5-9-2003

# A retrospective analysis of factors contributing to successful inclusive placements

Erin L. Tibetts
*Rowan University*

# A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE PLACEMENTS

by
Erin L. Tibbetts

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 5, 2003

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved May 9, 2003

# ABSTRACT

Erin L. Tibbetts
A Retrospective Analysis of Factors Contributing to Successful Inclusive Placements
2002/2003
Dr. Stanley Urban
Master of Arts Degree in Learning Disabilities
Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant Certification

The purpose of this study was to examine variables that are associated with successful placement of children with disabilities into regular education classroom settings. Subjects were children with varying disabilities that were placed in regular education classrooms in a single elementary school building. In each setting, in-class support was provided by a special education teacher. Data was gathered by an examination of records including grades and child study team information. Also, teachers were interviewed to provide their perceptions of elements that are necessary for success in the regular classrooms. Teachers also expressed their overall impressions of the in-class support model of service delivery. Results showed that most children were eligible for special education on the basis of specific learning disabilities. Child study team records indicated that there was no commonality among broad IQ ranges for each subject. Teacher interviews showed that pupil motivation, positive self-concept, and parental support were present in successful placements. Teachers also indicated that they were in favor of inclusion, and that they felt it was beneficial for special needs students to be included in mainstream settings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to express sincere gratitude to the following people, who have made it possible for this project to be completed:

To my husband, Rob, and my son, Michael, for their patience, understanding, support, and encouragement.

To my family, especially my mother, for being behind me every step of the way;

To Dr. Stanley Urban, for guidance and assistance throughout the course of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLES

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The field of Special Education has undergone a great deal of evolution throughout the last fifty years. Prior to the 1960s, it was not unusual for individuals with special needs to be excluded from schools and from society in general. In 1954, however, the court case *Brown vs. Board of Education* began a fight for civil, as well as educational, rights. Through this case, it was determined that "separate-but-equal" education was not legal (Mastropieri, 2000). In 1970, a California court ruled in *Diana vs. Board of Education* that results from culturally biased tests could not be the basis for placing children in special education. Through two separate cases in 1972, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills vs. Board of Education* (District of Columbia), it was determined that students with disabilities were entitled to an education. Denial of education for those individuals would be a violation of the 14th amendment. Another milestone was reached in 1973, when Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act was enacted. This civil rights law protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in schools or places of employment that are federally funded (Mastropieri, 2000).

The most significant piece of legislation in the field of special education, however, was enacted in 1975 with the passage of P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law mandated that: 1) all children were entitled to a free, appropriate public education, including children with disabilities who had not been allowed to attend school prior to the passage of P.L. 94-142; 2) education was to take

place in the least restrictive environment to the greatest extent possible, which put into motion the idea that students with disabilities should be educated along with their general education peers as much as possible. In 1990, the law was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Since 1990, several amendments to the law have been put into place.

IDEA may very well have been the cornerstone of the 1990s movement towards inclusion. There are a variety of degrees of inclusion, ranging from mainstreaming to full inclusion. There is also a great deal of controversy about the success of inclusion, vs. the negative impact of inclusion upon the education of students with disabilities.

## NEED FOR STUDY

Inclusion of special education students is a movement that has gained increasing momentum. Based on the relatively recent trend towards inclusion, there is a paucity of empirically based research relating to the success or failure of students with disabilities who have been placed in inclusive settings. Furthermore, little research has been done to determine specific variables that contribute to the weakness or strength of inclusive programs. Opinions regarding the most effective placement of students with disabilities are widely varied.

On one side of the debate, teachers, parents, administrators, and/or students feel that mainstreaming/inclusion is highly beneficial. This group contends that special needs students experience social, as well as academic, benefits by being placed in a general education classroom. This side is the one that feels students should not be excluded from

their peers for any reason. Modifications should be made, they would say, to enable ALL students to participate in the regular education curriculum.

On the other side of the debate are teachers, parents, administrators, and/or students who feel that inclusion into regular education does not meet the needs of students with disabilities who have very specific academic needs. Individuals who take this position also feel that social benefits do not occur in inclusive settings because the special needs students continue to be bullied and/or ostracized by their regular education peers.

Because much of the literature is anecdotal and lacks empirical evidence, studies that attempt to answer specific research questions are needed. Specifically, it is important to determine those variables that may contribute to success in inclusive settings, as well as those that do not seem likely to yield positive results.

## VALUE OF STUDY

Very often, the people who are most closely involved with the placement decisions of special needs students – parents, teachers, child study team members, administrators, counselors, etc. – struggle with the question of which educational setting will be of the most benefit to the student. Their opinions, whether based on personal relationships with the child or professional expertise, could lead to a life-changing experience for the child. Quality of education can be a crucial indicator of future success in an individual's life.

Being aware of variables that may lead to success in an inclusive setting, and understanding the importance of these variables, may play an important role in the

decision-making process for placement of special needs students. A study that can highlight the most important factors for success can be invaluable.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overall, the following broad research question will be addressed for the purposes of this study: which variables are critical in order for special needs students to achieve success in inclusive settings? Success will be measured by a grade of C or better. In addition, the following specific questions will be considered:

- Question One: Does category of disability appear to have an impact upon success for students participating in an educational program involving inclusion?
- Question Two: Is there a correlation between IQ ranges and performance in inclusive settings? (For example, do significant weaknesses from a learning evaluation indicate lack of success in an inclusive classroom?)
- Question Three: Does the attitude of the general education teacher have an impact upon how well the special needs student will perform in his/her classroom?
- Question Four: Do internal factors such as motivation and/or effort affect student performance?

DEFINITIONS

Following are definitions of terms that are used frequently throughout the course of this study:

1. Inclusion – a term used to describe the education of students with disabilities in general education settings. Generally, inclusion often means that students with disabilities are served primarily in the general education classroom, under the responsibility of the general classroom teacher (Mastropieri, 2000).
2. Full Inclusion – refers to the practice of serving students with disabilities and other special needs entirely within the general classroom. Full inclusion means that all students with disabilities are served the entire day in the general classroom, sometimes with special education teachers and/or other personnel present in the general classroom (Mastropieri, 2000).
3. Mainstreaming – the placement of students with disabilities – often part-time – into general settings (Mastropieri, 2000).
4. Least Restrictive Environment – This term refers to the rights of students with disabilities to be educated to the greatest extent possible in the general education classroom (Mastropieri, 2000).
5. Pullout Model – Students with disabilities are pulled out of the general education class for special education instruction. This can entail several options: pullout support involves a special education teacher supporting the regular education teacher by helping the student with mainstream curriculum. Pullout replacement is when a special needs student receives instruction in one of the major subject areas: reading, language, and/or math, from the

special education teacher outside the classroom. In a self-contained setting, students with disabilities receive all or most of their major instruction from special education teachers (Mastropieri, 2000).

## LIMITATIONS

The following sources of error are operative in this study and therefore results should be interpreted with caution:

1. The sample represents a convenience group of students at the elementary level grades five and six that were accessible to the author and do not represent a random sample. Furthermore, this sample was drawn from an upper middle class community.
2. There is danger that subjectivity in quantification is involved in a study of this nature. This is a case study analysis and the researcher's past experiences with the subjects play a major role in the research process. Degree of student motivation is a difficult factor to measure by objective methods. The measurement of this variable will be determined by the subjective judgment of the researcher.
3. Finally, the number of subjects involved with this study is small. In addition, the study is not of a longitudinal nature and the observation period is short.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## HISTORY OF THE INCLUSION MOVEMENT

It is likely that the concept of *mainstreaming* began as a result of P.L. 94-142, which is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law mandated that *all* children were entitled to a free and appropriate public education, which was to be provided in the *least restrictive environment.* On a very basic level, P.L. 94-142 made it possible for students who had previously been excluded from school to receive an education. Prior to the passage of the law, children with disabilities were often placed in institutions. In some cases, parents used their own money to pay for their children to attend private schools in settings that were often inappropriate (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000).

The *least restrictive environment* component of IDEA paved the way for children with disabilities to receive as much of their education as possible with their general education peers. The concept of *inclusion* takes mainstreaming a few steps further. *Inclusion* refers to students with disabilities being able to receive their education in general education placements. The implication with *inclusion* is that "students with disabilities are served primarily in the general education classroom, under the responsibility of the regular classroom teacher" (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). *Full inclusion* is another popular term used in special education. It is used to describe a situation in which students with disabilities are serviced entirely in the regular classroom.

Due to the movement towards mainstreaming/inclusion, almost 75% of students with all categories of disabilities were receiving most, if not all, of their education, in the regular classroom in the year 2000 (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Also in 2000, it was determined by the US Department of Education that an estimated 50% of students with learning disabilities had been placed full time in general education classrooms (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2002).

The trend towards inclusion is evident in the following figures, which were provided by the US Department of Education in 2000. In the school year 1988/1989, 30% of students serviced by special education providers spent as little as 20% or less of their school day in a special education setting. By 1997/1998, the number had increased to 46.4% (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). We can ascertain from these numbers that there was clearly an increase in the number of students with disabilities who were being educated in the regular education classrooms for the majority of the school day. We can also infer from the data that a greater number of students with disabilities were being "included" in the general education population. Supporting the US Department of Education's report, 891 districts in 50 states indicated in 1995 that they had used inclusive education programs in their schools. These districts also reported that they most often used co-teaching as a model of service delivery (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

## EDUCATION REFORM

In 1989, Madeleine Will expressed serious concerns about the traditional pullout model of educating students with special needs. She called on the National Commission on Excellence in Education to reform the system. Will felt that students with mild learning problems were at a disadvantage by being placed in separate special education

programs, and she wanted there to be a partnership between special and regular education. The Regular Education Initiative (REI) came about as a result of Will's proposal (Hagan-Burke & Jefferson, 2002). The movement was followed by controversy, and professionals were divided by their positions. According to Fuchs and Fuchs (1991), extreme abolitionists were those in support of the REI movement, while educators in favor of the traditional special educational system were referred to as conservationists.

There is concern that because of the REI movement and the growth of inclusion, decisions for placement are being made without giving consideration to FAPE (free and appropriate public education) and LRE (least restrictive environment). According to federal law (IDEA), students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education within the least restrictive environment. This is sometimes used as a rationale for placing students in general education settings, even if it is not necessarily the "appropriate" placement/education (Hagan-Burke & Jefferson, 2002). There needs to be a focus on instructional decision making, and decisions about inclusion should be made responsibly.

Another driving force in the movement towards inclusion was the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The amendments were created due to findings that achievement outcomes for students with disabilities had not significantly improved as a result of special education reform efforts prior to 1997. As a result of low academic expectations and limited access to the general curriculum, students with disabilities had not demonstrated educational progress. The 1997 amendments also proposed that special needs students should participate in state accountability systems as a way to increase participation in the general curriculum. It

was thought that this would also raise the academic expectations for all students with disabilities (Defur, 2002).

## INCLUSION VERSUS SEGREGATION

The movement towards inclusion is a popular one in education these days. Inclusion most often refers to the placement of special needs students in regular classroom settings. However, it is a term that can also be used in connection with the growing trend for gifted students to receive instruction in a regular classroom. In some districts, gifted education teachers are collaborating with their general education colleagues instead of instructing their students in separate classrooms.

> "All students learn together. One size fits all . . . the idea behind this movement is the notion, popular in the realm of politics, that fairness means equality. Exclusion of any kind somehow means we value certain students more or less than others. Since that position is intolerable, we put them all together to show that every child is of equal moral worth. But equal worth should not be confused with identical classroom experience." (Hartz, 2000)

Hartz has acknowledged that inclusion has led to improvements in academic and social skills for many special needs students. However, he has also indicated that the decision for placement should be based on individual abilities and needs. Inclusion should not be adopted "as the exceptionless principle" (2000).

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION AND SEGREGATION

The success or failure of an inclusive program often depends upon the attitudes of parents, teachers, administrators, and students. "The success of the inclusion movement will be largely determined by the attitudes of those involved; this includes both attitudes

of parents and students as well as educational administrators and teachers" (Jones, Thorn, Chow, & Wild, 2002). According to Marcovitch, Vachon, MacGregor, & Campbell, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have become more positive as the movement has gained momentum (Jones 2002). Parents have become much more active participants in their children's education, and it is important to consider their feelings about inclusion. Since socialization has become one of the major issues involved in the controversy of inclusion, it is also important to take into account the level of peer acceptance involved with placing special needs students into regular classrooms.

Jones et al. (2002) have identified three main theoretical perspectives of the inclusion model: equality of education, financial issues, and the importance of social interactions for special needs students. Gerrard (1994) and Wolfenberger (1995) have indicated that those in favor of total inclusion feel that special education is costly, unequal, and harmful to all children's development. In addition, Staub and Peck (1995) believe that inclusion is an ideal placement for the development of social skills. They feel that the promotion of this type of development will have a positive impact upon learning (Jones et al., 2002). This theory of improved social skills has been supported by research. Overall, studies have shown that both general education students and special needs students are accepting of the inclusion model. In fact, Ormsby & Deitz (1994) determined that "special needs students receive about 340 percent more social interaction in inclusion classrooms than segregated classrooms."

Data have also shown that there is a generally positive attitude among students towards inclusion. A study by Beveridge (1996) indicated that inclusionary settings fostered the development of social relationships between special needs students and the

general education students. In addition, these positive attitudes and relationships sometimes lead the non-disabled classroom students to help their special needs peers in controlling behavior problems in inclusionary placements. In terms of parental attitudes, parents are mostly in favor of the practice of including special needs students with general education students, according to several studies. However, parents with special needs children are more likely to be comfortable with exclusionary (i.e. segregated) settings (Jones, Thorn, Chow, & Wild, 2002).

On the other side of the debate are those in favor of segregation for special needs students. Three main issues of importance for inclusion opponents are: special needs students require extra attention, high teacher workload and the negative effects upon regular classroom students, and the need for special programs for students with disabilities. Segregationists might also argue that highly trained teachers and special programs are needed by special needs students, and that inclusionary settings do not accommodate these needs. In terms of teacher attitudes, it has been reported that teachers do not feel confident about their ability to handle special needs students in an inclusion class (Jones, Thorn, Chantal, Chow, & Wild, 2002).

Several studies have shown that parents of special needs students are usually satisfied with a segregated placement for their children's education. This may be partly due to the parents' perception that special needs students receive more attention and caring from the teacher in segregated settings. These parents are often reluctant to send their children back into an inclusive classroom for reintegration (Jones, Thorn, Chantal, Chow, & Wild, 2002). Studies have also been conducted to determine the level of socialization in inclusive settings versus segregated special education placements. In the

inclusion setting, it appears that special needs students experience less social interaction, and engage in less play, than their regular classroom peers. It has also been noted by Thompson, Whitney, and Smith (1994) that with inclusion, special needs students experience more bullying than the regular classroom students (Jones, Thorn, Chantal, Chow, & Wild, 2002).

Jones, Thorn, Chantal, Chow, & Wild (2002) conducted a study in order to determine students' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion. There appeared to be an overall positive acceptance of inclusion among the subjects. The group that responded with the highest level of positive attitude was the special needs students. Parents of both regular classroom students and special needs students reported the lowest level of acceptance for inclusion. All groups reported a concern about the teacher workload involved with inclusion. Regular students' parents and special needs students expressed the highest level of concern 'about the teacher's ability to handle the additional workload in an inclusion setting' (Jones 2002).

EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSION

Hanline & Daley (2002) have considered the benefits of creating inclusive early childhood education programs. They state that the main reasons for creating these kinds of programs are: "to create normalized expectations for children with disabilities and to foster an understanding of disabilities among the nondisabled." Currently, however, there are only about 50% of preschoolers with disabilities who are receiving services in inclusive programs. There are several myths surrounding the negative aspects of inclusive early childhood programs. Hanline & Daley have purported that there are actually benefits for both the disabled youngsters and their nondisabled peers in inclusive

programs (2002). For example, research has shown that young children with disabilities are more stimulated in inclusive settings. Inclusion also provides more opportunities for interactions with nondisabled peers. Contrary to the belief that special needs children can be disruptive to the education of nondisabled students, Hanline & Daley (2002) claim that it is possible to modify the activities in an early childhood program so that children with and without special needs will both be able to participate. An additional benefit to providing inclusive early childhood programs is the opportunity for nondisabled children to interact with children that have disabilities. This will foster a greater understanding of individuals with disabilities. In fact, studies have shown few cases of nondisabled peers reacting negatively to their peers with disabilities (Hanline & Daley, 2002).

## READING INSTRUCTION IN THE RESOURCE ROOM

In 2000, a study was done by Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer to assess reading instruction in the resource room. The study was actually a follow-up to one that had been conducted two years prior by Vaughn, Moody, and Schumm. The participants were six resource room teachers from a large southeastern school district, as well as the students in their class. The purpose of the follow-up study was to determine the following: 1) the instructional practices used for reading by the resource room teachers; 2) the reading outcomes for students with disabilities who received resource room instruction; 3) the grouping practices for instruction; and 4) insights provided by the teachers relating to what they feel is unique about special education.

According to Moody et al. (2000), many students with disabilities are not being provided with the specialized instruction that they are guaranteed through the provisions of IDEA. Students spend less than 10% of their school day reading, even though most

children with learning disabilities are in need of reading instruction. In 1998, Vaughn, Moody, & Schumm determined that the instruction taking place in resource rooms was primarily for whole groups, some of which contained large numbers (5 to 19). In addition, materials used for instruction were not adapted for individual students, in spite of a diverse range of reading abilities and grade levels. Teachers did not seem to focus on specific reading skills such as word recognition and comprehension (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer, 2000).

Various studies have also shown that even when class sizes are smaller in resource room settings, teachers do not tend to individualize their instruction. Therefore, reducing class size does not seem to have any impact upon student performance. The Orton Dyslexia Society has stated that,

> "Children learn best when instruction corresponds to their current reading level, and may not learn well if the instruction is not attuned to their stage in learning to read" (1997).

In spite of a body of research supporting the notion that children learn best with individualized instruction and materials, Vaughn, Moody, and Schumm observed in 1998 that most teachers were not utilizing instructional materials based on students' reading levels. In the same 1998 study, the researchers asked teachers what they felt was 'special about special education.' Most subjects identified the following characteristics: smaller class size, consideration of different learning styles, and the additional time that can be spent with disabled students. None of the responses included the notion that special education should involve individualized reading instruction (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer, 2000).

In the 2000 follow-up study conducted by Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer, resource room teachers stated that it was important to include phonics as part of instruction for students. However, the researchers determined through observation that phonics was not a major component of the resource room programs. Phonics was not being taught 'in context.' Instead, when students encountered unfamiliar words while reading aloud, teachers simply told them the unknown words or asked the students to figure it out by re-reading the sentence. In addition, most teachers identified themselves primarily as whole language teachers, even though their instruction was not truly whole language (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer, 2000).

The follow-up study also compared instructional grouping practices in 2000 to those that had been observed in 1998. Overall, the follow-up group of teachers used less whole group instruction, more individualized instruction, and more grouping of similar reading levels for instruction. It was also determined that three out of six teachers attempted to use individualized instruction and materials according to students' needs. Other teachers who were not providing differentiated materials stated that individualization should occur incidentally within reading. However, it was not observed that incidental instruction in response to student needs was taking place (Moody et al., 2000). Most of the teachers indicated that having large numbers of students was an obstacle in the attempt to individualize instruction.

It was determined by Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer (2000) that there was very little comprehension or strategy instruction being provided in the resource room. These results were similar to those obtained in 1998, as well as through other studies. Overall, students demonstrated very little progress in reading, as determined by

performance on the Woodcock-Johnson Revised (1989). The WJ-R results revealed that students had not made significant gains in reading throughout the school year.

Results from the study by Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer (2000) seem to show that students with disabilities who receive instruction in the resource room are not being provided with instruction to match their individual needs. Many feel that resource rooms are not effective models of service delivery, and that inclusion is the best alternative. The unique needs of children should be considered on an individual basis when a decision about placement is being made. Another alternative that should be considered is one-to-one tutoring for students who are performing at substantially lower levels than their grade-level peers (Moody, Vaughn, Hughes, & Fischer, 2000).

## READING INSTRUCTION IN THE INCLUSION CLASSROOM

In 2000, about 50% of students with learning disabilities had participated full time in the regular education classroom (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2002). Many research studies have focused on reading instruction because of the serious reading problems experienced by many children with learning disabilities. Studies have shown that students with learning disabilities can benefit from instruction in reading strategies for decoding, comprehension, and metacognition (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2000).

Strategy instruction has proven to be crucial to students' learning. However, it is just as important to consider classroom variables and the instructional approaches used by the teacher. According to research by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994), factors such as teacher beliefs, classroom climate, and instructional grouping can impact student performance as much as student-dependent traits such as aptitude. Other studies have

found that peer tutoring and small group instruction can yield positive results for students with learning disabilities and behavior disorders.

Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman (2002) attempted to identify instructional practices for teaching reading that have contributed to the success of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Through a review of the literature, Schmidt et al. found that several educators feel that cognitive strategy instruction can be key for students with reading problems. Schmidt et al. analyzed articles relating to reading strategies that had been introduced at the elementary level in inclusive classrooms. Each article chosen for the study involved inclusive settings with learning disabled students.

Results from the study by Schmidt et al. (2002) indicate that success is related to a multifaceted approach to reading intervention. Less improvement is demonstrated if only one strategy is being utilized for reading instruction. Individual needs must be considered, and teachers must be willing to modify their curriculum in terms of instructional methods and materials. Other factors that seem to play an important role in the effectiveness of strategy instruction in inclusive settings are "teacher beliefs and collaboration between teachers and students" (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2000).

Study results also indicate that metacognitive strategy instruction, in conjunction with collaborative teaching practices, contributes to the overall success of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. In order for success to occur, however, teachers must believe that strategy instruction and collaborative teaching are effective practices (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2002).

## COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

### TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT CO-TEACHING

In order to determine how effective an inclusive program will be, consideration must be given to teachers' perceptions. Since co-teaching is a component of inclusive programs that involves both general educators and special educators, their beliefs and attitudes can have an impact upon whether or not a student with disabilities will be successful. Austin (2002) conducted a study to determine teachers' overall beliefs about the various issues involved with co-teaching. The purpose of the study was to obtain teachers' perceptions about issues such as co-teachers' current classroom experiences, effective collaborative teaching practices, recommendations for co-teacher preparation, the importance of school-based supports, the degree of academic and social preparation provided in inclusive classrooms, whether or not the students like the inclusive environment, and perceptions about whether the special educator or general educator does more work. The majority of the special educators involved in the study indicated that they specialized in high incidence disabilities such as learning disabilities. The majority of respondents were teachers at the secondary level in subject areas such as science, social studies, or English/language arts (Austin 2002).

It is interesting to note that 72% of the general educators, as well as 73.3% of special educators did not volunteer for their co-teaching assignment. It can likely be inferred that the majority of co-teachers were not given a choice about their work placements. When asked about their current experiences, a high percentage of both general and special educators revealed that they felt the general educator did the most work in the inclusive classroom. However, most agreed that they worked well together,

and that the co-teaching experience was beneficial in improving their overall teaching (Austin 2001).

Discrepancy was observed in the responses for the "Recommended Collaborative Practices Survey." The majority of all the respondents agreed that daily meetings for lesson planning would be helpful. In reality, however, the co-teachers who did meet on a daily basis did not agree about how truly effective this practice was. In addition, many respondents agreed that each partner in a co-teaching environment should be responsible for specific components of the program. They were not, however, actually using this practice on a regular basis (Austin 2001).

When interviewed about the usefulness of student teaching experiences taking place in collaborative teaching settings, 90.3% of special education co-teachers, as opposed to only 70.5% of general education co-teachers, felt that such a placement would be useful. Special education co-teachers also responded more favorably than regular education co-teachers for the following issue: usefulness of preservice courses for general education co-teachers in preparing them for placement in an inclusive classroom.

During the interview phase of Austin's study (2001), most subjects indicated that their overall co-teaching experience was a positive one. The majority stated that cooperative learning and small groups were two instructional strategies that were effective in inclusive classrooms. Special educators involved with co-teaching felt that they had experienced improved content knowledge from their placement, while regular educators noted that their classroom management skills, as well as their ability to modify curriculum, had improved. In spite of the positive feedback about co-teaching

assignments, most co-teachers expressed dissatisfaction with school support, especially noting that more planning time was needed.

The respondents cited several benefits to collaborative teaching. Most co-teachers felt that their collaborative teaching strategies were generally effective in educating all the students in the inclusive classroom. In addition, other positive components of the co-teaching model of service delivery included reduced student-teacher ratio, the availability of two teachers' expertise, remedial strategies and review for all students, and the opportunity for students without disabilities to increase their understanding of learning difficulties experienced by their disabled peers. However, some respondents expressed concern for situations in which students are placed into inclusive classrooms for socialization purposes, rather than for academic needs. Such inappropriate placements can lead to disruptions in the classroom, which would impact the learning of students without disabilities (Austin 2001).

Co-teachers expressed the belief that their students were generally receptive to co-teaching, as evidenced by high levels of student participation and cooperation. Improvement was also observed in tolerance for differences.

The majority of respondents expressed that teaching responsibilities were shared between co-teachers in the inclusive classroom. In general, special educators tended to modify lessons and address learning difficulties, whereas the regular educator was responsible for lesson planning and instruction.

## GUIDELINES FOR CREATING EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

It has been suggested by Cook & Friend (1995) that educators interested in participating in a co-teaching program should follow specific guidelines in order to

ensure success. Potential co-teachers should first decide what their goals are and establish a rationale for creating a co-teaching program. Common rationales for co-teaching include: reduction of stigma for students with disabilities, increased instructional options for all students, and increased support for teachers and related service providers. Professionals should also determine whether co-teaching is the appropriate instructional option for each individual student. A primary consideration when deciding on placement should be finding the appropriate match between students' needs and skills and the curriculum.

For example, if direct instruction or intervention is required for a student to achieve optimal learning, or if the student's needs differ greatly from the general education classroom students, then co-teaching is not likely the best option (Cook & Friend, 1995). Another important issue when co-teaching is being considered is the ecology of the class. Professionals involved in the decision-making process should look closely at the mix of students in terms of the learning needs and styles of children without disabilities (i.e., children who may be non-classified but "at-risk"). If there is a wide range of learning and teaching styles, co-teaching may still be possible with the additional support of another teacher.

According to research by Cook & Friend (1995), there are several characteristics and qualities that lend themselves to successful co-teaching experiences. Co-teachers must be flexible, and they must be willing to commit themselves to the concept of co-teaching. Also essential are strong interpersonal, communication, and decision-making skills. Co-teachers should be able to problem-solve through collaboration with their

partners. Strong clinical judgment can also be important for co-teachers in order to analyze and apply information they might learn from their partners.

Cook & Friend (1995) suggest that planning and communication are integral parts of maintaining a co-teaching relationship. Prior to the start of a co-teaching program, partners should discuss their views on issues such as their instructional beliefs, planning time, ways to let students know that both teachers are equal, confidentiality issues, tolerance levels for noise, classroom routines, discipline policies, mutual feedback, and "pet peeves." They may seem like simple and straightforward issues, but lack of discussion can lead to disagreement and disorganization.

To plan for a co-teaching program, Cook & Friend (1995) suggest that several steps be taken. First, establish a planning structure and then make a mutual decision about what the program will be called (i.e., describe the program). Next, specify the goals and objectives and determine who is eligible. Specify each teacher's responsibilities and outline the types of services that will be offered in the program. Finally, design the evaluation strategies and measures. It is also recommended that professionals introduce the concept of co-teaching and communicate with others about their intentions to begin a co-teaching program.

## CASE STUDIES OF COLLABORATION

Trent (1998) conducted a follow-up study on collaborative teaching that had taken place in a southeastern US high school. The research consisted of a specific case study that involved a high school social studies teacher who had participated in co-teaching with two different special education teachers in the years 1989-1990 and 1991-1992. In the first experience, the social studies teacher had expressed interest in co-teaching and

was paired with a teacher whom she did not know. Both participants agreed that they shared compatible goals such as monitoring of academic performance and behavior of all students in the classroom. They also felt that one of the benefits to the co-teaching experience was the opportunity to provide assistance to students with disabilities during test-taking situations.

The regular and special educators both shared another mutual goal: "to meet the needs of students with and without learning disabilities who were not being successful in their 11$^{th}$-grade program. They believed that this goal was attainable with their co-teaching program. They felt that the special education teacher possessed unique skills and knowledge that could be utilized to enhance the instruction of the general education teacher. On the other hand, lack of planning sometimes made it challenging to implement the co-teaching program (Trent 1998).

Both teachers expressed the opinion that the co-teaching program had been beneficial for all students in the classroom, not just those with disabilities. Smaller student/teacher ratio allowed the opportunity to provide more individualized attention. Students' improved grades for notebook collection demonstrated that they were learning organizational skills. Unfortunately, the second co-teaching experience of the social studies teacher (1991-1992) was not as successful due to teacher incompatibility.

Nancy Langerock (2000) was a fourth grade teacher in Texas who initiated the steps to create an inclusive program, along with the special education teacher who had been providing services to some of their students. Both professionals felt that their individual curriculums and programs were lacking. They wanted their students to achieve more and to improve basic reading and writing skills. Together, they began

combining their skills, lesson plans, goals, and objectives to form an inclusive language arts program.

As part of her project, Langerock had chosen six students who achieved the lowest scores on the Reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) the previous year. Langerock used the reading scores from TAAS, as well as an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI), and Writing Analysis: Authentic Language Arts Assessment (ALAS) to obtain a baseline. After participating in the inclusive program started by Langerock (2000) and her special education partner, the six students were given the three assessments again. All six students on the TAAS made gains ranging from 1% to 20%. In addition, all students demonstrated increased reading performance by one to three grade levels on separate administrations of the IRI. Other improvements were observed in the classroom in areas such as comprehension, decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary, and the use of visual and oral information. Based on scores obtained from the Writing Analysis (ALAS), students achieved gains from one to three points.

In addition to the improvements noted in academic areas, Langerock (2000) and her co-teaching partner both observed positive changes in social skills. For example, when the inclusive program began, students had a tendency to group themselves with like peers (e.g. special needs children stayed with special needs, gifted students stayed with other gifted, etc.) After several months, the children began to realize that they each had something worthwhile to offer the class, and that they could all work together and help each other. The teachers felt that this may have occurred because of the example they set in collaborating with each other.

## CONGRUENCE BETWEEN ROLES AND ACTIONS OF SECONDARY SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CO-TAUGHT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SETTINGS

According to research by Weiss and Lloyd (2002), it is difficult to implement inclusion at the secondary level because of issues such as skill deficits exhibited by students with disabilities and the lack of small group teaching and direct instruction in secondary general education classrooms. Therefore, they conducted a study to determine the roles of special educators in co-teaching relationships at the secondary level. They also wanted to distinguish between the instructional techniques of special education teachers in co-taught classrooms as well as special classrooms.

Weiss and Lloyd (2002) investigated co-teaching at the middle school and high school levels in a rural district in the mid-Atlantic region. Six special education teachers were involved – three from middle school and three from high school. All six special educators were involved with co-teaching, as well as providing instruction in special education classrooms.

One component of the study was the examination of the roles in the co-taught classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Special educators often took the role of providing support and monitoring student behavior without being directly responsible for instruction. Another role of the special educator was to provide instruction on the same materials but in a separate classroom so that lessons could be modified to the students' needs. A third role observed in co-taught classrooms involved the special educator teaching part of the mainstream material to the whole class while the fourth role was that of a team teacher. With team teaching, both partners alternated instructing and monitoring all students in the classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

On the other hand, teachers in special education classrooms were the sole providers of instruction. Special educators in these settings could control curriculum, evaluation, and feedback. Participants in the study indicated that special education classrooms involved slower pace and more individualized instruction for special needs students.

In general, some teachers in the study indicated that they were involved with co-teaching because they had been forced into the roles. Outside pressures from the community and administrators had an impact upon the teachers' roles. Roles in co-taught classrooms were also affected by issues such as "(a) scheduling pressures, (b) content understanding, (c) acceptance by general educators, and (d) the skills of the special needs students" (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

In conclusion, there is an existing need for further research in the area of inclusion. Although a variety of research articles can be found on the topic of inclusive education, opinions are widely varied in terms of whether or not students can benefit from this type of program. It is important to determine factors that can contribute to a student's success or failure in an inclusive classroom.

# CHAPTER III

# DESIGN OF THE STUDY

## POPULATION

The subjects that participated in this study are students in a middle to upper class school district in central New Jersey. Five students are currently in the fifth grade, while the other seven subjects are sixth grade students, attending middle school within the district. Those in middle school had been fifth grade students at the same school as the current fifth grade students during the previous year, 2001-2002. All subjects were chosen for this study because they have received in-class support from a special education teacher at some time during their years in elementary school.

### *Current Fifth Grade Students*

Among the group of current fifth grade students in the study, all five were provided with in-class support in their fourth grade math class. Three of the five are presently in a fifth grade mainstream math class with the support of a paraprofessional, while two students have been placed in a resource room setting for math replacement instruction. Three of the current fifth grade students received in-class support for three hours per day in their third grade mainstream class. The support was provided in all subject areas. In addition, two of the students in this group were given in-class support services for one hour per day in second grade. The primary focus of the support at that time was Reading and Language Arts.

TABLE 1. Current Fifth Grade Students: Grade Level, Academic Areas, and Grades Received When In-Class Support was Provided

| Subject | Grade Level | Academic Area/Grade Received |
|---|---|---|
| S1 | 2 | Reading/Very Good Writing/Satisfactory |
| S1 | 3 | Reading/B Writing/C Math/B |
| | | Science/B Social Studies/B |
| S1 | 4 | Math/A |
| S1 | 5 | Math/B |
| S2 | 2 | Reading/Very Good Writing/Satisfactory |
| S2 | 3 | Reading/B Writing/C Math/C |
| | | Science/B Social Studies/B |
| S2 | 4 | Math/B |
| S2 | 5 | Math/B |
| S3 | 3 | Reading/B Writing/C Math/D |
| | | Science/B Social Studies/C |
| S3 | 4 | Math/B |
| S4 | 4 | Math/C Science/C Social Studies/B |
| S4 | 5 | Math/C |
| S5 | 4 | Math/C |

*Current Sixth Grade Students*

TABLE 2. Current Sixth Graders: Grade Level, Academic Areas, and Grades Received When In-Class Support was Provided

| Subject | Grade Level | Academic Area/Grade Received | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| S6 | 4 | Math/B | Science/B | Social Studies/B |
| S6 | 5 | Math/C | Science/C | Social Studies/B |
| S6 | 6 | Science/B | Social Studies/B | |
| S7 | 4 | Math/C | Science/C | Social Studies/B |
| S7 | 5 | Math/C | | |
| S7 | 6 | Science/B | Social Studies/B | |
| S8 | 4 | Math/B | Science/A | Social Studies/A |
| S8 | 5 | Math/B | | |
| S9 | 4 | Math/C | | |
| S9 | 5 | Math/C | | |
| S10 | 4 | Math/B | | |
| S10 | 5 | Math/B | | |
| S11 | 5 | Math/C | | |
| S11 | 6 | Science/B | Social Studies/B | |
| S12 | 5 | Math/C | | |
| S12 | 6 | Science/B | Social Studies/B | |

All students in the group of current sixth graders received in-class support in their fifth grade mainstream math class. Five of these students were also provided with in-class support for fourth grade math (the other two did not attend the school in the study as fourth graders). In addition, four of the youngsters from this group were given in-class

support during fourth grade science and social studies, while one of the students received similar services in fifth grade. Currently, four of the sixth grade subjects are receiving in-class support in their science and social studies classes.

## INSTRUMENTATION

The instrument used for this study has been designed to assess the opinions of teachers regarding the following issues: working with classified students, mainstreaming/inclusion, and pullout versus in-class services. Assessment of teachers' opinions was obtained through the use of interviews. Interview questions were provided by this researcher.

TABLE 3. Interview Questions Given to Teachers

| |
|---|
| What are your overall impressions of the in-class support service delivery model? |
| What character traits or factors do you feel are the most important in promoting success for children with special needs in an in-class support setting? (top three choices) |
| How important do you feel the following factors are in promoting success: student motivation, teacher attitude, and parental attitude/support? |

## COLLECTION OF DATA

Unobtrusive data was collected about each subject in a variety of areas. Background information was obtained to determine each student's category of disability, IQ ranges (when possible), and performance – evaluated by grades – in mainstream classes in which in-class support was provided. Information about attitudes of the

general education teachers and students' internal variables (i.e. motivation) was also obtained. Data was collected by reviewing students' school records, reviewing child study team records, and conducting interviews with teachers who have had in-class support in their classrooms.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Research was conducted by reviewing student and child study team records for the following information: school performance (determined by grades and teacher comments), category of disability, and IQ ranges (determined by educational testing). Research was also conducted by holding interviews with teachers relating to attitudes about inclusion, mainstreaming, and pullout versus in-class services.

Data was analyzed by assessing student records and interview results to determine whether common factors existed among students who have been successful with in-class support.

# CHAPTER IV

# ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The results of the study are presented in a format that attempts to answer the research questions listed in Chapter 1. For each question, a comparison was made between each student included in the study. Data analysis was also conducted by comparing teacher responses to interview questions.

## RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in a format that answers the questions listed in Chapter 1. The questions are discussed sequentially and the data pertaining to these questions are presented in the form of discussion and tables.

- Question One: Does category of disability appear to have an impact upon success or failure for students participating in an educational program involving inclusion?

As indicated by Table 4, the vast majority of subjects that achieved success in mainstream classes with in-class support have been classified with a specific learning disability. One student was classified as multiply disabled as a result of having a specific learning disability in conjunction with a behavior disorder.

TABLE 4. Disability Categories of Study Subjects

| Subject | Category | Subject | Category |
|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | SLD | S7 | SLD |
| S2 | SLD | S8 | SLD |
| S3 | SLD | S9 | SLD |
| S4 | SLD | S10 | SLD |
| S5 | SLD | S11 | SLD |
| S6 | SLD | S12 | MD |

*Note.* SLD = Specific Learning Disability; MD = Multiply Disabled

- Question Two: Is there a correlation between full scale IQ results and performance in inclusive settings? (For example, do significant weaknesses from a learning evaluation indicate lack of success in an inclusive classroom?)

TABLE 5. IQ Ranges of Subjects

| Subject | IQ Range | Subject | IQ Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | Low Average | S7 | Average |
| S2 | Average | S8 | Significantly Below Average |
| S3 | Average | S9 | Low Average |
| S4 | Average | S10 | High Average |
| S5 | Average | S11 | Average |
| S6 | Not Available | S12 | Average |

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of subjects (seven) achieved IQ scores in the Average range. However, two of the subjects' scores fell into the Low Average range, one subject performed in the Significantly Below Average range, while another scored in the High Average range. Scores were not available for one subject.

- Question Three: Does the attitude of the general education teacher have an impact upon how well the special needs student will perform in his/her classroom?

## TEACHER RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING IN-CLASS SUPPORT

At the elementary school level, there are five teachers who have participated in the in-class support model of service delivery for the subjects in this study. One of the five teachers is currently retired and living out of state. Therefore, interviews were conducted with the remaining four participating teachers. The purpose of the interviews was to assess the opinions of the teachers regarding in-class support as a service delivery model.

### Teacher 1

Teacher 1 was involved with in-class support in her third grade class for one year, 2000-2001. The special education teacher was placed in the classroom for three hours each day for all academic subjects. Three of the subjects involved in this study were students in this classroom.

Teacher 1 indicated that there were several advantages to the in-class support model. For example, classified children who are kept in the mainstream class never miss lessons or directions. She feels that their self-esteem is helped because there is no isolation and other children do not make fun of them. According to Teacher 1, another advantage is that all the children are able to utilize the expertise of the special education teacher, not just the special needs children. She indicated that in-class support allows the regular teacher to work with the slower students, as well as to observe all the students while the special education teacher is teaching. In addition, the teacher feels that in-class support allows for more individual attention for all students, which leads to more progress because the children are asked to meet expectations. There are also less discipline problems in this type of setting because the special needs children want to conform to the behavior of the class.

Teacher 1 indicated that it was difficult for her to think of any disadvantages to the in-class support model of education. She felt that the one negative aspect would be having special needs students who experienced a great deal of difficulty with the mainstream work. If they required a separate program, then the in-class support setting would not be beneficial for them. Overall, Teacher 1 feels that in-class support is "outstanding." Responses from this teacher seem to indicate that she feels very positively about in-class support, and that she enjoys working with special needs students within her classroom.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 was involved with an in-class support setting for two years in her fourth grade math class. The special education teacher was placed in her classroom for one hour

each day. Five subjects in the study were students in this math class during the year 2000-2001, while the other five subjects received math in-class support from 2001-2002. Two subjects did not attend this school for fourth grade.

Teacher 2 indicated that one of the positive aspects of in-class support is that there are no pullouts to work into the schedule. She feels that pullout replacement instruction is difficult to accommodate because there really are no good times for the children to miss whatever is taking place in the classroom. Teacher 2 also feels that in-class support is beneficial because it doesn't identify specific kids as needing help. Unlike pullouts, there is no stigmatism involved with in-class support. Another benefit is that there is a second teacher in the classroom for all the students to utilize. The teacher also feels that the special education teacher benefits from learning more about the mainstream curriculum. There is more collaboration between regular teachers and special education teachers when an in-class support program is implemented.

A possible disadvantage to in-class support, according to Teacher 2, is that both teachers are sometimes "spread too thin," especially when the classroom consists of mainstream children in addition to the special needs students. Also, the ability levels in this type of setting tend to be far apart. The students with higher abilities may be slowed down by the lower students. In general, Teacher 2 feels that in-class support can be a useful classroom placement. She maintains a positive attitude about working with special needs students.

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 was involved with an in-class support setting for one year in her fifth grade math class. The special education teacher was placed in her classroom for one hour

each day. Seven of the subjects in this study were students in this math class during the year 2001-2002.

Teacher 3 indicated that an important benefit to the in-class support model is that there is a second teacher to provide individual help for all the students. In addition, she feels that another positive aspect is that the students are able to see the materials presented in a different way. With two different teachers, there are two different styles from which the children can benefit.

When asked to identify disadvantages, Teacher 3 said that she couldn't think of any. She indicated that the only downside would be a situation in which the two teachers had different philosophies or didn't get along with each other. Responses provided by Teacher 3 seemed to indicate an overall positive attitude towards the inclusion of special needs children in her classroom.

Teacher 4

Teacher 4 is currently involved in an in-class support setting in her fifth grade math class (2002-2003). A special education paraprofessional is placed in her classroom for one hour each day. At the present time, three of the subjects in this study are students in this math class.

When asked to identify the advantages of in-class support, Teacher 4 indicated that she likes having a second person in the room because it helps her to stay on track with her lessons. The other person is able to help the children stay on task so that the teacher doesn't need to stop frequently. Without in-class support, the teacher finds it difficult to provide individual help to those in need. Having a second person in the room also improves discipline. Teacher 4 feels that it is critical for all students to have some

exposure to the mainstream curriculum. When students are pulled out of the classroom, there is no collaboration between the two teachers. In addition, she feels that the special education teacher who provides replacement instruction outside the classroom is not accountable for a particular curriculum. In other words, she feels it is more beneficial for the children to learn the same material as the mainstream students, modified if necessary.

Teacher 4 discussed one disadvantage to the in-class support model. She feels that sometimes the children learn to depend on the extra support, even if they don't necessarily need it. Teacher 4 seemed to have generally favorable impressions of in-class support. She indicated that she enjoys working with special needs students and helping them to face challenges.

- Question Four: Do internal factors such as motivation and/or effort affect student performance?

TABLE 6. Character Traits/Factors Necessary For Success With In-Class Support (As Indicated By Teachers)

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher 1: | confidence – they must want to succeed and feel that they can succeed<br>parental support<br>well-adjusted – no discipline problems |
| Teacher 2: | self-confidence<br>risk-taker – has to be willing to take the initiative<br>motivated – independent worker |
| Teacher 3: | must be able to stay focused<br>able to work independently<br>self-motivation<br>responsible – for completing classwork and homework<br>home support – help from parents is important |
| Teacher 4: | good self-image – must be willing to accept help<br>must be aware that the real purpose of in-class support is to provide help, not to criticize |

These results will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

# CHAPTER V

# SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

## SUMMARY

When a child is evaluated by a child study team and is determined to be eligible for special education services, a very critical decision must then be made. What is the best placement for the child in the educational system? What services should be provided for the child so that he can learn and achieve to his fullest potential? Which modifications and accommodations should be made to ensure that the child is still working as independently as possible?

Teachers, parents, child study team members, administrators, and sometimes the child himself, are often involved in the decision-making process. When considering special education placement, the child's welfare is of primary concern. In addition, there are issues of legality that must be taken into account. By law, children with special needs must be placed into the least restrictive environment. They must be provided opportunities to participate in the mainstream curriculum as much as possible. Thus, the movement towards inclusion began. Today, it is still an important and controversial issue in the field of education.

Is it possible for students with special needs to be successful in a mainstream classroom? If they have been classified as "eligible for special education services," can they handle grade-level work? For all children, with or without special needs, there are factors that seem to indicate successful performance in school and positive learning experiences.

The purpose of this study was to determine the existence of factors that seem to be indicative of success for special needs students who receive in-class support in a mainstream class. The subject group consisted of five fifth grade and seven sixth grade students from a middle to upper class school district in central New Jersey, for a total of twelve subjects. All subjects have been classified as eligible for special education services, according to New Jersey code. Students were chosen for this study because they have received in-class support from this researcher for at least one mainstream subject area. Factors such as disability category, IQ range, attitude of the general education teacher, and internal factors (i.e. motivation and effort) were analyzed and compared for each student to determine whether commonalities existed.

Analysis and comparison of the data revealed that there are certain factors that seem to indicate a child with special needs will be successful in the mainstream with in-class support.

## FINDINGS

As evidenced by grades of C or better, all subjects were able to achieve success in a mainstream class in which in-class support was provided by a special education teacher. One factor analyzed for this study was category of disability. Results appeared to indicate a strong commonality in that eleven of the twelve subjects had been classified with a specific learning disability. One subject was classified as multiply disabled as a result of a specific learning disability and a behavior disorder.

The study also sought to determine if IQ was a factor in determining success in mainstream settings with in-class support. Since specific IQ scores were not available,

broad ranges were compared. Although there were seven subjects that fell into the Average range, this is only a slight majority. In other words, there was not an overwhelming number of subjects that were performing in the average range. One subject's IQ fell into the High Average range, another performed in the Low average range, while another subject's scores indicated a Significantly Below Average performance. IQ information was not available for one subject. Based on the varied results of IQ ranges, this does not appear to be a factor that determined success for this subject group.

Four regular education teachers who have worked with the subject group in classroom settings with in-class support were interviewed to determine if there was a common attitude among them that would indicate success for special needs children. (One teacher has since retired and was not available for this study.) All four teachers had very positive feelings about in-class support. They seemed to be in favor of keeping special needs children in the classroom as much as possible. They indicated that they enjoyed working with the children and having a second teacher in the classroom. Based on these interview results, teacher attitude seemed to play a role in the success of the subject group.

The participating teachers were also asked to reflect upon the special needs students who had been successful in their classrooms to determine character traits or other factors that seemed to be critical for success. Responses that were given most frequently were motivation and self-confidence. In general, the teachers felt that the subjects in the study truly wanted to be successful and to participate in the mainstream curriculum. They felt that the children were willing to work hard in order to achieve their

goals. Self-confidence was also seen as important because the students felt good enough about themselves to feel that they were capable of being successful with a regular education curriculum. The children felt that they could achieve at the same level as their "regular" peers. All teachers also felt that parental and family support was another factor that would indicate success.

## CONCLUSION

Based on results from this study, there are certain factors that seem to be critical for the success of special needs students in mainstream classrooms with in-class support. It appears that success may occur most often for children who have been classified with a specific learning disability. On the other hand, IQ range did not seem to be an important factor in determining success. Following are other factors that each of the subjects had in common: classroom teachers who exhibited positive attitudes about inclusion and working with special needs children, motivation, effort, and parental support.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Although a majority of the students in the study have been classified with a specific learning disability, it is important to note that SLD was not the original classification for three of the subjects. In earlier years, two of the three subjects had been classified as multiply disabled - specific learning disability in conjunction with communication impairment. One of the three subjects had also been classified as multiply disabled – specific learning disability in conjunction with other health impaired (due to ADHD). Therefore, results of this study may not be valid in determining that

students with specific learning disabilities are more likely to be successful than students with other types of disabilities.

The school used in the study has a limited population of students in that the district is middle to upper class. In addition, the special needs population does not consist of a wide variety of disabilities. Perhaps the results of this study simply reflect the high number of students with specific learning disabilities attending this particular school.

Broad IQ ranges did not appear to be a contributing factor in determining success for special needs students in mainstream classes with in-class support. The IQ ranges for this group of subjects were quite varied. Some of the testing to determine IQ had been done several years ago for the purposes of initial classification. It would be interesting to retest these students to determine whether IQ scores have improved. Perhaps then there might be more of a commonality among the results.

The study indicated that another critical factor seemed to be the student's classroom teacher. All teachers interviewed for the study expressed that they were in favor of the in-class support model of service delivery. They felt that special needs students should be expected and encouraged to perform at the same level as their "regular" peers, whenever possible. I can assume from these results that if a special needs student is placed into a classroom with an unreceptive teacher, the outcome might be very different. In order for a child with a disability to have any chance of succeeding in a mainstream classroom, the teacher needs to be positive, encouraging, and willing to give extra help. A teacher who feels that it is a burden and an inconvenience to have

special needs students in her classroom is most likely not going to be willing to make allowances or to spend extra time giving assistance.

The working relationship between special education and mainstream teacher is also important. This researcher developed positive, trusting, and respectful relationships with each of the teachers involved in the study. In each situation, a partnership existed between the two professionals. Frequently, the special education teacher presented the lesson while the general education teacher observed and circulated throughout the classroom, providing assistance as needed. Support was given to all students in the class, not just the special needs students. Therefore, the special education students were more comfortable asking for help. They felt confident and secure about having two teachers in the room.

In co-teaching situations in which the two teachers do not develop a positive working relationship, the benefits to in-class support may not exist. Tension may be evident between the two teachers, and students will certainly sense this. If there seems to be confusion in terms of each professional's role in the classroom and their respective responsibilities, students may not understand what is expected of them.

The study revealed that motivation and self-confidence seem to be common factors among students who achieved success with in-class support. This was not a surprising finding. Motivation is often a predictor of success for many people in many areas of life. Parental support was also found to be a common factor. In my experience, this makes a significant difference in the overall attitude and performance of special needs students. Those who have supportive and encouraging parents seem to demonstrate more self-confidence than those whose parents are not involved.

Although the importance of this study is evident in determining factors that may contribute to the success of students with special needs in mainstream classes, it was done on a very small scale. The study was not longitudinal and the number of subjects was small. It would certainly be beneficial to conduct similar studies on a larger scale.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. If the study was to be replicated, a larger and more varied sample size might contribute to more reliable results.
2. A study to determine factors which indicate success for students in special education placements, and a comparison to those factors that were found in this study for inclusion students.

REFERENCES

Austin, V. L. (2001). Teachers' Beliefs About Co-Teaching. Remedial & Special Education, 22 (4), 245-255.

Cook, L. & Friend, M. (1995). Co-Teaching: Guidelines for Creating Effective Practices. Focus on Exceptional Children, 28 (3), 1-16.

Defur, S. H. (2002). Educational Reform, High-Stakes Assessment, and Students with Disabilities. Remedial & Special Education, 23 (4), 203-211.

Hagan-Burke, S. & Jefferson, G. L. (2002). Using Data to Promote Academic Benefit for Included Students with Mild Disabilities. Preventing School Failure, 46 (3), 112-118.

Hanline, M. F. & Daley, S. (2002). "Mom, Will Kaelie Always Have Possibilities?" Phi Delta Kappan, 84 (1), 73-76.

Hartz, G. (2000). Inclusion or Exclusion? It All Depends. Christian Science Monitor, 92 (34), 13.

Jones, M. N., Thorn, C. R., Chow, P., & Wild, C. (2002). Equifinality: Parents' and Students' Attitudes Towards a Student-Centered Approach to Integration. Education, 122 (3), 624-635.

Langerock, N. L. (2000). Collaboration in an Inclusive Classroom: A Passion for Action Research. Teaching Exceptional Children, 33 (2), 26-34.

Mastropieri, M. A. & Scruggs, T. E. The Inclusive Classroom: Strategies for Effective Instruction. Upper Saddle River: Merrill.

Moody, S. M., Vaughn, S., Hughes, M. T., & Fischer, M. (2000). Reading Instruction in the Resource Room: Set Up for Failure. Exceptional Children, 66 (3), 305-316.

Schmidt, R. J., Rozendal, M. S., & Greenman, G. G. (2002). Reading Instruction in the Inclusion Classroom. Remedial & Special Education, 23 (3), 130-140.

Trent, S. C. (1998). False Starts and Other Dilemmas of a Secondary General Education Collaborative Teacher: A Case Study. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 31 (5), 503-513.

Weiss, M. P. & Lloyd, J. W. (2002). Congruence Between Roles and Actions of Secondary Special Educators in Co-Taught and Special Education Settings. The Journal of Special Education, 36 (2), 58-68.