4-23-1996

Regular and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion

Michelle L. Burton
Longwood University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.longwood.edu/etd
Part of the Special Education and Teaching Commons

Recommended Citation
Burton, Michelle L., "Regular and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion" (1996). Theses, Dissertations & Honors Papers. Paper 244.
Regular and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion
Michelle L. Burton

This thesis was approved by:
Dr. Patty Whitfield (Chair): [Signature]
Dr. Ruth Meese: [Signature]
Dr. Jennifer Apperson: [Signature]
Dr. Stephen Keith: [Signature]
Date of Approval: April 23, 1996

Running head: INCLUSION
Abstract

Inclusion is one of the most controversial issues facing education today. With the passing of P.L. 94-142, all children were guaranteed the right to a free and appropriate education. The major concern is whether or not the regular education classroom is appropriate for all children.

The purpose of this study was to survey regular and special education teachers regarding inclusion. One-hundred ninety-five regular and special education teachers in the state of Virginia completed a survey assessing their perceptions of inclusion. The results showed a significant difference between regular and special education teachers' outlook on inclusion. Implications of the results are discussed.
INCLUSION 3

Acknowledgements

To the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Patty Whitfield; Dr. Ruth Meese; Dr. Jennifer Apperson; and Dr. Stephen Keith, thank you for all of your infinite knowledge and support.

Thanks to all of the school systems and teachers that took the time to fill out my survey.

Julie, thank you for listening and keeping me sane.

Jon Betty, thank you for all you’ve done for me and taking care of my family while I was away. Aunt Betty and Uncle Donald, thank you for supporting me through my college years. Mom and Dad Gilbert, thank you for the relaxing weekends and home cooked meals. Kelley, thanks for all the chicken soup.

Scott, my wonderful boyfriend. Thank you for always believing in me and giving me the strength to keep going. I made it through this year because of you and your constant faith in me. You’re wonderful and I love you!!

Denise, You are my inspiration! Your caring smile, your excited eyes, and your never ending "ma" kept me going. You will always be my star student. I love you!

Last but not least, Mom. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to go to college and supporting me through it all. I am forever grateful for the most important gift you’ve given me - life. Thanks for being my best friend and #1 fan. I love you!
# Table of Contents

List of Appendices by Title ......................................... 6
List of Tables by Title ............................................. 7
List of Figures by Title ............................................. 8
Literature Review .................................................... 9
  Litigation ......................................................... 9
  Legislation ...................................................... 14
  Regular Education Initiative ................................. 18
  Inclusion ........................................................ 20
  Statement of Purpose ........................................... 27
Methodology .......................................................... 29
  Subjects .......................................................... 29
  Instrument ....................................................... 29
  Procedure ....................................................... 30
  Data Analysis ................................................... 31
Results .............................................................. 32
  Demographic Information ...................................... 32
  Instrument ....................................................... 33
Discussion .......................................................... 38
  Limitations of Study ........................................... 39
  Future Research Suggestions ................................. 41
References ........................................................... 42
Appendices .......................................................... 54
Tables ........................................................................ 66
Figures ...................................................................... 69
List of Appendices by Title

Appendix A: Letter to the Superintendent
Appendix B: Letter to the Principal
Appendix C: Letter to the Teachers (Cover Letter)
Appendix D: Regular Education Teachers' Survey
Appendix E: Special Education Teachers' Survey
List of Tables by Title

Table 1: Analysis of Variance for Regular and Special Education

Table 2: Means for Regular and Special Education
List of Figures by Title

Figure 1: Grade Level

Figure 2: Number of Years Teaching
Inclusion 8

Regular and Special Education Teachers’ Perceptions on Inclusion

One of the most controversial issues facing special education today is the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classrooms. Presently, inclusion has caused heated debates and extensive research (Hallahan, Kauffman, Lloyd, & McKinney, 1988; Lloyd, Repp, & Singh, 1991).

Litigation

Litigation has played a major role in the development of services to students with disabilities. For the past several decades, litigation has helped revolutionize the way students with disabilities are served in the public schools (Prasse, 1986). Important litigation has focused on many issues in special education, which include "(1) the right to education for students with disabilities; (2) nonbiased assessment for students; (3) procedural safeguards for students with disabilities; (4) the right to an extended school year at public expense for some students; (5) related services for students; and (6) the interpretation by the United States Supreme Court of the intent of Congress in P.L. 94-142" (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 1995, p.19; Prasse, 1986; Prasse & Reschly, 1986; Smith, 1990; Turnbull, 1986). Numerous famous court cases have helped form the special education services currently being provided.
In 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson established the "separate but equal" principle. This case stated that the constitution requires equal treatment of the races. This could be obtained by providing equal, but separate, educational facilities (Zirkel & Richardson, 1988).

However, in 1954, the Supreme Court overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine under Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. The major issue was that "separate but equal" facilities were unconstitutional violating the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which guarantees that all students receive equal protection of the laws. After Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the Fourteenth Amendment required that racially segregated public schools be declared unconstitutional (Zirkel & Richardson, 1988). As a result of this case, schools were desegregated. This case had a great impact on special education even though it did not focus on individuals with disabilities (Smith et al, 1995).

During the 1970s, many groups were advocating the improvement of education for students with disabilities. Beginning with the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania, 1971, the federal courts brought the Due Process and Equal Protection guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment into the field of special education (Hudgins & Vacca, 1979). Pennsylvania, along with other states, kept children out of public schools if they were
diagnosed as "uneducable and untrainable" (Fischer, Schimmel, & Kelly, 1981). PARC claimed that the state constitution guaranteed education for all children, yet they excluded children with mental retardation. As a result of this case, children with mental retardation were able to receive an appropriate, public education with special classes taught by qualified teachers. Special Education also provided instruction whenever possible in the regular education classroom to those students with mental retardation (Fischer, Schimmel, & Kelly, 1981; Smith et al, 1995).

In 1972, around the same time as the PARC case, Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia was filed in Washington, D.C. This court case required a hearing before children who had been labeled as having behavioral problems, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or hyperactivity could be suspended or expelled from schools. This landmark case also proved that no school district could deny supported education for "exceptional" children because of insufficient funds. All children should receive an appropriate education and funding, even if that requires using other funds, such as supply or field trip money (Alexander & Alexander, 1992). This ruling has set a precedent in cases where restricted financial resources were the reason for limited special education services for any child with a disability.
In Rowley v. Hendrick Hudson District Board of Education, 1982, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Rowley, a deaf child, did not need an interpreter with her throughout the school day. The school district claimed that the interpreter was not necessary because Rowley was doing well. The court stated that the interpreter was required to "maximize" the student’s academic achievement (Smith, 1990). As a result of this case, every school was required to make a free, appropriate, public education accessible to students with disabilities (Alexander & Alexander, 1992; Smith et all, 1995).

During 1989, Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education ruled on the least restrictive environment (LRE) of a child. Daniel was a six year-old boy with mental retardation and speech impairment. Daniel was enrolled in an early childhood program for children with special needs. However, Daniel’s parents wanted Daniel in a regular education pre-kindergarten class with nondisabled peers. The regular education teacher and aide devoted most of their time to Daniel; therefore, neglecting the rest of the class. At the end of the year, a committee concluded that regular education pre-kindergarten was inappropriate for Daniel. His parents filed suit, and the Circuit Court ruled that Daniel’s presence in the regular education pre-kindergarten classes was unfair to the rest of the class. The court agreed that extra attention is needed for students with
disabilities; however, it should not be at the expense of the entire class (Underwood & Mead, 1995) As a result of this case, the LRE for Daniel was in the special education classroom.

Many cases have been heard by the courts in the past decades that relate directly to special education. Well-known cases include Armstrong v. Kline, 1979, which ruled some children with disabilities may need extended or summer programming to prevent regression; Honig v. Doe, 1988, which stated a student could not be expelled from school if the inappropriate behavior is directly related to the disability; and Larry P. v. Riles, 1981, which required schools to retest every African-American student in an educable mentally retarded (EMR) class (Smith, 1990). Many cases pertaining to special education have set precedents for the way professionals perceive and teach special education students.

One of the most recent cases, Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon, 1992, has changed special education and the principle of the LRE. In 1992, a district court in New Jersey ordered a plenary hearing to be held to determine whether a seven year old boy with mental retardation could be educated in the regular education classroom. The parents of Oberti wanted the child to be educated in the regular education classroom. They claimed that the LRE is in the regular education class. However,
administrators believed the self-contained special education class to be more feasible for the child (LRP Publications, 1992). In 1993, the Third Circuit court upheld the district court's ruling calling for full inclusion of the child in the regular education classroom with supplementary aids and services (LRP Publications, 1993). This case had a tremendous impact on special and regular education as a whole.

Legislation

One of the most important factors responsible for the beginning of inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom is legislation. A majority of the time, legislation came into effect because of litigation (Smith et al, 1995). The most important legislation for students with disabilities in the education setting was Public Law (PL) 94-142. However, before PL 94-142 came into effect, many other public laws paved the way. According to Smith et al (1995), in 1954, PL 83-531 was the first legislation focusing on individuals with mental retardation. This public law provided the initial funds for starting the research concerning persons with mental retardation. Public Law 89-10 (1964) and PL 89-313 (1965) allocated funds to the education and hospital settings for students with disabilities. This was the first legislation that distributed money to schools, hospitals, and institutions which provided services for students with a
disability. In 1969, Public Law 91-230 focused on learning disabilities as a true disability. It not only considered individuals with mental retardation but individuals with a learning disability to be reviewed for services. PL 92-424, in 1972, required 10% of the funds from Head Start to go to individuals with disabilities because many students with disabilities are in the Head Start program.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandated that services be provided to individuals with disabilities similar to providing needed services for students without a disability (Roberts & Mather, 1995). In other words, no federally funded organization can discriminate against an individual because he or she has a disability. Another public law, PL 93-380, is considered the "forerunner" of PL 94-142. PL 93-380, 1973, required that specialty services be provided in educational settings for those with disabilities.

In 1975, PL 94-142 (also known as Education of All Handicapped Children Act or EHA) required that a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) and related services be provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and that an individualized education plan (IEP) be written for each student (Hasazi, Johnston, Liggett, & Schattman, 1994; Roberts & Mather, 1995; Shanker, 1994; Smith et al, 1995). According to Smith et al (1995), many issues were addressed under PL 94-142, which include LRE, IEP, FAPE, related
services, due process rights, due process hearings, and nondiscriminatory assessment. This public law started many debates on the guidelines of the LRE.

In 1990, Congress renamed PL 94-142, or EHA the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA expands the definition of disabilities and also includes traumatic brain injury and autism. IDEA also adds new related services to include therapeutic recreation, assistive technology, rehabilitation counseling, and social work services (Shanker, 1994). According to Osborne and Dimattia (1994), a majority of court decisions on the LRE stated that mainstreaming was not mandatory for all students with disabilities; however, special education must be provided, if appropriate. Congress, in 1994, began considering new recommendations for IDEA. Its plan contained a provision that would incorporate the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom.

Traditionally, students with disabilities have been placed in special education classrooms with specialized teachers. These settings include self-contained, special classes, or resource rooms (Smith et al, 1995). Deno (1970) proposed a model that provided special education students with many options on where they could be educated in their LRE. This model is called the continuum of services, and it is still being used today. Under the model, seven options
of special education services are described, which include (1) the regular classroom, (2) regular class with consulting services for regular class teacher, (3) regular class with supportive instructional services, (4) part-time regular class and part-time special class, (5) full-time special class, (6) special day school, and (7) full-time residential school. This model is shaped in the form of a triangle. The broad or bottom part of the triangle is the regular education classroom. This represents the LRE in which a child can be placed.

At the top of the triangle is the full-time residential school because that kind of school is a very specialized type of education where a child with disabilities would go if they had difficulty in the public schools. Usually the less severe disabilities are towards the bottom of the triangle. This is because students with less severe disabilities tend to function in the regular education setting. The more severe disabilities are focused more towards the top of the triangle because the more severe the disabilities, the more specialized attention the student needs. The major goal of special education is to return the student to a less restrictive environment as soon as possible. If the regular education classroom is where a child with disabilities can best be taught those skills he needs, then that is where that child should be. Every child should be in his or her own LRE. A child with disabilities
should only move towards the more restrictive environment as far as necessary.

**Regular Education Initiative**

Some professionals are not satisfied with the current continuum in special education (Davis, 1989). In the 1980s, the regular education initiative (REI) was introduced because many professionals started to question the purpose for continuing both regular and special education separately (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986). Numerous definitions exist of the REI. According to Hinders (1995), the REI is "a concept proposing that individuals needing referral for special education services and individuals currently receiving special education services be educated within regular education classrooms" (p. 200). Most professionals and researchers describe the REI as a merger of regular education and special education (Davis, 1989; Gersten & Woodward, 1990; Reynolds, 1989).

The REI is known to have been started by Madeleine Will (1986), the former Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, in a speech made in 1985 (Coates, 1989; Jenkins, Pious, & Jewell, 1990; Lerner, 1987; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991; Wang & Walberg, 1988). In her article, "Educating Students with Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility," Will cited some problems with the current system of special education. She
believed that the pull-out approach had failed to meet the needs of students with disabilities. She also argued that the pull-out program "stigmatized" students with disabilities, which resulted in negative self-esteem. Will believed that special education may lower expectations and focus on the students' failure rather than the students' successes. The last argument Will stated was that many students go unassessed; therefore, they never receive special education services. Will proposed several solutions for all of these problems. In her opinion, including all students in the regular education classroom would improve self-esteem and academic learning.

Many issues exist within the REI. Numerous researchers and professors agree with Madeleine Will. They believe that the REI can have positive outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Most supporters of the REI argue that the regular education setting is effective and appropriate for all students (Edgar, 1987; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984).

Along with many advocates of the REI, there are just as many opponents (Gerber, 1988; Hallahan, Keller, McKinney, Lloyd, & Bryan, 1988; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Keogh, 1988; Mesinger, 1985). The main argument against the REI is that it is not appropriate for all students. These "opponents" of the REI are not for excluding students with disabilities from the regular education classroom; however,
if the child is not in his or her LRE, then the regular education class is doing him or her more harm than good.

Inclusion

The term REI has evolved into a concept called inclusion. The REI and inclusion are the same concept; however, the REI was introduced in the 1980s and inclusion was introduced in the 1990s.

No universal definition of inclusion is defined. Many people tend to refer to inclusion as mainstreaming (Salisbury, 1991) or integrating students into the regular education classroom (Banerji & Dailey, 1995; News Digest, 1995). All three concepts are similar, yet quite unique.

Mainstreaming, integration, and inclusion are the belief that all children can and should be educated in the regular education classroom. The difference between the three is the duration in the classroom. According to Nichcy (National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth) (1995), mainstreaming is the "practice of providing a student with disabilities some of his or her education in a general education classroom" (p. 3). This implies that the student with disabilities receives part, but often the majority, of his or her education in a self-contained special education classroom. Integration can mean either mainstreaming or inclusion. However, integration can mean providing some or all of his or her education in the regular education setting. Inclusion, on the other hand, is "the
practice of providing a child with disabilities his or her education within the general education classroom, with the supports and accommodations needed by that student" (Nichcy, 1995, p. 3). In order to be considered inclusion, a child must also receive this education in his or her neighborhood school, which is where a child would normally attend if he or she did not have the disability.

Inclusion is divided into two separate ideas, full inclusion and partial inclusion. Full inclusion is educating all students, with or without disabilities, in regular education classrooms, no matter how severe the disability or how intensive the services they need (Schrag & Burnette, 1994). This is quite different from partial inclusion, which is also known as mainstreaming. Partial inclusion is educating students with disabilities in the regular education setting for some portion of the day. The remaining time would be spent receiving instruction in a special education classroom.

According to Sailor (1991), a school system must have six characteristics in order to have a full inclusion program. First, all students must attend their regular neighborhood school. Second, each school site must have an average number of students with disabilities. Third, no student can be rejected from the regular education setting because of a disability. Fourth, no self-contained special education classes should be allowed, and the regular
education classrooms must be age and grade appropriate for each student. Fifth, cooperative learning and peer instruction must occur in each classroom. Lastly, special education services must be provided within the general education classroom.

Inclusion is very controversial. Many people are for full inclusion (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Sapon-Shevin, 1995; Snell, 1991; Stainback & Stainback, 1987; Wang, Peverly, & Randolph, 1984) and many people are against full inclusion (Braaten, Kauffman, Braaten, Polgrove, & Nelson, 1988; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Keough, 1988).

Many advantages and disadvantages of inclusion exist. One of the most prominent advantages of inclusion is the positive interaction between students with disabilities and students without disabilities (Beck, Broers, Hogue, Shipstead, & Knowlton, 1994; Clark, 1994; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992; Putnam, Spiegel, & Bruininks, 1995). Some other advantages of inclusion are increased levels of self-esteem; elimination of misidentification and eligibility of students; closer interaction between school personnel and all students; destruction of the current dual education system; and no more removal of special education students from the regular education classroom (Smith et al, 1995).

Along with many advantages, numerous disadvantages exist. The reasons for opposing inclusion include: general
educators' limited knowledge about inclusion, resulting, therefore, in limited support; general and special education teachers' lack of collaboration skills; limited empirical data to support inclusion; and the limited education of nondisabled students because of the placement of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Current teacher training and licensure are based on the dual education system. In addition, some students learn better in special education classes taught by special education teachers (Smith et al, 1995).

Many professionals disagree with the multitude of issues surrounding the concept of inclusion. According to Marti Snell (1995), however, several areas of agreement exist between professionals who are for and against inclusion, which are as follows: 1) education should be appropriate and individualized; 2) learning should occur; 3) learning social skills and relationships are important; 4) teachers and staff should collaborate together; 5) inclusion is not determined by one's label; 6) student and parent references are important; and 7) IDEA is implemented. Even though professionals are divided on where they stand with inclusion, several key concepts exist on which they agree.

The areas of agreement are a common ground for those who accept and reject inclusion. If inclusion is going to work, then the responsibilities of different professionals must change. The role of the special education teacher
would become much more integrated within the school. Instead of teaching only special education students with special education services, the special education teachers would work more closely with the regular classroom teacher. The special education teacher would not only be a teacher to those with disabilities, but to an entire class in the inclusive model.

The role of the regular education classroom teacher changes dramatically with inclusion. With the inclusive model, the regular education classroom teacher is responsible for the students with disabilities as well as those without disabilities. The regular education teacher is accountable for teaching all students in the class. The regular education teacher also becomes a collaborating or co-teaching teacher with the special education staff (Smith et al, 1995). In other words, the regular education and special education teacher become collaborators, teaching the same students all at once.

Several studies have been conducted on the effects of inclusion. Many researchers believe that inclusion has had a positive effect on students with disabilities (Berres & Knoblock, 1987; Brinker & Thorpe, 1984; Guralnick & Groom, 1988; McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumann, Haager, & Lee; 1993). Numerous studies have involved students with mild to moderate disabilities or learning disabilities (Wang & Peverly, 1987; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986,1988). These
studies have shown that students with mild to moderate disabilities or learning disabilities are successful in the regular education classroom. The students with disabilities engaged in social interaction with nondisabled peers more than in the specialized classroom with other students with disabilities (Guralnick & Groom, 1988).

More recently, a number of studies have dealt with the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in the general education classrooms (Faught, Balleweg, Crow, & van den Pol, 1983; Giangreco & Putnam, 1990; Hanline, 1993; Sasso, Simpson, & Novak, 1985). This is the area of special education where professionals for and against inclusion have the most debate. Some feel that students with severe disabilities should be included in the regular education classroom (Biklen & Knoll, 1986; Danielson & Bellamy, 1989; Karasoff & Kelly, 1988; Thousand & Villa, 1989; Wisniewski & Alper, 1994). However, other professionals feel that those students with severe disabilities should be placed in special education classrooms (Brown, Branston-McClean, Baumgart, Vincent, Falvey, & Schroeder, 1979; Faught et al, 1983).

Along with many research articles and studies, many personal stories have been written by individuals who have experienced and who support inclusion (Fann, 1995; Rankin, Hallick, Ban, Hartley, Bost, & Ugglia, 1994; Vaughn, 1993). Fann (1988), a third grade teacher, tells her personal
experience of a girl named Molly, who was deaf. Molly was included in the regular education classroom with support services from her interpreter. There were many challenges that Fann had to overcome. She had to learn sign language, collaborate with Molly’s interpreter, and keep a daily rapport with Molly’s parent. However, after all of the struggle and hard work, Fann believes whole-heartedly in the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Although some authors favor inclusion (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Koleski & Jackson, 1993; Vitello, 1994; York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heisi-Neff, & Caughey, 1992), some authors do not support inclusion. Shanker (1994) stated that full inclusion is neither free nor appropriate. He believes that "full inclusion is replacing one injustice with another" (p. 19). Also, according to Fuchs and Fuchs (1994), sometimes separate is better. They stated that several children with mental retardation do not benefit from instruction in the regular education classroom. Therefore, a comprise must be reached. Do we consider the student’s social needs, or do we concentrate on his educational needs? This is a question that Fuchs and Fuchs raised in their article.

Carr (1993) is a mother of a child with a learning disability. She is totally against inclusion. She recalled night after night helping her son with his homework and the
son becoming so frustrated because he did not understand his work. Her son was placed in a resource room, which did not meet his needs. He was then placed in a special education self-contained classroom and was taught by special education teachers. Carr believed it was the special education teachers and their ways to modify assignments which got her son through school. She thinks that if inclusion can benefit some students, then do it. However, she believes that the individual attention that her son received in the special education classroom was exactly what he needed. Therefore, she disagrees with the idea that all students regardless of the disability should be educated in the regular education classroom.

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) conducted interviews to gain the opinions of general and special education teachers and administrators on inclusion. Fifty-three teachers and administrators from five Virginia school districts were interviewed on the inclusion of students with moderate to severe disabilities into the regular education class. The interviews revealed initial reactions to inclusion, as well as the teachers' and administrators' current perceptions of inclusion. The interviews showed the teachers' beliefs of successful inclusion and advice on how to achieve it.

A second study by Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993) described the experiences of
regular education teachers who had students with disabilities in their classes. Nineteen regular education teachers, kindergarten through 9th grade, filled out questionnaires and were interviewed on their experiences of inclusion. The results indicated that the initial reaction to the placement of a child with disabilities into the regular education classroom was negative. After being exposed to inclusion, seventeen teachers described the experience as positive and benefitting to the students with disabilities, their classmates, and even the teachers themselves. This study also revealed what support services they found helpful and which services the teachers found not helpful.

Many studies have been conducted on the perceptions of regular education teachers (Coates, 1989; Giangreco et al, 1993; Hoover, 1986; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordan, & Rothelin; 1994; Wilczenski, 1992). In the past, regular education teachers' attitudes and beliefs have been surveyed (Schumm, Vaughn, Gordan, & Rothlein, 1994; Wilczenski, 1992). For example, a Colorado school district's teaching staff, classroom aides, building principals, and selected administrators were surveyed on their beliefs regarding inclusion (Pearman, Barnhart, Huang, & Mellblom, 1994).

The primary purpose of this research, therefore, was to examine regular education and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion. This study investigated the
differences and similarities of the regular education and special education teachers' view of inclusion. The perceptions of regular education teachers should provide important information on how inclusion can work in the classrooms.
Method

Subjects

For this study, a random sample of 10% of Virginia public school divisions was selected from the 1994-95 Virginia Educational Directory. A total of thirty-three school divisions were invited to participate. The subjects were regular and special education teachers from the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Instrument

A survey questionnaire was designed for this study. The survey contained 24 questions regarding both regular and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion. Part I of the survey obtained demographic information, such as whether the participants were male or female and number of years teaching. Regular and special education teachers were given different surveys, with parallel questions. In Part I, some of the items asked special education teachers whether they teach under a self-contained, resource, or monitor and consult model and if they have any students who are mainstreamed into the regular education classrooms. Regular education teachers were asked if their students with disabilities attended special education classes and what percent of time the students with disabilities spend in the regular education classroom. Part II addressed how regular and special education teachers feel about inclusion and some issues that go along with the inclusion of students.
with disabilities in the regular education classroom. For example, teachers were asked to agree or disagree with whether or not inclusion is the best way to meet a child's needs and if students with disabilities benefit socially from the regular education classroom. Part II was the same for both surveys except for number 22. Regular education teachers were asked whether or not they felt special education teachers were willing to teach students with disabilities in the regular education classroom and special education teachers were asked their opinions on whether or not regular education teachers were willing to have students with disabilities in their classroom. In Part II, the teachers were asked to respond to the 11 items using a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Procedure

Letters were sent to all of the superintendents of each school division selected asking permission to conduct this research in their school system (See Appendix A). The researcher was notified by mail or phone regarding the participation of each school division. After obtaining permission from the school division, survey packets were mailed out to the principals or the director of special education with a letter to the principal describing the purpose of the research (See Appendix B). The packets contained the surveys to regular education and special
education teachers, a cover letter describing the nature of the survey, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The cover letter also stated that the survey was strictly voluntary and confidential (See Appendix C). Subjects were asked to return the survey by 10 days from the date received. After approximately 4 weeks from the date of mailing, each of the school divisions or individual schools who had not responded were contacted by phone and asked to return the surveys.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used to report the demographic information given by the respondents. The researcher used a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean ratings of regular and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion. A significance level of .05 was used. A Chi-Square was then calculated on every statement on Part II of the inclusion survey between total respondents and the number of years teaching experience. A Chi-Square was also calculated on every item on Part II between the total respondents and the grade level in which they taught.
Results

Demographic Information

Of the 665 surveys that were sent out to school division staff, 310 (47%) were returned. However, 115 of those responses could not be included due to excessive missing data or the survey not being completed. The total sample was 195, which consisted of 113 (58%) regular education teachers and 82 (42%) special education teachers. The survey respondents included 31 (16%) males and 164 (84%) females. Fifty-one regular education teachers (45%) indicated that they taught at the elementary (K-5) level, 37 (33%) taught at the middle school (6-8) level, and 25 (22%) taught at the high school (9-12) level. Thirty-five special education teachers (43%) said that they taught at the elementary level, 28 (34%) taught at the middle school level, and 19 (23%) taught at the high school level (See Figure 1).

The total years of experience were broken down into 5 categories: 0-5 years; 6-10 years; 11-15 years; 16-20 years; and 21+ years. Of the regular education teachers, 28 (25%) teachers had taught for 0-5 years; 17 (15%) teachers had taught for 6-10 years; 15 (13%) had taught for 11-15 years; 29 (26%) had taught for 16-20 years; and 24 (21%) had taught for 21 or more years. Among the special education teachers, 28 (34%) had taught for 0-5 years; 18 (22%) had taught for 6-10 years; 16 (20%) had taught for 11-15 years; 14 (17%)
had taught for 16-20 years and 6 (7%) had taught for more than 21 years (See Figure 2). Forty-eight (25%) of the respondents were from urban areas and 147 (75%) were from rural areas of Virginia.

Instrument

On Part II of the inclusion survey, subjects’ responses were summed to form a single index of the perceptions of inclusion. Each of the 11 items had a potential total of 4 points making the range on Part II of 11-44 points. A score of 11 indicated that the subject was against inclusion. A score of 44 indicated that the subject was supportive of inclusion. Some items in Part II were stated in the negative; therefore, the scoring had to be adjusted by reversing the point values of the responses from strongly disagree equalling 1 and strongly agree equalling 4 to strongly disagree equalling 4 and strongly agree equalling 1. The mean score on Part II for regular education teachers was 30.10. The mean score on Part II for special education teachers was 31.35 (See Table 1). The range on Part II for regular education teachers on the Likert scale was 16-42. The range for special education teachers was 18-39. The standard deviation for regular education teachers was 4.1640, while the special education teachers obtained a standard deviation of 4.0685. The standard error of regular education teachers perceptions was .3917, and special education teachers had .4493 for their standard error. (See
The researcher used a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean scores of regular and special education teachers on Part II of the inclusion survey. A significant difference was found between regular and special education teachers' perceptions regarding inclusion (F = .0370, p > .05) (See Table 1).

On every item in Part II of the survey, a Pearson Chi-Square test was calculated between regular education and special education teachers to determine if they differed significantly on their perceptions of inclusion. A Chi-Square was also calculated between regular and special education teachers combined and the number of years teaching. A third Chi-Square was calculated between the combination of regular and special education teachers and the grade level in which they taught. Each item was examined individually with the total of regular and special education teachers by the number of years teaching and grade level. Differences between regular and special education teachers' perceptions were found in items 17, 18, and 21-24 (See Appendices D & E).

Items 17 and 18 dealt with students with disabilities being socially accepted in the regular education classroom. The significance between regular and special education teacher's was at the .05 level for item 17; however, item 18 had a significance level at .01. Item 21 stated, "Non disabled peers suffer from having a child with disabilities
in the regular education classroom." Item 22 was different for regular and special education teachers. On the regular education survey, Item 22 asked for the regular education teachers' perception on whether or not special education teachers are willing to have students with disabilities in their classroom. The special education survey asked the special education teachers' perceptions on whether or not regular education teachers are willing to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Item 23 addressed both regular and special education teachers and stated, "I do not feel prepared to teach children with disabilities in the regular education classroom." Item 24 asked both teachers if they were willing to work together to make inclusion work. Items 21-24 had differences at the .01 level of significance, and items 22 and 23 had differences of at the .001 level.

Every respondent was given a classification on the number of years they had been teaching: (1) 0-5 years, (2) 6-10 years, (3) 11-15 years, (4) 16-20 years, and (5) 21+ years. Overall, no significant difference was found between regular and special education teachers combined and the number of years teaching. However, a significant difference was found on two individual questions. Items 18 and 22 showed a significant difference at the .05 level between regular and special education and the number of years teaching. Item 18 stated, "Students with disabilities do
benefit socially from the regular education classroom." Item 22 compared the difference between regular and special education teachers on their willingness to have students with disabilities in their classroom.

A Chi-Square was also computed on Part II of the inclusion survey between the total number of regular and special education teachers and the grade level that they taught. A classification of 1 (elementary), 2 (middle), and 3 (high) was given for every respondent. No significant difference was found overall; however, statement 19 had a significant difference for both regular and special education teachers at the .05 level. This statement read, "Students with disabilities do not benefit academically from the regular education classroom."

Ninety-two percent of the both regular and special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that not all students with disabilities can be included in the regular education classroom. Sixty-four percent of regular education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they did not feel prepared to teach children with disabilities in the regular education classroom. However, 98% of both regular and special education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to work with the regular and special education teachers as much as possible to make inclusion work.
No "comments" section was included on the survey; however, many regular and special education teachers justified their answers and made several notes pertaining to how they feel towards inclusion. Item 20 states that inclusion is the best way to meet a child's needs. Many teachers answered the statement but then wrote, "It depends on the child." That statement or ones similar to it were found in over 50% of all surveys that were returned.

Overall, a significant difference was found between the perceptions of regular and special education teachers on inclusion. However, no significant difference was found on Part II of the inclusion survey when the combination of regular and special education teachers and the number of years teaching or the grade level in which they taught were considered.
Discussion

The results of this study showed that a significant difference exist in the perceptions of regular and special education teachers toward inclusion. This information is important because, in order for inclusion to be successful, teachers must first work together. This study was consistent with other studies in that regular and special education teachers differ on whether inclusion is the best way to meet a student's needs. Special education teachers, however, are more willing than regular education teachers to collaborate and team teach with each other to benefit the student.

This study and other studies found regular education teachers were limited in their knowledge of teaching students with disabilities (Kauffman et al., 1988; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). Sixty-four percent of regular education teachers responded that they did not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities. Even though 64% of regular education teachers did not feel comfortable teaching students with disabilities, it is encouraging that 98% of regular and special education teachers said they were willing to work with each other to make inclusion work. Although regular education teachers lack experience and knowledge of students with disabilities, they are willing to work toward inclusion for the benefit of the student. If regular and special education teachers are at least willing
to work together, then inclusion has a chance of working and becoming successful.

The results of this study differed from previous studies in several ways. A study conducted Pearman, Barnhart, Huang, and Mellblom (1992), found a significant difference in the attitudes of regular and special education teachers and the grade level in which they taught. However, in this study, teachers of different grade levels did not differ in their perceptions on inclusion. One reason for this might be elementary regular education teachers may be more willing to include students with disabilities in their classroom than high school teachers because elementary teachers are more flexible due to the structure of their curriculum. For this reason, high school teachers might not be as open to inclusion as elementary school teachers.

Limitations of study

A few limitations must be noted in this study. One limitation was that many surveys had to be discarded because teachers did not fill in the back portion of the survey. The cover letter did not specify to fill out both the front and back of the survey nor was there any indication on the survey that there was more to complete on the back.

Another limitation was to whom the surveys were sent. In some school divisions the director of special education or superintendent distributed the surveys. In other school
divisions the surveys were sent directly to the school principal or to the person in charge of research. Each school division had a designated person to whom the survey packets were sent. This created a problem in self-addressed envelopes because more than one had to be sent to some school divisions and not to other divisions. This also could have an affect on how the teachers completed the survey. In some school divisions, the teachers had to return the surveys to their principal or director of special education; therefore, they might not have been absolutely truthful in completing the survey. If the teachers had been told that no one would see the survey, except the researcher, then they might have answered differently.

A third limitation in this study was in the sample population. Many more counties than cities are in Virginia; therefore, rural areas were more often selected than urban areas. This may have an affect on the outcome of the results. Many of the urban areas are moving towards, or at least trying, inclusion. Some of the rural areas are still using the pull-out system. This could create a bias towards inclusion and how it is viewed. Those teachers who have had experience with inclusion will have a better knowledge on whether it works or not. Those teachers who have never experienced inclusion can not really give a strong opinion on whether or not inclusion works.
Future Research Suggestions

Some suggestions for further research include focusing on a specific aspect of inclusion such as regular and special education teachers and the differences in the way they teach. Another option for further research is to include administrators, parents, and other teachers in the sample. One could get a parent’s view on inclusion to see if any differences exist between the teachers and the parents. Finally, having the administrators questioned on inclusion could be vital in determining whether or not inclusion can work.

Inclusion is a controversial topic in education today. However, whether we are for inclusion or against inclusion one fact still remains, the important decision for teachers is what is in the best interest of the student.
References


INCLUSION 45


Appendix A

Letter to the Superintendent
Dear Superintendent,

My name is Michelle Burton and I am a graduate student at Longwood College. I am currently working on my Master’s thesis. The purpose of this research is to examine regular and special education teachers’ perceptions of inclusion defined as providing a child with disabilities an education within the regular education classroom, with the support services and accommodation needed by that student. This survey will study the differences and similarities of the regular education and special education teachers’ view of inclusion. The results of this study will provide important information on how inclusion can work in the classroom.

I would greatly appreciate if you would permit your school division to be included in this research. This survey only takes about 5 minutes to complete. Please note that any information provided by you, your school division, and staff will be held in strict confidence and participation from your teachers is completely voluntary.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Burton
Appendix B

Letter to the Principal
Dear Principal,

My name is Michelle Burton and I am a graduate student at Longwood College. I am currently working on my Master’s thesis. The purpose of this research is to examine regular and special education teachers’ perceptions of inclusion defined as providing a child with disabilities an education within the regular education classroom, with the support services and accommodation needed by that student. This survey will study the differences and similarities of the regular education and special education teachers’ view of inclusion. The results of this study will provide important information on how inclusion can work in the classroom.

I have already obtained permission from this school division to conduct this survey. I would greatly appreciate if you would distribute the enclosed surveys to all of your special education teachers as well as your regular education teachers who have students with disabilities in their class. There are two separate surveys; one for the regular education teacher and one for the special education teacher. This survey only takes about 5 minutes to complete. Please note that any information provided by you, your school, and your teaching staff will be held in strict confidence and participation from your teachers is completely voluntary. Have all teachers complete the survey and mail back in the self-address stamped envelope within 10 days.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Burton
Appendix C

Letter to the Teachers (Cover Letter)
Dear Teacher,

My name is Michelle Burton and I am a graduate student at Longwood College. I am currently working on my Master's thesis. The purpose of this research is to examine regular and special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion defined as providing a child with disabilities an education within the regular education classroom, with the support services and accommodation needed by that student. This survey will study the differences and similarities of the regular education and special education teachers' view of inclusion. The results of this study will provide important information on how inclusion can work in the classroom.

I have already obtained permission from this school division to conduct this survey. I would greatly appreciate if you would complete the enclosed survey. This survey only takes about 5 minutes to complete. Please note that any information provided by you and your school will be held in strict confidence and this survey is voluntary. Complete the survey and mail back in the self-address stamped envelope within 10 days.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Burton
Appendix D

Regular Education Teachers' Survey
Survey

Part I: Directions: Please check which applies to you.

1. Regular Education _____ Special Education _____

2. Male _____ Female _____

3. Number of years teaching _____

4. Grade level presently teaching _____

5. In what school district do you teach?
   Urban _____ Rural _____

6. Do you currently have students with disabilities in your class?
   Yes _____ No _____

7. If yes, how many? _____

8. Do your students with disabilities attend special education classes?
   Yes _____ No _____

9. On an average, what percent of time do the students with disabilities spend in your class? _____

10. Check all types of students who have any one of the following disabilities in your class:
    Learning Disabled _____
    Mentally Disabled _____
    Emotional/Behavioral Disturbance _____
    Physical Impaired _____
    Visual Impaired _____
    Hearing Impaired _____
    Other (please specify) ___________________________

11. Have you ever taught special education?
    Yes _____ No _____

12. How many courses have you had in special education? _________

13. How many workshops have you attended in special education? _________
Part II: Directions: Please circle which answer best describes your perceptions on inclusion.

Key: SD=Strongly Disagree   D=Disagree   A=Agree   SA=Strongly Agree

Definition: Inclusion is providing a child with disabilities an education within the regular education classroom, with the support services and accommodation needed by that student.

14. I agree with the inclusion of students with disabilities. ................. SD  D  A  SA

15. Not all students with disabilities can be included in the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

16. All students with disabilities should be included in the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

17. I believe students with disabilities are not socially accepted in the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

18. Students with disabilities benefit socially from the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

19. Students with disabilities do not benefit academically from the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

20. Inclusion is the best way to meet a child’s needs. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

21. Non disabled peers suffer from having a child with disabilities in the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

22. Special education teachers are willing to teach students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

23. I do not feel prepared to teach children with disabilities in the regular education classroom. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA

24. I am willing to work with the regular education (special education) teacher as much as possible. ................................................................. SD  D  A  SA
Appendix E

Special Education Teachers’ Survey
Survey

Part I: Directions: Please check which applies to you.

1. Regular Education _____ Special Education _____
2. Male _____ Female _____
3. Number of years teaching _____
4. Grade level presently teaching _____
5. In what school district do you teach? Urban _____ Rural _____
6. Which model do you teach under?
   Self-contained classroom _____ Collaborating _____
   Resource room _____ Co-teaching _____
   Monitor & consult _____
7. What percent of time each day do you spend:
   Collaborating _____
   Co-teaching _____
8. Do your students with disabilities attend regular education classes?
   Yes _____ No _____
9. On an average, what percent of time do the students with disabilities spend in regular education classes? _____
10. Check all types of students who have any one of the following disabilities in your class:
    Learning Disabled _____
    Mentally Disabled _____
    Emotional/Behavioral Disturbance _____
    Physical Impaired _____
    Visual Impaired _____
    Hearing Impaired _____
    Other (please specify) ________________________________
11. Have you ever taught regular education?
    Yes _____ No _____
12. How many courses have you had in regular education? _____
13. How many workshops have you attended in collaboration or co-teaching? _____
Part II: Directions: Please circle which answer best describes your perceptions on inclusion.

Key: SD=Strongly Disagree  D=Disagree  A=Agree  SA=Strongly Agree

Definition: Inclusion is providing a child with disabilities an education within the regular educational classroom, with the support services and accommodation needed by that student.

14. I agree with the inclusion of students with disabilities........................................SD  D  A  SA

15. Not all students with disabilities can be included in the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

16. All students with disabilities should be included in the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

17. I believe students with disabilities are not socially accepted in the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

18. Students with disabilities benefit socially from the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

19. Students with disabilities do not benefit academically from the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

20. Inclusion is the best way to meet a child's needs........................................SD  D  A  SA

21. Non disabled peers suffer from having a child with disabilities in the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

22. Regular education teachers are willing to have students with disabilities in their classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

23. I do not feel prepared to teach children with disabilities in the regular education classroom........................................SD  D  A  SA

24. I am willing to work with the regular education (special education) teacher as much as possible........................................SD  D  A  SA
Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Regular and Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>REGULAR EDUCATION</th>
<th>SPECIAL EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sum of Squares</td>
<td>Mean Squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>74.9987</td>
<td>74.9987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>3282.6731</td>
<td>17.0087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>3357.6718</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05 level
Table 2

Means for Regular and Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable By Variable</th>
<th>REGULAR EDUCATION</th>
<th>SPECIAL EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Ed</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>30.0973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ed</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>31.3537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>30.6256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1
Grade Level

Elementary  Middle  High

- Regular Education  Special Education
Figure 2
Years of Teaching

- Regular Education
- Special Education