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**A STUDY OF THE COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES OF GENERAL EDUCATION
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE INCLUSION CLASSROOM IN AN
URBAN HIGH SCHOOL**

by

Angela McDougall

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
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at
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Thesis Supervisor: S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D.

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I sincerely acknowledge special education and general education teachers at Camden High School, Camden City who provided me with the opportunity to observe, take notes and answer questions on their instructional practices in their classrooms.

Abstract

Angela McDougall

A STUDY OF THE COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN THE INCLUSION CLASSROOM IN AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

2018-2019

S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D.

Master of Arts in Special Education

This study expands on prior research on the benefits and strategies implemented in an inclusion classroom with the general education and special education teacher in an urban high school. The collaborative strategies that both teachers implement are critical to ensure a high level of instruction delivery to the special education students and the general education students that are placed together in the inclusion classroom. The general education teacher and the special education teacher both have their respective roles in the inclusion classroom.

General education teachers, ICS (in class support) and special education teachers who instruct in self-contained classrooms were interviewed to get a perspective from each teacher on their strategies, collaboration, years of experience and training to successfully teach students with disabilities and non-disabled students in the same classroom. Data was collected by note taking, interviews and observing the teachers in the classroom, leading and or supporting instructional strategies. A total of five classes were observed in varying content areas. Four were inclusion classes with in class support from certified special educational teachers and one self-contained classes with students of varying disabilities with a paraprofessional in a supportive role.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of This Investigation

The focus of this investigation was in an examination of the benefits and collaborative strategies that are implemented by teachers in classrooms include that include students with exceptional learning needs (inclusive classrooms). This study also questioned the training and abilities of general education teachers, and special education teachers in the urban high school to meet the needs of special education students placed in inclusion classes as they enter the high school arena.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), mandated that children with disabilities should be educated with their peers along with additional aides and or services so that the requirements of their Individual Education Plan (IEP) are met, under the least restrictive environment (LRE) in the public school. Because of these laws, and the “No Child Left Behind Act, (2002) school districts are not allowed to exempt special education students from taking state mandated standardized assessments. Hence, these special education students are placed in general education classes and are taught the same curriculum as their non-disabled peers. This type of class is known as an inclusion class.

An inclusion class may be taught primarily by a general education teacher with a special education teacher providing in class support for the special education students. In some districts, the special education teacher may co teach or team teach with the general education teacher. Some research has noted that general education teachers should

welcome the inclusion make up of their classroom. According to Loreman and Deppeler (2002) ...one goal of inclusion is for every school to not only accept, but welcome children with disabilities. Uditsky (1993) state that; *in the inclusive classroom the student with a significant disability, regardless of the degree or nature of that disability, is a welcomed and valued member. The student is: taught by the regular classroom teacher (who is supported as needed); follows the regular curriculum (with modification and adaptation); makes friends; and contributes to the learning of the entire class [and] ... participates in all aspects of school life according to her interests and moves year to year with her peers from kindergarten through high school (p. 79).*

Purpose

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the benefits as well as some collaborative strategies that inclusion teachers utilize along with the general education teacher to ensure success for all students placed in an inclusion classroom in an urban high school. This study also examined the training, abilities and Professional development of general education teachers and special education teachers and their respective perception of their roles in the inclusion classroom.

There are those who believe that the needs of students with disabilities are better met in self-contained classes rather than in inclusion classrooms. Research has noted that in some inclusion classrooms special education students "... show significant improvement in academics and socially when placed in regular education classes, than those who are in self-contained classes" (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994). Then there are those who think that inclusion classes do not benefit general education students. It is believed that instructional time is extended, because special education students have far

more needs; thereby learning takes place at a slower pace than it would be if the entire class was general education, or if it was all special education students in a self-contained classroom.

The data for inclusion classes in this high school study show that close to 50% of students are identified as students with special needs. Also, Patton and Townsend, 1999; Gardener, 200; and Salend, 2005 stated that there are a disproportionate number of special education diagnoses in the urban high school. With this in mind, if a teacher is not adequately trained to work with a higher number of special education students, it can severely limit the success of not only the students in the inclusion class but the overall effectiveness of the teacher in these classes.

Research Problem/Question

There are numerous studies done on the effects of inclusion classes at the elementary and middle school level. Information is readily available on the internet, but there is relatively sparse information on the high school population. So this lack of information is what prompted this study to focus on the inclusion class in an urban high school. What is the success rate of these students? What percentage of students with an IEP show academic progress or graduate and go on to post-secondary schools. What does the general education teacher expect and what specifically is the role of the special education teacher in an inclusion classroom in the urban high school?

Who determines the preparedness of the school's administrators and classroom teachers to effectively prepare special education students in inclusion classrooms for graduation, post-secondary academia and life/career success?

Research Questions:

- Do special education and general education teachers feel they receive sufficient training to meet the needs of various classified special education students in a regular classroom? What additional training do they identify that would help them better serve their students?
- What strategies do teachers (general and special education use to ensure success for all students placed in an inclusion classroom?
- How do special education teachers see their role in the secondary classroom?
- How are special educators utilized in the secondary classroom?
- Do general education/special education teachers collaborate with other school professionals?
- Do general educational/special education teachers collaborate prior to delivering instruction in the inclusion classroom?
- What percentages of students with an IEP show progress and graduate from high school?

Definitions

- **Inclusion:** Inclusion is the method of educating students with disabilities in the same classrooms with students without disabilities. Before PL 94-142 was put in place, students with disabilities were separated from other students
- **Inclusion classroom:** The physical classroom that is used for the instruction of both special education and general education students
- **IDEA:** Individual with disabilities Act - Legislation governing special education which state that individuals with disabilities should be included in the classroom

to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers; this is known as placement in the (LRE) Least restrictive environment.

- **No Child Left Behind:** Legislation signed by President G.W. Bush in January 2002, which gave the schools throughout the country educational reforms in accountability parental choice, community and state freedom and promoted proven educational methods.
- **HSPA:** The High School Proficiency Assessment, a state mandated assessment which is partial requirement for high school graduation.
- **Modeling:** The teacher models what the students will be doing and provides examples for students to refer to.
- **Independent practice:** Students will work on assigned tasks independently with guidance but no assistance from teachers.
- **Guided practice:** Students will complete assigned tasks with the assistance of the classroom teachers and or paraprofessional.
- **IEP:** Individual Education Plan commonly referred to as an Individualized Education Plan. The IEP is a legal document that describes the program of special education services that a student with disabilities should receive in order to be successful in school
- **LRE:** Least Restrictive environment. A federal requirement that states students with disabilities should be taught with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.

- **PL.94-142 – EHA:** Enacted in 1975 by US congress also known as EHA – guarantees a free and appropriate public education for individuals with a disability.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The inclusion classroom in an urban high school is not a new phenomenon, because inclusion is not a new topic. It is one that has been discussed, tried and instituted in many school districts around the country. Inclusion is a legal right that is afforded to children with disabilities which came out of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004). Implementing inclusion classes in school districts is a task more easily put on paper than is implemented in the actual classroom.

There are several models of an inclusion classroom. There can be a special education teacher and a general teacher placed in a classroom as partners to deliver instruction to students with disabilities alongside regular education classmates. In some districts, the special education teacher is a full partner that is a co teacher, sharing all responsibilities with the general education teacher. In other districts, the special education teacher is in the classroom in a supportive role but will support all the students in the classroom, not just the students with disabilities.

Several legislative acts made it possible for students with disabilities to be put into classrooms and receive instruction with their similarly aged peers. Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) came out of P.L.94-142. In 1997, this legislation was amended to add the inclusion of special education students in the regular education class environment in schools that are publicly funded. The students with IEPs were not only to be instructed under the same curriculum as their non-disabled peers, but they were not exempt from

taking the same state mandated standardized tests (with accommodations, not modifications) as their peers.

An Inclusion class may be taught primarily by a general education teacher with a special education teacher providing in class support for the special education students. In some districts, the special education teacher may co teach or team teach with the general education teacher. In the high school in this study, the special education teacher is in a supportive role in the inclusion class. In a self-contained class for students with varying disabilities, the special education is the lead teacher with a paraprofessional in a supportive role. Some research has noted that general education teachers welcome the inclusion make up of their classroom. According to Loreman and Deppeler (2002), one goal of inclusion is for every school to not only accept, but welcome children with disabilities.

Some proponents of inclusion may state that general education teachers are not sufficiently trained and therefore not able to meet the needs of the special education student. Also, in the urban high school, the classrooms for students with learning disabilities may not be adequately functional for these students. Research also states that there is not enough evidence to support inclusion. “There is a strong research base to support the education of children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers. Although separate classes, with lower student to teacher ratios, controlled environments, and specially trained staff would seem to offer benefits to a child with a disability, research fails to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs” (Lipsky, 1997; Sailor, 2003).

However, research also indicate that some general education teachers claim that they have not had sufficient training and or support that will translate in effective /successful teaching in an inclusion class. "... increased demands have created a sense of hopelessness and frustration among both general and special education teachers because they are required to step out of their quality world into an inclusion setting where they are ill-equipped and unprepared to teach students with disabilities" (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris, 2007). These teachers feel that they are not equipped to deal with the diverse needs of the students that have been "included" in his or her classroom.

Even though a special education teacher is present in the classroom with the general education teacher; the general education teacher have to teach, monitor and motivate these multiple disabled students to achieve some sort of progress; academic, social and otherwise in preparation for graduation, post-secondary academia, and life. This can be and is often quite a task for both teachers. The general education teacher is primarily responsible for the education of the special education students. Despite his or her presence, the in class support special education teacher, is more or less in a supportive role to the general education classroom teacher in some districts. Then there is usually a difference in the amount of content knowledge between the two teachers. To remedy this, one of the requirements of NCLB is that special education students should be taught by highly qualified teachers in the content area. Although special education teachers are considered highly qualified in special education most do not hold certification in content areas at the high school level. This is the reason that in this high

school, some special education teachers are utilized as in-class support teachers and are not required to teach but provide support to students with disabilities.

Instructional methods used by both general education and special education teachers could range from co-teaching, team teaching, parallel teaching and station teaching, and alternate teaching. The most commonly used method is co-teaching.

Additional strategies that have been found to be successful in the high school have been Peer tutoring. “Peer tutoring resulted in significant increases in spelling, social studies and other academic areas for students with and without disabilities” (Maheady et al., 1988; Pomerantz et al., 1994). The use of graphic organizers, study guides, and computer accommodations resulted in significantly improved performances on tests and quizzes for students with and without disabilities” (Horton, Lovitt, & Berglund, 1990). These strategies have been observed mainly in the Language arts literacy and mathematics inclusion classrooms.

Some research has noted that “placement in inclusive classrooms does not interfere with the academic performance of students without disabilities with respect to the amount of allocated time and engaged instructional time, the rate of interruption to planned activities and students’ achievement on test scores and report card grades” (York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The school used in this study is a four-year comprehensive public high school in an urban district. At the start of this study, the total number of students in the high school was approximately 667. Out of this number, 320 are classified as students who qualify for special education services or students with an IEP.

There are a total of 82 certificated staff members, which includes 17 Special education teachers. Some of these special education teachers also provide in-class support to the general education teachers in addition to teaching their own self-contained special education classified students in classrooms with, or in some cases, without an assistant.

There are 65 general education teachers who instruct in the core content areas of Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Physical education, Career and technical education, Fine arts, World languages, Science and History. There are 9 paraprofessionals who assist in inclusion classrooms and self-contained classrooms.

The classrooms in the study consisted of:

Classroom 1 = LAL – grades 10-12 - general education teacher with ICS special education teacher

Classroom 2 = History - 10th and 11 grade- general education teacher with ICS special education teacher

Classroom 3 = Math = 9th grade –general education teacher with ICS special education teacher

Classroom 4 = Science = 10th and 11th grade –general education teacher with ICS special education teacher

Classroom 5 = self-contained – Moderately cognitively impaired classroom - all subjects taught by a certified special education teacher - 9th to 12th grade, with one on one paraprofessional as an aid for one student.

Table I shows the classrooms that were observed, the subject area, the teachers in the classroom, the average number of students in the classroom, years of teacher experience and whether the teachers received training on students' IEP requirements.

Table 1*Observed Classrooms*

| Content area CLASS ROOM (#) | Grade | Gen ed | Special Ed | Self cont | ICS | Yrs of exp | Avg # students in class | PD (IEP)training received |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------|------------|-----------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| LAL (1) | 10-12 | | √ | | √ | 12 | 13 | Yes (ICS) NO (gen ed) |
| Math (2) | 9 | √ | | | √ | 10 | 14 | Yes (ICS) No (gen ed) |
| Science (3) | 10-11 | √ | | | √ | 12 | 20 | YES (ICS) No (gen ed) |
| History (4) | 10-11 | √ | | | √ | 2 | 10 | Yes (ICS) No (gen ed) |
| Mod Cog Multiple subjects (5) | 9-12 | | √ | √ | Para-Prof essio nal | 20+ 20 | 11 | Yes (spec ed) No (Para) |

Procedure

This study focused on the strategies implemented for academic success in the inclusion classroom by both general education and special education teachers; their perspective on professional development support received and their abilities/capabilities to provide rigorous instructional delivery; and their views on benefits gained by special education and general education students in the inclusion classroom.

For this study, a total of nine teachers and one paraprofessional were observed and notes made from observing them in the classroom setting and them sharing their perspectives.

The teachers' responses were reported from the notes taken during their conversations with the researcher and so too were the classroom observations. This provided an opportunity to decide if the methods/strategies used by the classroom teachers are sufficiently rigorous to enable academic success in both populations of students in the inclusion classroom. The information recorded from the New Jersey Department of Education website on high school performance provides some insight on the academic achievement levels of the school. Data applicable to the research questions were analyzed using tables and a descriptive narrative.

Data collection

Site. Observations were conducted at an urban high school in four inclusion classrooms and one self-contained classroom. Teacher interviews were with both general and special education teachers.

Data was collected by observing teachers in five classrooms on their use of instructional strategies implemented in the classroom, and their methods of instructional delivery. Data collection included taking notes during these observations and interviewing the teachers. The teachers were observed and shared their strategies and their perspective on their abilities/capabilities to deliver instruction to general education and special education students in the same classroom.

The following questions were asked of the general education and special education teachers:

- Do you consult /collaborate with the Special education teacher prior to delivering instruction in the classroom?
- Have you consulted with school psychologist, Child Study Team regarding special needs students in your classroom?
- Do you attend IEP conferences for special needs students in your class?
- Do you believe that you have received sufficient training to be an effective teacher for students with special needs in an inclusion classroom?
- Do you believe that your training or lack of training adversely impacts the academic progress of general education and special education students in your class?

- Should general education teachers be wholly responsible for teaching students with special needs?
- Do your years of experience as a general education teacher prepare you to teach special needs students in an inclusion classroom?
- Have you seen or recorded data (assessments) that show academic growth of special needs students?

A total of three days of observations and note taking was done. Observations were done in each classroom for twenty minutes out of the forty-one minute class period. One-on-one interviews with the teachers were done only once. Additional data was obtained from the New Jersey state department of education website on the high school performance summary (<https://rc.state.nj.us>).

Chapter 4 Results

Analysis of the Data

Data recorded from teacher interviews indicated that training was not directed to them acquiring reinforced knowledge and strategic resources that would enable them to effectively service students with varied learning disabilities. In this respect, the general education teachers rely heavily on the knowledge, training and experience of the special education teacher in the classroom especially for strategies that included applicable behavior modification, accommodations, such as preferential seating, using assistive technology learning devices and adjusting instructional delivery to enhance their understanding of material presented on a daily basis.

Table 2 presents the results of the interview questions posed to the general and special education teachers, including the para-professional used as a one on one assistant in the moderately cognitive impaired classroom. Data recorded from teacher interviews indicated that training was not directed to them acquiring reinforced knowledge and strategic resources that would enable them to effectively service students with varied learning disabilities. In this respect, the general education teachers rely heavily on the knowledge, training and experience of the special education teacher in the classroom especially for strategies that included applicable behavior modification, accommodations, such as preferential seating, using assistive technology learning devices and adjusting instructional delivery to enhance their understanding of material presented on a daily basis.

Table 2*Interview Questions/Responses*

| Questions | Yes-Gen ed | No-Gen ed | Yes-Sp ed | No-Sp ed | Para Prof | Total |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| Q 1 | 4 | | 5 | | No | 10 |
| Q2 | | 4 | 4 | | Yes | “ |
| Q3 | | 4 | 5 | | Yes | “ |
| Q4 | | 4 | 5 | | No | “ |
| Q5 | 4 | | 5 | | Yes | “ |
| Q6 | 4 | | 3 | 2 | No | “ |
| Q7 | | 4 | NA | NA | NA | 4 |
| Q8 | 4 | | 5 | | Yes | 10 |

In the subject areas of Language Arts Literacy, Math, Science and History, none of the general education teachers reported receiving specific /sufficient training to be an effective teacher in an inclusion class. (Question # 4). But all answered yes to question # 1, “Do you consult/collaborate with the special education teacher, prior to delivering instruction in the classroom”. However, the extent of the collaboration was sharing of lesson plans.

In the subject areas of Language Arts Literacy, Math, Science and History, none of the general education teachers reported receiving specific /sufficient training to be an effective teacher in an inclusion class. (Question # 4). But all answered yes to question # 1, “Do you consult/collaborate with the special education teacher, prior to delivering instruction in the classroom”. However, the extent of the collaboration was sharing of lesson plans.

Figure 1 showed the overall performance of the school rose slowly from 2012 to moderate gains in 2017. Schooldigger.com reported that this high school performed better than 0.3% of high schools in New Jersey. In 2014, percentage fell to 0.2%. In 2014 percentages fell to 0.2%, in 2015 performance fell to 1%. 2016 saw a slight rise to 0.2%, but in 2017, performance rose to 4.4%. Despite the rise in performance the school is in need of improvement.

Data for specific academic gains for special education students are not clearly defined. But if overall academic progress was made, and then it may be that both general education and special education student population benefitted from the strategies implemented by the state, district and classroom teachers.

| | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | ❖ |
| 3 | ❖ | | | | |
| 2 | | ❖ | | ❖ | |
| 1 | | | ❖ | | |
| 0 | | | | | |
| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |

Figure 1. School Performance Rating (%)

Data for specific academic gains for special education students are not clearly defined. But if overall academic progress was made, and then it may be safe to say that both general education and special education student population benefitted from the strategies implemented by the state, district and classroom teachers

Because the population of students with an IEP change from school year to school year, the percentages of these students who go on to post-secondary academic institutions vary. Data for the 2012-2013 school year (see data table 2) revealed that approximately 40% of the graduating students with an IEP were accepted into post-secondary academic

institutions. There were one hundred and eighty graduating seniors. Fifty seven (31.6%) of these were students with an IEP. Eighteen were accepted in a 2 year post-secondary institution. Three were accepted into both 2 and 4 year institutions. Three were accepted at vocational training institutes. There was no available data for previous years at the time of writing.

The instructional strategies that teachers implemented in the inclusion classrooms, included peer tutoring, cooperative learning groups, and differentiated instruction. Noted below are some strategies that were observed in the different classrooms visited.

Science classroom. The type of strategies used in the science classroom with the general education and special education teacher as in class support ranged from one on one assistance to small group instruction. The in-class support (ICS) teacher reported that the students will work on response problems in small groups, cooperatively with each other. One student would ask a question then the group will explore the answers and come to an agreement before writing the final response. This method would take extra class time, so sometimes it was necessary to complete the task the next day or encourage the students to complete for homework, in this way; the playing field was leveled for both the general and special education students in the classroom.

English classroom. The general education teacher started the lesson as whole class instruction. The discussion on the day of observation was creating a life map. The teacher asked if they knew what a life map was. The students gave oral responses. A discussion ensued on what a life map was. The teacher showed an example of a completed life map. The example was passed around. The special education ICS teacher

then moved around the room clarifying directions and assisting all students who had additional questions. The general education teacher then explained to the students that they would be producing a life map of their own. She described the steps that they would take to get the project started. The teacher gave additional instructions and gave a rubric to be used as a guideline to get the project completed. This method appeared to work and the instructional period ended on time with almost all of the students participating in the discussion. The teacher gave the due date of the project and class ended.

Math – Algebra 1. In this 9th grade inclusion classroom, the general education students were in the majority, with five special education students with varying learning disabilities. In this classroom, both teachers worked together, moving around the room assisting all students. The class was working on multiplying polynomials. The students were working in pairs. There was no apparent purposeful separation of the students with disabilities and regular education students. Both teachers said that they shared the same common planning time. However, the general education teacher planned the lesson and the special education teacher made modifications and planned accommodations for the students with disabilities and shared this with the general education teacher.

Moderately Cognitively Impaired Class. The Moderately cognitive impaired classroom was visited twice. They were working on a history lesson. The paraprofessional was encouraging the student who he provided aid for to write on the lines of his notebook. The teacher, who is a certified special education teacher, directed the lesson. The students were sitting in two groups of four and one group with three students including the severely disabled student. The classroom was a bit hectic as

students called on the teacher and paraprofessional when they needed assistance. The instruction period in this classroom is somewhat flexible, the teacher explained. Because of the disabilities of the students and the fact that the students stay in the same classroom for most of their instruction, the teacher could extend the learning time.

With new state mandated assessments in Mathematics and English. The students are assessed at several intervals during the school year. The data gathered from these assessments will be used to increase teacher collaborative planning and careful instruction with the goal of raising the performance level of general and special education students in all classrooms. It must be noted however, that there are no modifications to the assessments for the special education students taking these tests. Because of the newness of the assessments, it is not yet determined whether the special education students must “pass” the tests, or show improvement in academic performance just as their general education peers.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study examined some strategies that general education special education teachers implemented during their instructional delivery in the inclusion classroom. While the strategies were sound and worked in the classroom, the school performance report showed that the high school was in the lowest ranking percentile of schools in the state.

Research-based strategies to boost academic as well as social progress were observed in use, such as Universal Design Learning, peer to peer tutoring, small group reinforced instruction. As indicated on the performance report, even though some progress is evident it was apparent the concerns of the teachers that their lack of professional training could be the barrier to higher gains for the special education students placed in an inclusion class in this school. Lipsky (1997) and Sailor (2003) reported that research generally supports the inclusion of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.

This study revealed that on the whole, collaborative strategies implemented by both teachers in the inclusion classroom with the goal of maximizing student academic involvement on a daily basis overall progress were successful, despite the fact the general education teachers in all classrooms in the study believed that they needed additional professional training in order to be effective in practicing their pedagogical skills with the disabled students placed in their classroom.

The issue of professional training was found to be an area of consistent concern among all the general education teachers interviewed during the study. The teachers felt that they had to rely too heavily on the in-class support (ICS) special education teacher for guidance on procedural strategies with regard to delivering instruction that was effective and in line with the requirements of the special education students' IEP. Notwithstanding, they did not express the desire to dismiss the ICS teachers' knowledge of the IEP process, but they wanted to be more aware of the laws/mandates and their professional responsibilities as it pertains to the students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom.

Overwhelmingly, the general education teachers did not believe that they had sufficient professional development training in special education to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Additional training in the Federal laws and procedures that are part of IDEA and 504 and workshops with the learning disabilities teacher consultant (LDTC), and child study team at the school were needed to shed light on various aspects of the IEP process, especially after the initial classification is completed.

Given that the teachers are encouraged to review the students' IEP, some noted that in-depth knowledge would help them in planning and delivering instruction. This knowledge would potentially lead to maximizing student learning and performance, not only for the students with disabilities, but for the general education students also.

The teachers spoke of the common planning sessions where they shared instructional delivery strategies in their core content areas. These shared strategies included but were not limited to differentiated instruction, scaffolding, chunking, one on

one assistance, group and peer tutoring and student collaborative grouping. These strategies were used in all instructional areas. In an inclusion classroom, varying levels of these strategies were implemented based on the various IEP requirements of the students in that classroom. Although team teaching and/or co-teaching is not officially implemented in this high school, this approach was observed in practice in two classrooms. The teachers in the two classrooms reported that it worked in their particular classroom; primarily because of the relationship that they fostered and shared with the students in the classroom.

The special education teachers in this study viewed their role as that of an instructional catalyst in the classroom. The ICS teacher is in a supportive role to the general education teacher and as such makes the modifications and administer the accommodations necessary to service the students' IEP requirements so that the students receive services as required by law in the least restrictive environment.

The special education teacher in the self-contained classroom observed in this study was the only certified teacher delivering instruction in this classroom. Except for pullout sessions for Health and physical education, Art and Music instruction, the teacher provided all other academic instruction for this class. This teacher who had more than twenty years teaching experience felt that he was sufficiently trained to instruct the students. But his concern was that an additional staff member was needed. That area, be it due to understaffing or class size regulations of placing the maximum number of students with varying disabilities allowed in the same classroom environment is another area of investigation not covered in this investigative study.

The general education teachers shared that they were encouraged to collaborate with each other. The time for this collaboration took place during the allotted common planning period which was on every teacher's schedule. Ideally, collaboration ranged from sharing instructional strategies, behavioral issues and or any other issues that teachers are confronted with during the school day. In common planning meetings, for the Mathematics and Language Arts department, it was noted that teachers were planning strategies to meet and improve student performance on an upcoming standardized assessment for their content area.

The issue with the time set aside for teacher collaboration was that a special education teacher who provided support for different content areas could not meet with all the teachers and had to rely on sharing of the lesson plans as the collaboration for that particular class.

In addition to the observed and noted strategies that the teachers implemented in the inclusion classes, there are several strategies which have been found to be successful by other researchers on the inclusion classroom.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size of this study was limited to one high school in an urban district. Therefore reliability of the study may be limited.

Implications for Practice

While no one method of instructional strategy has been proven to be beneficial to students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom, the development and implementation of practices together with effective professional development support for the general education teacher in the inclusion classroom should be planned for and put in place.

Because of the Department of Education reports that state that there have been significant increases in the number of school aged children eligible for special education services, school districts should plan for and implement practices and procedures to train general education teachers; so that these teachers who instruct students in inclusion classrooms are prepared to meet the educational needs of their students. Teachers should have the opportunity to use a variety of co-teaching methods. There are several co-teaching methods that are used successfully by teachers in other districts. General education teachers should be offered opportunities to attend Professional development workshops/seminars specifically geared for general education teachers who teach inclusion classes. Kathleen Whitbread, Ph.D (What Does the Research Say About Inclusive Education?) reported that “Research shows that Principals, special education directors, superintendents, teachers, parents and community members must all be involved and invested in the successful outcome of inclusive education” (Villa,1997: Walther-Thomas 1997).

First and foremost, the Child Study Team must use the IEP meeting to determine what supports the classified student would need in the general education classroom in order to achieve academic success. Guidance counselors, general education, special education teachers, those that provide in class support including paraprofessionals; all stakeholders must collaborate as a community to ensure and maximize overall performance of the special education student in the inclusion classroom.

Information on the percentages of students with an IEP who go on to post secondary academic institutions are not clearly defined, on the department of education website and other sites who reported on the academic performance of the high school.

There is a vast amount of research literature that examines the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities, their non disabled peers and the teachers' perspective in the inclusion classes. However, most of the research seems to focus on the elementary and middle school years. There is not a lot of information to be found on the benefits, strategic planning and management of instructional and professional preparations for teachers of inclusion classes in the high school, in urban areas.

While no one single method of instructional strategy has been proven to be beneficial to students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom, the development and implementation of practices together with effective professional development support for the general education teacher in the inclusion classroom should be planned for and put in place. The New Jersey Department of Education reports that there have been significant increases in the number of school aged children eligible for special education services. School districts should plan for and implement practices and procedures to train general education teachers; by offering professional development workshops/seminars specifically geared for general education teachers who are expected to instruct students in inclusion classrooms so that they are prepared to meet the overall needs of their students.

Conclusions

If inclusion is to be successful in the high school, especially in an urban district, as well as in other school districts, then general education and special education teachers must work together utilizing the best co-teaching practices available. The professional school community must build on the strengths of the special education students in order to provide a successful transition as they assist them in planning next steps in a post secondary learning environment, or as new workers in their communities.

One drawback with the inclusion of students with disabilities is that assessments and reports of student performance are used to monitor and alter the activities of educators and schools, yet students with disabilities are frequently not included or required to prove their success or lack thereof in these assessments. For example, the senior students with IEP's who take the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) are not required to get a passing grade, even though this is a requirement for graduation for the general education student. This exclusion suggests that the achievements of the special education students are not considered to be significant based on the fact that they have an exempt status because of their disability. So therefore, after being instructed alongside their general education peers during their high school years for graduation purposes it does not matter that they did not meet the graduation requirement. Why then were they placed in an inclusion class?

This study revealed that on the whole, collaborative strategies implemented by both teachers in the inclusion classroom with the goal of maximizing student academic involvement and overall progress were successful; despite the fact the general education teachers in all classrooms in the study believed that they needed additional professional training in order to be effective in practicing their pedagogical skills with the disabled students placed in their classroom.

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