued and the results will be important in our district. Also, we included a new pencil for you to use and M & M's to enjoy while you're completing the survey!

We would like to personally thank you in advance for your time and thoughts as your input helps us complete our project. Please return the completed survey to Julie or Sara at Walker Station by Friday, MARCH 13. Also, feel free to call one of us with any questions or comments (453-5330).

Thanks again,

Julie Lensink (ext. 248)

Sara Sposaro (ext. 239)
Appendix B

Survey
Inclusion Survey

Name:________________________ (optional)
School:________________________ (optional)

Current position (check one): _____ Special education teacher
_____ General education teacher
_____ Building principal

Grade level: _______
Number of students in your room: _______
Number of certified special education students in your room: _______
   How many are: _____LD _____SPL _____other:___________
   _____EI _____MI

Personal Information:

Number of years teaching: _______
Number of undergraduate special education classes: _______
Number of graduate special education classes: _______
Number of special education related inservices/seminars: _______
   Name of activity(ies): __________________________________________

Certification/endorsements (check all that apply):
   elementary _____ List any other:
   learning disabilities _____
   mental impairments _____
   emotional impairments _____

Note: The term inclusion, in this survey, is defined as a situation in which students with mild disabilities receive academic instruction within the general classroom setting for the entire or a substantial portion of the school day. Listed are many barriers or constraints that may be preventing you from participating in inclusion situations.
Please check the “Existing Barrier” column if you feel the statement is a currently a barrier, “Potential Barrier” if it could be a barrier, or “Not a Barrier” if the statement does not apply. Also, feel free to comment after each section.

### Support

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**Comments:**

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### Teacher Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Barrier</th>
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**Comments:**

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Time/Classroom Issues

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<td>*General education class sizes are too large</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Lack of appropriate, adaptive materials</td>
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Comments:

Curriculum/Collaboration

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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>*Lack of special education teachers’ ability to adapt curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Lack of time to create/implement adapted curriculum</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>*Lack of special education teachers’ ability to collaborate</td>
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<td>*General education teachers are not willing to adapt for inclusive curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Special education teachers are not willing to adapt for inclusive curriculum</td>
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</table>
*General education teachers don’t feel responsible to include students with disabilities

*General education teachers feel pull-out programs are most effective

*Special education teachers feel pull-out programs are most effective

Comments:

*********************************************************************************************************************************************

**Student Concerns**

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*General education teachers feel inclusion does not benefit general education peers

*Special education teachers feel inclusion does not benefit special education peers

*General education teachers feel students included receive negative stigma

*Special education teachers feel students included receive negative stigma

*Students with disabilities have a negative effect on the classroom environment

*Students’ disabilities are too severe to include in general education

Comments:
Open-ended Questions

*What prior experience do you have with inclusion?

*What, if anything, would need to change to help you be supportive of inclusion?

*If inclusion practices are happening in your building, what makes them effective?

*If you are currently working with students who receive pull-out special education services, do you feel inclusion would be an effective alternative?

*What is the biggest barrier of inclusion for you? Please explain how you feel about the topic.
Appendix C

Reminder
To: Staff  
From: Sara Sposaro and Julie Lensink  
Re: Inclusion Survey  
Date: March 11

Just a quick reminder to mail your survey by Friday, March 13. We realize that you were only given a week to complete it, however, we hope that it is one less thing for you to think about over the weekend. Thanks again for participating!
Table 1

**Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Existing Barrier</th>
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<td>Lack of building principal support</td>
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<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of general education teacher support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of support from:</td>
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<tr>
<td>-SPL (speech)</td>
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<td>-OT (occupational therapy)</td>
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<td>-TC (teacher consultant)</td>
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<td>-Other</td>
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<td>Lack of paraprofessional support</td>
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<td>Lack of parent support</td>
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<td>Lack of overall building support</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
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</table>

(Note: all totals are reported as percentages.)
Table 2
Teacher Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Table 3

Time/Classroom Issues

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate planning time between general/special education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of time due to instruction responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of time due to non-instruction responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>General education teachers are unwilling to take time to: plan, participate in IEPC, communicate with parents, learn specific strategies</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special education teachers are unwilling to take time to: plan, participate in IEPC, communicate with parents, learn specific strategies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty in coordinating schedules</td>
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<td>General education class sizes are too large</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate adaptive materials</td>
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### Table 4

**Curriculum/Collaboration Issues**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of general education teachers' ability to adapt curriculum</td>
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<td>33</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lack of special education teachers' ability to adapt curriculum</td>
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<td>Special education teachers feel pull-out programs are most effective</td>
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(Note: all totals are reported as percentages.)
Table 5

Student Concerns

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<tr>
<td>Students’ disabilities are too severe to include in general education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
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(Note: all totals are reported as percentages.)
ABSTRACT: Two to three sentences that describe the contents of your paper.

The purpose of this study was to survey one district's general and special educators and administrators to identify existing and potential barriers to inclusion. The results of the survey determined what support, modification, and training was needed to motivate educators to participate in inclusion practices.