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## Special education students' perceptions of inclusion versus pull-out placements

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SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION VERSUS PULL-  
OUT PLACEMENTS

by  
Jennifer L. Shaw

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
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May 3, 2004

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_

Professor

Date Approved \_\_\_\_\_

May 3, 2004

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## ABSTRACT

Jennifer L. Shaw  
SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION VERSUS  
PULL-OUT PLACEMENTS  
2003/04  
Dr. Stanley Urban  
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of special education students toward their placement in inclusion and/or pull-out resource settings. Inclusion and pull-out special education students were interviewed individually regarding their perceptions of the academic and social ramifications of their respective placements. Fourth and fifth grade students (N = 15) currently enrolled in inclusion or pull-out settings from a suburban middle class elementary school were interviewed. The data collected from this phenomenological study was analyzed in order to create broad statements that may be generalized to a more extensive population. This study demonstrated that the majority of inclusion and pull-out students are content with their respective placements in special education. The students in pull-out are cognizant of the academic support offered to them through the pull-out program, and many of them prefer pull-out because of the academic advantages inherent in the small group setting. The students in both types of settings revealed very few social consequences of receiving support from a special education teacher in either placement.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this paper to all of those fourth and fifth grade students in special education whom sincerely and willingly shared their thoughts and emotions about their placements with me. It is my hope that the candid recounts of their experiences will serve to positively impact upon the placements of future children in special education.

I would also like to extend my appreciation toward Dr. Stanley Urban, whose insights and direction enabled me to weave my threads of information into a seamless cloth.

Finally, I would like to express my most heartfelt gratitude toward my mom and dad, whose infinite support and encouragement have guided me through every step of my life's journey.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Discussions regarding the most effective methods of educating students is a perennial question that permeates the literature regardless of how far back in history one chooses to examine. During the nineteenth century, educational decisions focused upon how to teach students basic literacy and number skills during an era when school attendance was not consistently an expectation, much less a legal requirement. As the twentieth century commenced, however, educational policy decisions revolved around developing more comprehensive educational goals, legalizing compulsory attendance, and creating equal access to education for students of all ethnicities (Arends, 1994).

Within the first three quarters of the twentieth century, decisions regarding the education of students with disabilities often resulted in their inappropriate placements in either private or institutional settings. Frequently, these students were denied access to public education. The future of these children with disabilities would change forever with the passage of landmark legislation enacted by Congress in 1975 known as P.L. 94-142. This law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. This act guaranteed a “free, appropriate public education” for *all* students, regardless of their academic functioning or capabilities. Furthermore, the act specified that the education of students should take place in the least-restrictive environment. The phrase “least-restrictive environment” referred to the initiative that “students with disabilities were to

be educated to the greatest extent possible in the general education classroom” (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000).

The provisions of IDEA have changed the educational opportunities provided to countless American students with disabilities. A 1998 report published by the U.S. Department of Education showed that, “nearly three-fourths of students with disabilities are now being served primarily within the general education classroom setting” (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Clearly, the impact of the “least-restrictive environment” clause of IDEA has significantly altered the mindset driving educators’ placement decisions for these students. This clause has forced educators to consider a continuum of placements when determining the most beneficial setting for an individual child based on his or her unique needs. Placement options are frequently composed of inclusive settings, in which the students with disabilities are educated completely within the regular classroom, resource rooms, in which the students are taught separately by a special education teacher for select subjects, self-contained classrooms, in which students are taught all subjects by a special education teacher in a classroom comprised of students all with disabilities, and various out of district placement options.

IDEA guarantees students with disabilities the right to be educated in the setting that simultaneously provides opportunities for a successful educational experience and is least removed from the general education setting. Determining the placement that will sufficiently embrace both of these characteristics is an arduous endeavor that weighs heavily upon educators and parents. Even with all parties focusing on the best interest of the child, opinions vary and disagreements can arise. In the absence of an absolute “correct placement”, educators and parents must make a selection between placement

options based upon what they deem to be the “best placement” based on their individual judgment.

In the midst of the debates, the controversies, and the pedagogical and theoretical discussions between parents, educators, and administrators, one lone voice has rarely been summoned. The voice that possesses an opinion, a belief, a legitimate theory - is the one that is frequently never allowed to speak. It is the voice of the students themselves.

### VALUE OF THE STUDY

Collectively, administrators, educators, and parents are faced with the monumental task of determining the most effective educational placement for each and every student with special needs. When selecting among options ranging from full inclusion to out of district placements, a variety of academic and social factors must be considered when determining which placement will best meet the needs of the individual child. In addition to determining the placement that will most appropriately accommodate the child’s instructional needs in order to ensure academic success, educators must also consider the placement that will best promote the child’s socialization skills, self-esteem, and social acceptance.

In order to assist them in making the most rational and effective placement decisions, parents and educators may turn to the current literature base for advice. Research studies can be found to confirm the benefits and pitfalls of both inclusion *and* pull-out programs. The gamut of contradictory theories, opinions, and viewpoints regarding the efficacy of inclusion versus pull-out placements frequently lead to debates perforated by anxiety and discontent.

Throughout these tension riddled decision-making processes, these adults tend to neglect consulting the one source that could be considered an authority on the topic. Who better to judge the effectiveness, impact, and social consequences of special education placements than those students who have experienced them firsthand? A consultation of the preferences of special education students themselves could be a key component in determining whether inclusion or pull-out models are truly the most beneficial placement for students with special needs.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of special education students toward their placement in inclusion and/or pull-out resource settings. The design of the study will allow an examination of emotional feelings generated by the special education students toward each of these placements, and it will obtain their perception regarding which setting most effectively provides for their educational and social needs. An understanding of how each of these placements is viewed by the students will shed new light on the contradictory research base that currently compares the efficacy of these two diverse models.

#### NEED FOR THE STUDY

The special education placement decision-making process can be emotionally difficult for the parents and educators involved. To further compound these difficulties, the existing research base regarding the most effective special education placements is contradictory and non-absolute. In the midst of these contradictions replete throughout the literature, there enters a need for a new perspective regarding the most effective

placement. The students who have first-hand experience within the various educational placements can add a dimension not considered in those research studies solely comparing objective test scores or rating scales. An analysis of students' first hand perceptions of special education placements will provide parents and administrators with additional information to consider when contemplating the best placement option for an individual child.

In addition to allowing parents and educators to consider the students' perspective when making placement decisions, studying students' perceptions toward their special education placements also provides the students with an opportunity to feel as though they have more control over their own educational destiny. If students' motivation to learn is directly impacted by the responsibility they are given regarding educational issues, than it is imperative that educators provide these students with an opportunity to have a voice in their own educational placement (Vaughn & Klingner, 1998). Studying special education students' perceptions of their special education placements not only provides valuable insights to assist parents and professionals in their own decision making process, but it also can be utilized to empower the students themselves in order to give them a sense of control and responsibility over their educational future.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The data obtained will be used to answer the following general research question:

What are the perceptions of special education students toward their inclusion and/or pull-out resource placements?

In order to answer this general question, the following questions will be investigated:

1. What are inclusion students' and pull-out resource students' understandings of and feelings toward having two teachers?
2. Do inclusion and pull-out resource special education students believe that their academic needs are being met within their current educational placement?
3. How do inclusion and pull-out resource special education students feel about their social acceptance within their current placement?
4. How do students placed in a pull-out resource class feel about attending a different class for part of the day?
5. If given a choice, which educational model, inclusion or pull-out resource, would special education students prefer? What factors have contributed to their ultimate preference?

## DEFINITIONS

The following list of definitions has been provided to ensure a shared understanding of these common terms:

Inclusion class- a regular education class in which special education students receive their instruction for the entire day. For the subject areas of language arts and sometimes mathematics, the class is taught collaboratively by a regular education and a special education teacher. The other subjects are taught only by the regular education teacher. During these other subjects, the regular education teacher is responsible for implementing modifications as delineated by a child's individualized education plan.

Pull-Out Resource Class – A class comprised of special education students removed from the regular education class and taught solely by a special education teacher. Students

attend the pull-out resource class for specific subjects, such as language arts or mathematics, for a part of the day. The students receive instruction in the other subjects within the regular education classroom by the regular education teacher.

## LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations that must be considered when generalizing the results of this study to other populations. First, the students participating in the study were enrolled in a single suburban, middle class school's fourth and fifth grade population. Therefore, the study sample not only represents a limited age span, but it also consists of students with similar cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds. Caution must be utilized when generalizing these results to students of diverse ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Secondly, in order to obtain unbiased and candid information from the students, the researcher will employ personal interviews as a means of data collection. As is the case with other types of self-report measures, there is always a risk that the students being interviewed will provide responses based on what they perceive to be the "correct answer" rather than sharing their true feelings or beliefs. Additionally, it will be difficult for the researcher to determine the precise factors that have influenced each child's responses. For example, when asked if she would rather stay in the regular class or attend the resource room for instruction, a student's answer may be based on her feelings toward a particular teacher rather than toward the instructional model itself. Even when queried about their choice, some students may not be able to completely express, or be unwilling to share, their true reasoning. Finally, it must be remembered that although all of the students in the research sample currently attend either a resource room or an inclusion class, each child's past experience in special

education has been varied and unique. Therefore, not only it is impossible to determine all of the factors that have created a child's perceptions of her placement, but it also may be difficult for a child to envision herself in a placement other than the one with which she is most familiar. This factor must be considered when analyzing the responses of those students who have only experienced inclusion. It may be very difficult for them to consider what it would be like to attend a resource room, and so they may simply express complacency with their current inclusion placement.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### A Historical Perspective of the Inclusion Movement

When Congress created P.L. 94-142, Congressional sponsors realized that one setting could not meet the needs of all learners. While fashioning this act, the authors' intent was not only to guarantee an appropriate education to students with disabilities, but also to encourage social interaction amongst students with special needs and their regular education peers. With this goal in mind, 94-142 ensured that all students eligible for special education services would receive their education in the least restrictive environment.

Prior to the 1990's, schools frequently adhered to the mandates of IDEA by educating students who were eligible for special education services within special classes. The appropriateness of these special classes began to be increasingly questioned during the early 1990's when concerns emerged regarding how these separate classes would impact upon students' social and communicative functioning within the general student population (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). These concerns soon gave rise to several advocacy groups that began promoting the education of all students, regardless of their handicapping condition, within the confines of the regular classroom. The movement toward inclusion was advanced when several court decisions ruled in its favor, including the 1993 *Oberti vs. Clementon* case in which the federal court upheld the right of children with disabilities to be educated in regular classrooms with their non-disabled peers (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1995). The advocacy groups for inclusion were further

supported by legislations and school boards that viewed full inclusion as a way to cut ever-increasing special education costs (Shanker, 1995).

IDEA's dual goals of ensuring an appropriate education while encouraging social interaction amongst peers often conflict with another, leaving parents and educators to decide which goal should receive precedence (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). The rise of the inclusion movement seemed to mandate the doctrine that the goal of fostering socialization superceded the goal of receiving the most appropriate instruction. However, even though inclusion advocates, especially those supporting full inclusion, often promoted their movement with a dominant and overbearing voice, it was not, and continues to not be, the overriding opinion endorsed by all parents and educators. Parents and educators can be divided into two groups – those that support full inclusion (the education of all students within the general education classroom), and those that support the least restrictive environment (in which students with special needs benefit from a continuum of services).

#### Inclusion: A Description of Its Vision

Inclusionists believe that it is impossible to separate the goals of “social interaction” and “appropriate education” because an *appropriate* education only exists in the presence of *complete* social integration with regular education peers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). Speaking for the more radical proponents of inclusion, Mara Sapon-Shevin, a Professor of Education at Syracuse University, asserts that the “world is an inclusive community...It is very important for children to have the opportunity to learn and grow within communities that represent the kind of world they'll live in when they finish

school” (O’Neil, 1995). To these advocates, inclusion reflects the diversity inherent in the composition of the “real world”.

While not all proponents’ views are as extreme as Sapon-Shevin’s, supporters of the inclusion model believe inclusion serves to reduce the stigmatization of special classes while making the services of special education teachers available to all students. Furthermore, placing regular and special education students together in one cohesive class fosters sensitivity, increases an appreciation of differences, and “provides an opportunity for sustained interaction between students who may not otherwise come together in school” (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Within this placement, the general education students serve as a model for academic and social behaviors (Pugach & Wesson, 1995).

The ideal representation of the inclusion model includes a flexible curriculum appropriate for different levels and modalities, thematic instruction, cooperative learning, and authentic assessment. Sapon-Shevin avows that these requirements call for a “fundamental restructuring” of school districts and schools (O’Neil, 1995). In order for schools to successfully implement inclusion, they must be committed to expending resources, support, teacher preparation time, and staff development (O’Neil, 1995).

#### Pull-Out Placements: An Adherence to the Law and Best Practice

Creating the most successful learning environment for all students is the main objective of both the inclusionists and the advocates of the least restrictive environment. Unlike the inclusionists, however, those supporters of a continuum of services believe that “...when a student is not benefiting from instruction in a regular class, a compromise must be struck between the legitimate social needs and the equally valid educational

needs of the child” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). While inclusionists believe that complete social integration is the *only* appropriate education, those who champion special classes contend that a total abolishment of special education placements unequivocally serves to *deprive* many students from receiving an appropriate education. Numerous organizations dedicated to the education of students with special needs, including the Council for Exceptional Children and the Learning Disabilities Association, stalwartly endorse IDEA’s model of a continuum of services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). Jim Kauffman, a Professor of Education at the University of Virginia, contends that since “...we don’t have research showing that *all* students can be taught well in regular classrooms.... we must maintain the alternative of moving kids to other placements when that appears necessary in the judgment of teachers and parents” (O’Neil, 1995). Furthermore, the law as outlined by IDEA mandates that educators must consider the least restrictive environment based on individual students examined on a case-by-case basis. Regular education may not be the least restrictive environment for all students (O’Neil, 1995).

Proponents of a continuum of services maintain that effective special education instruction cannot take place in a “one size fits all” model. Special classes removed from the regular education classroom provide teachers with unparalleled opportunities to individualize instruction while selecting curriculum, instructional techniques, motivational strategies, and progress monitoring tailored specifically to the unique needs of each student (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

#### Inclusion: Weighing Its Benefits and Drawbacks

Proponents of inclusion cite numerous advantages inherent in this model. A foremost rationale for their support of inclusion frequently revolves around the assertion

that inclusion reduces the stigma associated with the disability labels often linked to students whom attend special education classes (Whinnery et al., 1995). Related to this stigma includes a belief that the self-esteem of students with disabilities will be deflated because they will be considered “slow” by their peers (Klinger et al., 1998). Some researchers assert that “pull-out models contribute to students’ lack of membership in the classroom and thus to their overall low social status” (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). Proponents feel that inclusion circumvents the pitfalls associated with leaving the classroom to go to a separate class. Remaining in the regular education classroom affords students with more time to make friends, increases instructional time because of the avoidance of switching classes, and ensures a continuity of content covered for regular and special education students. Additionally, inclusion forces the regular education teachers to take more responsibility for educating all students, including those with special needs (Klinger et al., 1998).

The classroom environment created through inclusion can be one that fosters a sense of caring, interdependence, and mutual respect toward all members of the classroom community. The model of cooperative learning frequently utilized within numerous inclusion classrooms inspires students to “...recognize each other as sources of help” and enables them to simultaneously feel challenged, yet successful (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). The inclusion model also promotes the existence of flexible interactions between high and low achievers both socially and academically. Furthermore, the regular and special education teachers collaborating within an inclusion classroom are able to coordinate their instruction and fully ascertain the individual strengths and weaknesses of students through the continuity and coordination of their interrelated services (Pugach & Wesson, 1995).

Besides from nurturing a sense of group belonging, proponents believe that inclusion can also positively influence students' classroom behaviors and attitudes. In their 1984 study comparing full-time mainstreamed and pull-out resource special education students, Wang and Birch noted that the inclusion students were "observed to engage less in teacher-directed work, more in independent work, and more in on-task behavior", and their ability to generalize their knowledge across settings was superior to their resource room counterparts. Other studies have indicated that students with special needs in inclusive settings are also more successful than pull-out students at making mutual friends (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998).

Baker, Wang, & Walberg (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of studies researching the most effective setting for special education students. They measured academic outcomes of special education students through standardized test scores and social outcomes through ratings of how well special needs students related to others in the classroom. Their analysis revealed that inclusion makes a "small to moderate" impact upon these students' academic and social outcomes. Essentially, the study concluded that those students with special needs who are educated within the regular education classroom do better academically and socially than comparable students in noninclusive settings (Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1995).

The findings of the Baker, Wang, & Walberg study (1995) support the utilization of inclusion, however, these researchers warn that although "the effects of inclusion are positive and worthwhile...*they are not huge* [emphasis added]." Therefore, the benefits of inclusion should not overshadow the equally numerous shortcomings also inherent within the model. One major dilemma created by inclusion involves the amount of teacher preparation and training necessary for inclusion's successful implementation.

Inclusion forces regular education teachers to take responsibility for students whom they have very little guidance or knowledge about educating. Justine Maloney, Legislative Chairman of the Learning Disabilities Association of America, asserts, "Until regular education teachers receive the training they need, some students with disabilities will continue to fail [because] too often regular education teachers have been taught to teach curriculum, not students" (Shanker, 1995). Regular education teachers have not been trained to tailor the curriculum to the individual needs of students, and although inclusionists believe the special education services should follow these students into the regular education classroom, many districts employ inclusion simply as a means of cutting special education expenditures (Shanker, 1995). Furthermore, parents and teachers have expressed concern over whether the performance of the non-special education students in the inclusion class suffers because of the amount of time the teacher has to spend with those students with disabilities (Klinger et al., 1998).

While most regular education teachers are not offered professional development regarding students with special needs, even those who are provided specialized training demonstrate difficulties with educating students at an instructional level that promotes progress. Klinger et al. (1998) discovered that even when teachers were presented training, some students with learning disabilities in their full time regular education classrooms continued to demonstrate minimal progress in reading (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). The differentiation of instruction for students with special needs within inclusion classrooms is further elaborated upon in McIntosh et al.'s (1993) study that concluded, "Students with learning disabilities are treated by their general education classroom teachers much like other students." Upon first glance, this finding seems to emphasize the effectiveness of inclusion because it demonstrates the acceptance bestowed upon

students with learning disabilities. However, treating these students the same as everyone else also means that their instruction is non-differentiated, few adaptations are provided, and their individual needs are most likely not being effectively met (McIntosh et al., 1993). On the surface, the benefits of inclusion may appear clearly evident, however, a deeper analysis of this model may reveal internal flaws.

### Pull-Out Placements: Outdated, Or On the Cutting Edge of Instruction?

Since the inclusion bandwagon began in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the boisterous voices of a few outspoken inclusionists have vehemently denounced special education pull-out programs. In response to these criticisms, the utilization of pull-out programs has been abandoned in numerous school districts (Guterman, 1995). Despite the poor reputation this model has acquired, pull-out programs possess a few clear advantages unattainable in inclusion classrooms. Therefore, the option of pull-out placements should be considered when determining the most appropriate educational setting for any individual child.

The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act was created to ensure that students with special needs would not continue to experience failure as a result of inappropriate instruction. Every child is unique; however, those children with disabilities require very individualized programs in order to accommodate for their special needs. Since "you can't have all types of instruction happening in the same place at the same time" (O'Neil, 1995), and differentiation of instruction typically does not occur within the general education classroom, pull-out placements are essential in order to provide students with the "appropriate education" as identified in IDEA (Klinger et al., 1998). A study conducted by Fuchs, Deshler, and Zigmond (1994) concluded, "instructional gains

are greater in pull-out programs” (Whinnery et al, 1995). It may be postulated that one reason for the academic success enjoyed by pull-out placements is the presence of trained special education teachers who possess the experience, knowledge, and desire to teach these students. Instruction for these students could suffer in many inclusion classes in which general education teachers either do not make the necessary special education modifications, or they feel inadequately prepared to handle the challenges inherent in teaching students with special needs (Klinger et al, 1998).

Besides from the instructional benefits of pull-out, there could be social benefits as well. Students with learning disabilities are often identified as being the least popular or most rejected students in the classroom (Klinger et al., 1998). It could be speculated that placement in a smaller setting in which peers are more alike than different could serve to promote the self-esteem of these students.

Pull-out programs serve as a crucial component in the continuum of services as delineated within IDEA. Despite its ability to provide the most individualized education for any student with disabilities, the concept of pull-out programs is not flawless. Inclusionists argue that pull-out placements not only stigmatize students, but they also create low expectations by teachers (and therefore students), and they reinforce feelings of inferiority. All of these factors combine to result in poor school performance (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). Although the more recent Fuchs, Deshler & Zigmond (1994) research indicates that there exists greater instructional gains within pull-out programs (Whinnery et al., 1995), an abundance of inclusionists staunchly cling to the research of Ysseldyke, O’Sullivan, Thurlow, & Christenson (1989) which revealed that the instruction within special education classrooms does not appear to differ substantially from that of general education (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Armed with this research discovery, researchers

supporting inclusion have questioned the reasoning behind pulling out students with disabilities. The efficacy of pull-out is further questioned by other researchers whom argue that this model is typically “academically ineffective and socially harmful” (Guterman, 1995), and the segregation inherent in this model causes negative social effects (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Additional problems associated with pull-out placements include disruption of classroom instruction, failure to increase academic learning time, failure to produce a transfer of knowledge between the special education and regular classroom, uncoordinated teaching efforts between the regular and special education teachers, and lack of cost effectiveness (Jenkins & Heinen, 1989).

#### A Solution to Conquer the Cache of Contradiction

A plethora of research has been devoted to the study of the effectiveness of inclusion versus pull-out resource instruction. One might surmise that this collection of research might serve as the basis upon which placement decisions could be determined judiciously and confidently. However, the conclusions obtained by these studies are replete with contradictions about every topic investigated, including issues that range from social gains and ratings of self-esteem to academic and school performance levels. To date, the literature analyzing the efficacy of inclusion and pull-out resource programs is a compass that fails to point in a consistent direction.

The cadre of researchers cannot unequivocally point to the superior model of instruction. Yet, there is one group of people whose first-hand knowledge, experiences, emotions, and wisdom can provide invaluable guidance to those parents and educators searching for the most appropriate special education placement. This group, composed of the actual students in inclusion and resource classes, may not have doctorates or

dissertations to their credit, but they do hold a perspective and an understanding that adds an entirely unique and invaluable dimension to the placement debate. A few researchers have elected to evade the classic analysis of standardized tests scores and the statistics behind the ratings of self-worth in an effort to obtain indiscriminate and unadulterated information straight from those students who are the most involved with, and affected by, the two diverse models. In essence, these few researchers have had the fortitude to plainly and clearly present to these students the question that has burned in the minds of researchers, educators, and parents: Which is the best – inclusion or pull-out?

#### Inclusion or Pull-Out: Which Do Students Prefer?

Several research studies have been conducted that directly asked students whether they would prefer instruction through an inclusion or a pull-out model. A study conducted with 686 second, fourth, and fifth grade special, remedial, and regular education students revealed that the students' current placement seemed to significantly influence their response. The majority of students currently receiving pull-out services preferred pull-out, however, only *half* of the students currently attending inclusion classes preferred inclusion (Jenkins & Heinen, 1989). These findings were corroborated by Klinger et al.'s (1998) study that interviewed 16 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade LD students who were currently in inclusion, but whom had spent at least one previous year in pull-out. Results revealed that although few students were "emotionally engaged" to their opinion, pull-out was the overall preference despite the fact that pull-out was not these students' present model of instructional delivery. A third study conducted by Whinnery et al. (1995) further confirmed these findings. This 1995 study, in which 16 LD students in resource, 16 LD students in collaborative teaching (inclusion) settings, and 16 regular

education students were surveyed, revealed that although the attitudes between pull-out and inclusion did not significantly differ, those students who had all experienced pull-out and were now in inclusion were split in their preference for inclusion versus pull-out. These researchers concluded, “students were apparently not completely satisfied with receiving LD services in the regular classroom” (Whinnery et al., 1995). Although students are inclined to prefer the “status quo” in which they tend to select the model in which they are currently attending, the benefits of pull-out are strong enough to sway numerous students with special needs to yearn for the model they enjoyed in the past.

Although “...when there was a clear preference for a service delivery model, it was for pull-out”, studies reveal that age frequently plays a role in determining individual student’s preferences (Jenkins & Heinen, 1989). An analysis of three studies revealed that while younger primary grade students more frequently preferred inclusion, intermediate grade students favored the resource room because they felt they could learn better there (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). A study by Vaughn and Bos (1987) corroborates these findings. This study, in which 126 non-handicapped students and 20 students with learning disabilities in grades one through six participated, asked students to rank order their preference for attending the resource room, the reading room, the counselor’s office, or the nurse’s office. While 70% of the older LD students selected attending the resource room as their first or second choice, 50% of the younger LD students selected it as their last choice. A possible explanation for this disparity could be that as students spend more time in the resource room, “they realize the value of the time spent there” because they begin to understand that the level of work in the regular education classroom is too challenging. On the other hand, the expectations at the primary level “may be more commensurate with student needs,” thus making regular education more desirable for the

younger students (Vaughn & Bos, 1987). The older these students with special needs become, the more they are able to appreciate and comprehend the benefits pull-out can afford.

### The Academic Particulars about the Pull-Out Preference

Across the research studies, the majority of students with special needs articulated that the pull-out model of instruction was most highly preferred because it provided them with the best learning environment (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). All sixteen students receiving pull-out instruction in Whinnery et al.'s (1995) study revealed that not only did they enjoy going to the resource room, but 88% of them also believed they *learned* more in the resource room than in the regular class.

Students' reasons for preferring pull-out essentially revolve around two factors – the extra help they are able to receive and the quiet environment they are able to enjoy (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). The students with learning disabilities in Klinger et al.'s study (1998) seemed to be conscience of the extra assistance they needed in order to be successful learners. These students indicated that pull-out was more desirable over inclusion because they could receive more help, there were less people in the class, and they were presented material in a more understandable manner. Furthermore, since the class was composed of other students needing the same assistance, the interviewed students asserted that nobody in the class felt poorly about themselves. The attention and learning difficulties experienced by many of these pull-out students also allowed them to fully appreciate the resource room's quiet environment that enabled them to concentrate better (Klinger et al., 1998).

A third major factor cited in students' preference for pull-out revolved around their contention that the work received in the resource room was easier (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). Although critics may surmise that the students felt the pull-out work was "easier" because of its failure to be suitably challenging, perhaps a more reasonable explanation in support of pull-out may be that the work is considered "easier" by students because it is the only time they are actually working at their instructional level. In comparison to their daily academic struggles in the regular classroom, the academic expectations of the pull-out class may seem comparatively unproblematic (Klinger et al., 1998).

Despite the studies indicating that the majority of elementary students with special needs prefer the resource room because of its superior learning environment, this belief may not hold true for all students at the secondary levels. Guterman (1995) interviewed nine high school students with learning disabilities whom had experienced pull-out services since elementary school. The majority of these students asserted that their pull-out placement had not been overly beneficial because of its lack of challenging work and irrelevant, repetitive curriculums. None of the students interviewed felt as though they had obtained mastery over basic skills. Nonetheless, all of the students indicated that their pull-out placement "had been wise" because they realized that the general education teachers "rarely adjusted curricula, instruction, or requirements to accommodate for their needs" (Guterman, 1995). Despite their misgivings about the shortcomings of pull-out, given the special needs their learning disabilities required, only two of the nine students suggested an abolition of pull-out services. Their solution to a more effective special education placement was not inclusion, but rather a retention of

pull-out with a removal of “labels” and a curriculum replete with challenging and relevant materials (Guterman, 1995).

#### Inclusion: The Voice of the Minority Rings Through

While the prominent reason students preferred pull-out was due to the characteristics of the learning environment it presented, those students whom favored inclusion did so based on its social appeal. Klinger et al.’s study found that of the 32 students interviewed, 16 of them selected inclusion as the model that assisted students in making more friends. These students declared that inclusion aided the formation of friendships because there were more kids in the class, there were more opportunities to get to know classmates, and the utilization of cooperative learning enabled students to get to know everyone while they assisted one another. Social benefits pervaded the students’ reasons for supporting inclusion in the studies reviewed by Vaughn & Klinger (1998) as well. A few of the students in these studies reported that peers in the general education class were “nicer”, and everyone got along better in the inclusion class.

Although social reasons were the prime explanation for inclusion favoritism, some students also touted the academic benefits inherent in this model. Those students preferring inclusion in Klinger et al.’s (1998) study indicated that within this model, learning was stressed, more work was accomplished, and they enjoyed working together in groups and pairs. Students with and without disabilities in both the Klinger et al. (1998) and the Pugach and Wesson (1995) studies felt as though their academic needs were met in a more timely fashion in inclusion not only because of the existence of two teachers, but also because they were able to utilize fellow higher-achieving students as helpful “resources”. According to these students, the general education teacher knew

what they needed to succeed, and participation in the inclusion class enabled them to not miss any activities.

Nine special education fifth grade students in the Pugach and Wesson (1995) study who were participating in inclusion after a year of pull-out were able to share a unique perspective on their reasoning for favoring the inclusion model. Although all nine students affirmed the social benefits of inclusion by revealing they “were not teased as much as they had been in prior years”, they also shared the opinion that the inclusion model presented them with a sense of continuity and stability that the pull-out model failed to offer. These students felt that pull-out invited confusion because it was “easy to get mixed up when there were multiple things to do for several teachers”. Furthermore, these students expressed frustration over missing material covered in the regular education class and then receiving inaccurate information from peers regarding what was missed. For these students, the inclusion model enabled them to receive the assistance they needed while gaining a “full picture” of all subjects within the confines of one classroom. The inclusion practice of being “pulled aside” when small group remedial assistance was necessary was not considered nearly as disruptive or problematic as the full-fledged pull-out model. The small group instruction within the inclusive classroom was perceived as a regular part of classroom life that did not serve to fragment their academic or social experiences (Pugach & Wesson, 1995).

## The Existence of a Stigma Associated with Special Education and Pull-Out: Fact or Fiction ?

Does the pull-out model of instruction cause a stigma to be irrevocably associated with the special needs child? This is the driving question that incessantly burns at the souls of every parent and educator forced to make a placement decision.

Embarrassment, and the resulting stigma that it elicits, is the driving factor upon which students select a favored service delivery model. Regardless of the model preferred, a majority of students elect a model by contemplating which one causes the least amount of embarrassment to them (Jenkins & Heinen, 1989). Interestingly enough, not all students agree on the model that is the least embarrassing. Some of the second, fourth, and fifth grade students interviewed in Jenkins and Heinen's (1989) study asserted that attending a pull-out class would be embarrassing, while others contended that receiving in-class services would be embarrassing.

While some special education students contend that receiving help from the special education inclusion teacher is a source of embarrassment, others do not perceive this teacher as being at all stigmatizing. Although they received special education support through a pull-out program, the majority of the nine high school students interviewed by Guterman (1995) stated that they would *not* have preferred help from a special education teacher in an inclusion class because the support "would draw attention to students having difficulty and would lead to increased stigma." Other studies, however, revealed that taken as a whole, very few regular or special education elementary students realized that the second classroom teacher was a special education teacher, and all students, regardless of their ability level, highly valued this teacher (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). Studies conducted by Klinger et al. (1998) and Pugach and

Wesson (1995) both concluded that elementary school inclusion class students, with and without special needs, all perceived the special education teacher as a sort of assistant whose job it was to help *all* of the students succeed. Perhaps of the most interest, however, is the fact that *none* of the regular education students in either study realized that the “second teacher” was actually there to provide support to a select group of students in special education. To the students in these inclusion classrooms, the regular education teacher was viewed as the subject matter specialist, while the special education teacher was perceived as a “helper” whose job it was to attend to each of their individual needs (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Through an analysis of these discoveries, it may be postulated that students in special education do not feel stigmatized by the help they receive from the special education inclusion teacher because the rest of the class believes that teacher exists for everyone’s benefit.

When asked about their perceptions of the resource room and special education, the amount of stigma associated with each of these “labels” largely depended upon the age of the students. In their interviews with 126 regular education students and 20 students with learning disabilities in the first through sixth grades, Vaughn and Bos (1987) discovered that the age of the students determined the level of understanding they had regarding special education concepts, although there were no differences in understanding between those with and those without learning disabilities. Of note is the fact that 80% of all primary students and 51% of all intermediate students in the study did not know what special education was for. This high number of students who were uninformed and unconcerned about the existence or purpose of special education programs “raises questions about the strength of the negative stigma that has been associated” with the term ‘special education’ and ‘resource room’ (Vaughn & Bos, 1987).

It seems as though the adults debating about placement decisions find special education and the resource room more stigmatizing than the students ever do. Vaughn and Bos (1987) found that “when given an open-ended question, students tend not to associate the concepts of the resource room or special education with less bright students”. According to this study, the stigma associated with special education is largely a fallacy created within the minds of adults, ungrounded by the perceptions of kids.

Despite the findings of Vaughn and Bos (1987), Klinger et al. (1998), and Vaughn and Klinger (1998) indicating the non-stigmatizing associations between students with special needs and the existence of the inclusion teacher, the resource room, and special education, not all studies validate this rosy view. In Guterman’s (1995) interviews with nine high school students with learning disabilities, all of the students agreed that a “stigma automatically results from special education classification”, and all nine recalled feeling unhappy about leaving the general education classroom and possibly losing friends when they were first classified in elementary school. These students reported feeling that their mainstream peers considered them as less capable and “really stupid” (Guterman, 1995).

One reason for the contradiction in feelings identified through these studies could be explained by the different methods individual school districts employ to provide instructional support to students with special needs. The high school students in the Guterman (1995) study indicated that the negative stereotypes towards special education students existed because of a “lack of accurate information about what learning disabilities are, a lack of opportunities for classroom interactions between general and special education students, and the use of categorical labels”. The children interviewed in those studies in which it was concluded that students maintained a non-stigmatizing

view toward special education could have attended schools in which differences were readily accepted, students attending various classes through the day was considered as the norm, and special education labels were never utilized. The lesson that can be learned by all parents and educators is that the methods by which special education programs are introduced and sustained within a school may largely impact upon the way those programs and its students are perceived by the total school population.

### Does Pull-Out Cause the Pull-Down of Special Education Students' Self-Concepts?

Advocates for inclusion fervently avow that the pull-out model of instruction detrimentally reduces the self-concept of the students it serves. These inclusion proponents assert that pulling students out not only causes them to be labeled as "slow" by their peers, but the frequent absence from the general education classroom also results in these students' low social status and feelings of estrangement (Klinger et al., 1998; Vaughn & Klinger, 1998).

While some research indicates that there are differences between the self-concept of students in pull-out classes versus those in inclusion models, the significance of the differences found in these studies varies; it is questionable as to whether or not the social consequences of pull-out are of a magnitude that outweighs the inherent benefits of this model. In a study conducted by Whinnery et al. (1995), pull-out, inclusion, and regular education students in grades two through five were surveyed regarding their perceptions of inclusion versus pull-out services. Regardless of the instructional model in which they were educated, the majority of all the students surveyed indicated that they felt accepted by teachers and peers and they maintained positive feelings toward themselves. Despite these overall discoveries, results did demonstrate that inclusion students with learning

disabilities “perceived themselves to be less intelligent than their regular education peers”, and pull-out students had the lowest opinion of their intelligence as compared to inclusion and regular education students. Students in pull-out were more likely to respond “Yes” to the question, “I often feel dumb”, and they were more likely to feel that students in their class made fun of them (Whinnery et al., 1995).

A study conducted by Wang and Birch (1984) corroborates the findings of Whinnery et al (1995). Wang and Birch’s (1984) study, conducted on kindergarten through third grade mainstreamed and resource room students, revealed that in ratings of self-worth, inclusion students “tended to rate their cognitive competence, social competence, and general self-esteem significantly higher” than did the students in the pull-out program. Furthermore, while the mainstreamed special education students had almost identical competence and self-esteem ratings as the regular education students, the pull-out students’ self-ratings were found to be consistently lower (Wang & Birch, 1984).

Despite the fact that the Wang and Birch (1984) study concluded that pull-out students’ perceptions of self worth were lower than their mainstreamed peers, this revelation is not unanimously supported by more recent research. Although Whinnery et al.’s (1995) investigation found that a higher percentage of students in pull-out regarded themselves as having low intelligence, these researchers ultimately concluded that when viewed as a whole, the majority of pull-out students “responded positively to acceptance concerns” and “appeared to be content” with the pull-out model of instruction. Additional research has indicated that social acceptance is not an automatic byproduct of inclusion (Vaughn & Klinger, 1998). Vaughn and Klinger’s (1998) investigation of related studies discovered that as compared to resource pull-out students, “students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms do not demonstrate gains or losses in self-

concept and are still overall not as well liked as average to high achieving students.”

While early research touted inclusion because of its ability to promote social acceptance and increase self-esteem, recent research no longer lends the same level of credence to these tenants.

The overall feelings of acceptance identified by students in pull-out may be caused by influences other than their educational setting. In Guterman's (1995) interviews with nine high school students with learning disabilities participating in a pull-out program, all nine students admitted feeling that peers considered them “stupid”, they each felt that classification was considered a threat to one's social status, and they all regarded having a learning disability as a “personal deficit”. However, these students *denied* the assertion that pull-out creates a stigma that leads to social rejection and alienation because these students alleged that they had not internalized the stigma posed against them. Instead, these high schoolers asserted that the negative affects of classification could be deposed by exhibiting desirable personality traits, such as friendliness. They further avoided the stigma of classification by avoiding interactions with other special education students (such as those with multiple disabilities, such as Downs Syndrome), and by making a concerted effort to pay special attention to friends within the general education classroom. By the time these students got to high school, they had learned to accept their special education placement and had placed it in perspective; they realized that their intelligence was not related to their academic achievement, and their learning disability did not comprise the composition of their entire identity. In sum, those students in pull-out who were able to feel most comfortable with their placement learned to minimize the impact of external stigma by exhibiting self-

acceptance and finding alternative avenues of success outside of the academic classroom (Guterman, 1995).

While studies may not have shown a significant difference between the self acceptance of inclusion versus pull-out students, the study conducted by Whinnery et al. (1995) did find a clear discrepancy between groups in regards to who felt left out of class activities. Forty-four percent of students in the pull-out model indicated feeling left out, as compared to only six percent of inclusion students with learning disabilities. These researchers believe that these feelings of alienation may possibly be attributed to the fact that the pull-out students leave the classroom for part of the day, or it could reveal that the regular education students feel resentment towards those who do not have to complete all the same work as they do. This resentment might cause them to neglect accepting the pull-out students as full members of the classroom (Whinnery et al., 1995). Other studies, however, do not confirm clear feelings of alienation as indicated by those students in the Whinnery et al. (1995) study. Vaughn and Klinger (1998) conducted a review of related research studies which revealed conflicting results in regards to whether or not students were concerned about, or thought they missed out on, academic or recreational activities in the general education classroom.

#### The Preference for Inclusion Versus Pull-Out: And The Survey Says...

The popularity of young children's competitive sporting events has recently received much criticism because of the intensity and seriousness with which the adult spectators (parents) view the game. While the parents are often the ones entangled in arguments and fist-fights, the children sustain their nonchalant attitude in which the importance of having fun far exceeds the desire to flaunt, excel, or even win. This

situation encountered on myriad soccer fields, baseball diamonds, and hockey rinks around the country unswervingly mirrors the analogous debate over inclusion versus pull-out models of instruction occurring in countless child study teams, administrative offices, and parent-teacher conferences throughout the nation.

Proponents for inclusion and advocates for a continuum of services have debated incessantly over which is the most effective model. However, as parents, administrators, and educators staunchly support their cause, the students whose “best interest” they are looking out to protect demonstrate very little concern over the entire issue. Research indicates that while students do not unanimously prefer one instructional model to another, very few students exhibit exceedingly strong emotional attachment to any of their preferences. Many students take their placement in pull-out or inclusion all in stride; it is the adults involved who have created the fiery debates and relentless controversies.

Unquestionably, it is the responsibility of parents and educators to determine the most effective placement regardless of the students’ blasé attitudes towards the issue. Each model possesses distinct benefits and drawbacks in regards to instructional effectiveness and social consequence. Nonetheless, research does not illuminate one model overall as being clearly superior to the other. It is impossible for one model to meet the needs of every student; therefore, a continuum of services should be in place for individual consultation on a case-by-case basis. Ultimately, what model is the most effective? Which model do students prefer? The correct answer to both inquiries is ... it depends on the child.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### POPULATION AND METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION

The participants in this study are 15 students attending the school in which this researcher teaches. The 10 males and 5 females are fourth and fifth grade students ranging in age from 9 years, 6 months, to 11 years, 6 months. The accessible population of interest to this study is upper elementary special education students who participate in either inclusion or pull-out resource placements. A total of 22 students were eligible for participation in this study and parental permission was received for 16 of these 22 students to participate. Of these 16 students, one student moved from the district before an interview could be conducted. The diverse educational placements each of the participants has experienced is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Placements Past and Present ( N = 15)

<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Current Placement</u>	<u>Previous Placements</u>
1	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade ICS	Regular Education
3	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade ICS	ICS Grades 2 –3
2	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade ICS	ICS Grades 2-3 PO Grade 1
2	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade PO	Regular Education
2	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade PO	ICS Grades 2 - 3
2	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade ICS	ICS Grades 3 – 4
1	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade ICS	ICS Grade 4
1	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade PO	PO Grade 4 ICS Grade 3
1	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade PO	PO Grades 1 & 4 ICS Grades 2 & 3

Key

**ICS** = In-Class Support (Special Education Teacher Team Teaches with Regular Education Teacher for part of the school day)

**PO** = Pull-Out Resource Class in which language arts and/or math are taught by a special education teacher removed from the regular education classroom

\* Previous grades not listed denote a general education placement.

The number of students receiving special education services in this school's fourth and fifth grades are shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Students Receiving Special Education Services  
2003-2004

<u>Grade</u>	<u># of Classified Students</u>	<u>Total # of Students</u>
4	13	99
5	14	95

Demographic information pertaining to the school in which these students attend was taken from the *New Jersey School Report Card* for the 2001-2002 school year. This report, published by the New Jersey State Department of Education, provides information regarding an individual school's finances, teaching staff, class size, language diversity, and resources and compares the data to the state's average. The data for the district in which this study was completed is presented below.

2001-2002 School Year

Total Enrollment      541

Language Diversity

English    98 %  
Gujarati   1 %  
Others      1 %

	<u>This School</u>	<u>State Average</u>
Average Class Size	19.3	20.4
Student Attendance Rate	96.8 %	95.0 %
Student Mobility Rate	4.6 %	13.8 %
Student Suspensions	0.7 %	4.6 %
Length of School Day	6 hours, 24 minutes	6 hours, 26 minutes
Instructional Time per Day	5 hours, 40 minutes	5 hours, 36 minutes
Student/Administrator Ratio	541:1	307.2 :1
Students/Faculty Ratio	13.7:1	12.3:1
Faculty Attendance Rate	97.4 %	96.4 %
% Faculty with BA/BS Degree	69 %	
% Faculty with MA/MS Degree	31 %	
Students/Computer Ratio	6.8:1	4.7:1
Administrator Average Salary	\$ 91,550	
Faculty Average Salary	\$ 39,374	
Percent of Revenue from Local Taxes	69.0 %	
Percent of Revenue from State	27.0 %	
Percent of Revenue from Federal	2.0 %	
Percent of Revenue from Other	2.0 %	
Total Comparative Cost Per Pupil	\$ 8,234 36	\$ 9,519

## TREATMENTS AND METHODOLOGIES

The goal of this research investigation is to obtain the perceptions of students enrolled in special education programs toward inclusion versus pull-out resource placement models. The study will not only seek to determine students' emotional feelings toward these placements, but it will also strive to obtain students' opinions about the setting which they believe to be the most academically beneficial.

The students participating in this study each possess a unique educational history containing an assortment of experiences in regular and special education programs. The educational histories of each participant have been noted in order to understand the background from which each child's responses emanate. As a part of this study, this researcher did not implement any treatments or plans of action with the participants. Instead, each child's responses are based upon his or her distinctive past and present experiences.

Despite their diverse educational histories, each of the study participants possesses a few important commonalities. The school in which these students attend contains one pull-out resource class in fourth grade and one pull-out resource class in fifth grade. Therefore, in each grade level, all of the pull-out students interviewed are in the same class with the same regular and special education teachers. The fourth grade inclusion students were chosen from two different classes, while all of the fifth grade inclusion students come from one class.

## INSTRUMENTATION

This researcher developed two informal interview questionnaires in order to systematically evaluate students' feelings toward their special education placements.

While both questionnaires seek to obtain student's emotions and opinions regarding the special education models of instruction, one questionnaire is designed for students currently participating in pull-out resource settings, while the other is specifically created for use with students currently enrolled in inclusion placements.

The questionnaires were constructed in accordance with the goals of the research study. Each questionnaire contains seven open-ended free-response questions that are individually presented orally to each student. Four of the seven questions contain follow up probes that require students to provide rationales to support their initial responses. The purpose of the first few questions is to determine if inclusion students are cognizant of the role of the special education teacher, and if pull-out resource students are aware of the reasons why they attend a separate class for students with disabilities. The subsequent questions determine how having two teachers or attending a separate class makes the students feel. Next, students are asked questions regarding academics, including asking students where they learn best (in the pull-out class or in the inclusion class) and if they feel they are receiving enough assistance. Succeeding questions attempt to determine the social effects of pull-out and inclusion placements, while the final question straightforwardly requests the child to contemplate which placement option he or she prefers (pull-out or inclusion) and the rationale upon which this decision is based.

Each of the student's oral responses will be recorded. An oral conversation between the interviewer and the subject was chosen as the optimal form of data collection so that the act of writing would not serve as a hindrance to students' generation of accurate and reflective responses. Each of the seven questions was carefully worded so as to be concise and easily understood by the participants. The questions were also

phrased to ensure that the subject is not led to believe that there is a “correct” response. The Appendix contains a copy of both forms of the interview questionnaire.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This qualitative research study is phenomenological in design. A phenomenological study is “a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). This research investigation strives to ascertain special education students’ emotions, thoughts, and understandings toward their inclusion and pull-out resource models of instruction. As in all phenomenological studies, the study “is as much in the hands of the participants as in the hands of the researcher” because the interview subject has an opportunity to bring up whatever thoughts or feelings come to mind. It is the duty of the researcher to “suspend any preconceived notions or personal experiences that may unduly influence what the researcher “hears” the participant saying” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The researcher must approach each interview with an open mind while making certain she is not wording her prompts or cues in a manner that suggests a “desired” response.

This researcher will collect information on students’ perceptions through the utilization of the interview questionnaires. Although this researcher will conduct the majority of the interviews, two fellow special education teacher colleagues will also conduct three interviews each. These colleagues will be trained to conduct the interviews by adhering to the questions as delineated on the questionnaire. They will be trained to use probes that ask for reasoning or rationales, however, questions that direct a subject toward a preconceived answer are not permissible.

Each subject will meet with the interviewer individually in a quiet classroom in which the subject can talk freely. Each subject will be told that the researcher is writing a paper on “What students like and don’t like about school”, and therefore his or her responses are greatly valued. After rapport has been established, the interviewer will assure the subject that there are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. The interviewer will then proceed to ask the interview questions in the order they appear on the questionnaire. The students’ oral responses will be recorded on paper by the interviewer.

In analyzing the data collected from phenomenological studies, it is imperative that the researcher distinguishes the common threads that weave within each subject’s responses. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2001), the researcher completes this objective by pursuing the following steps:

1. Identifying statements that relate to the topic.
2. Grouping statements into “meaning units”, or specific categories.
3. Seeking divergent perspectives.
4. Constructing a composite, or an overall description of how people typically experience the situation.

By analyzing the parallel themes entwined amongst the interviews, it is this researcher’s goal to generate broad statements that may be generalized to a more extensive population. These generalizations may provide invaluable insights into the thoughts and feelings of countless special education students. These unsullied perspectives could serve to shed new light upon the often-confounding decision-making process encompassing all special education placement decisions.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### PART 1:

#### PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN INCLUSION PLACEMENTS

A total of nine students participating in inclusion placements were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the academic and social ramifications of their educational setting. Since the interview questions were open-ended, each student was permitted more than one response per question. Therefore, the frequency totals for each question in the following tables may add up to more than the total sum of participating students.

#### Purpose of the Inclusion Teacher

The first question posed to the students contained two elements: 1) why do you have two teachers for part of the school day? and 2) with whom does the special education teacher work? The majority of students felt that the purpose of the second teacher was to provide help to the students. Of those who responded that the teacher was there for the benefit of the students (as opposed to the purpose of being a "helper" to the regular education teacher), half of the students reported that the inclusion teacher helped *all* of the students in the classroom. The other half of these students named specific students within the class with whom this second teacher worked. Interestingly, those students whom named specific students all correctly identified the special education students for whom the inclusion teacher was responsible.

The summary of the students' responses is recorded in Table 1 and Table 2.

TABLE 1

Inclusion Students' Perceptions Regarding Why They Have Two Teachers

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
To provide help	6
Because I have an IEP	1
Because I am not smart enough	1
Unsure	1

TABLE 2

Inclusion Students' Perceptions Regarding With Whom the Special Education Teacher

Works

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Everyone in the class	3
Specific students within the class	3
Works with the regular education teacher	2
Unsure	1

### Feelings Toward and Benefits of Having Two Teachers

The inclusion students were asked, "Do you like having two teachers? Why or why not?" All students responded that they did enjoy having two teachers in the classroom. In all but one case, the students' reasoning for this preference emanated from the fact that the presence of two teachers benefited their academic performance.

When queried if they felt they learned better with two teachers in the room, once again, all students answered affirmatively. Although their specific reasons differed individually, all of the students' reasoning reflected a "two is better than one" type of attitude, and only one student's response reflected a non-student centered reason (one teacher could get a break while the other does work). The most frequently quoted benefit of two teachers included receiving extra help and having material explained in different ways. A summary of students' feelings towards and benefits of having two teachers in the classroom is presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

TABLE 3

#### Inclusion Students' Reasons for Enjoying Having Two Teachers in the Classroom

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
If one teacher is busy you can ask the other	4
You get extra attention if you don't understand	2
One teacher can talk while the other can help students	1
It is easier and helpful	1
It is nice having two teachers	1

TABLE 4

Inclusive Students' Reasons for Why They Learn Better with Two Teachers in the Classroom

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Both teachers might help you	3
You can get material explained again	3
Having two teachers helps me focus	1
Each teacher can help with different subjects	1
Questions are answered faster	1
One teacher gets a break while the other works	1

Feelings Toward the Special Education Teacher's Assistance

All of the inclusion students reported having the special education teacher work with them. Although one student reported that the special education teacher "...tries her best to get me with all the other kids", all of the other students indicated that, in one way or another, the special education teacher provides assistance by helping them either to complete or to understand the material or assignments presented.

A follow up question asked students to ponder how working with the special education teacher makes them feel. Although one student reported having no particular feeling, each of the other students reported positive emotions. The majority of students indicated that working with the special education teacher makes them feel "good", and one student even felt it made him feel "smarter and better". Individual responses revealed that these students did not feel singled out when they worked with the special education

teacher. On the contrary, one student felt that he did not "feel different" than anyone else, while another student admitted "it makes me happy to have someone I can ask."

A summary of students' perceptions of how the special education teacher helps them and their feelings toward receiving this assistance is displayed in Table 5 and Table 6.

TABLE 5

Inclusion Students' Perceptions about How the Special Education Teacher Helps Them

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Helps me with my work	4
Explains materials	2
Answers questions	1
Demonstrates easier methods to solve problems	1
Catches me up to the other children	1

TABLE 6

Inclusion Students' Feelings toward Receiving Assistance from the Special Education

Teacher

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Makes me feel good	6
Doesn't make me feel different	1
Makes me feel smarter / better	1
Not sure	1

### Quantity of Assistance Provided

All nine students participating in the inclusion classrooms indicated that they felt they received enough help with their work in school. It is interesting to note that although one fifth grader felt that he received enough assistance, he realized that he benefited from modifications in certain areas of weakness: "I feel like I get enough help, but sometimes I need more time, especially with journal. It takes me longer to write a story."

### Social Relationships

In order to explore the possible social impact on peer interactions and relationships between special education students in inclusive classrooms and their regular education peers, the students were posed the questions "How do you feel about the other students in your class?" and "How do they feel about you?" The highest number of students revealed that the other students in their class are their friends, and they feel "good" towards one another. Only one student viewed his relationship with his peers in a negative manner. He reported that his peers "are smarter than me." Likewise, only one student (different than the aforementioned student) indicated that classmates may possess negative attitudes toward her. Summaries of student attitudes are posed in Table 7 and Table 8.

TABLE 7

Inclusive Students' Feelings toward Their Classmates

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
They are friends	5
I feel okay towards them	1
"They need to be my friends"	1
No feeling	1
"They are smarter than me"	1

TABLE 8

Inclusive Students' Perceptions about How They are Viewed by Their Classmates

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Unsure	6
They are friends	2
Liked by some classmates, but not by all	1

The Pull-Out Versus Inclusion Preference

The final question posed to each of the students participating in inclusion required them to consider if they would prefer to remain in the large class setting with two teachers, or if they would rather be taught by the special education teacher in a small group setting in a different classroom. Although the majority of these students preferred to remain in their current inclusive setting, two students indicated a desire to experience

the pull-out placement, while one student was unsure. Reasons for wishing to remain in the inclusive setting revolved around three primary concerns: 1) social (one is able to have conversations and make more friends in the large class) 2) academic (the "two teachers are better than one" philosophy), and 3) practical (remaining in the large classroom is more comfortable and it saves time when one does not have to move classes). The two students who favored the idea of being pulled out to a smaller class cited the academic advantages of this educational model. These benefits included the special education teacher's increased ability to answer the students' questions, and the fact that "if the two teachers have two small groups in one room it is complicated when they are both talking".

Table 9 provides a summary of inclusion students' preferences toward inclusion versus pull-out models of special education placement.

TABLE 9

Inclusive Students' Preference for Pull-Out and Inclusion Special Education Placements

N = 9

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Unsure	1
Prefer to be in a pull-out class	2
Prefer to be in an inclusion class with two teachers because:	
This allows me to make more friends	2
Two teachers are better than one	2
More comfortable	1
No time missed switching classes	1

## PART 2:

### PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN PULL-OUT PLACEMENTS

A total of six students participating in pull-out placements were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the academic and social ramifications of being educated in a small group environment for part of the day. Each of the students interviewed attends a pull-out language arts and / or math class taught by a special education teacher. The students are pulled out between 1.5 and 2.5 hours each day, depending upon their individual programs. During the remaining portion of the day, these students are educated within the regular education classroom. During this time, a classroom aide provides extra assistance to a few of these students for a limited number of hours each week.

Since the interview questions were open-ended, each student was permitted more than one response per question. Therefore, the frequency totals for each question in the following tables may add up to more than the total sum of participating students.

#### Purpose of the Inclusion Teacher in Years Past

All of the pull-out students interviewed (even those in their first year of special education) were educated in an inclusive classroom last year. Therefore, all of these students have first-hand knowledge of what it is like to participate in both inclusion and pull-out placements.

The first interview question required the students to reflect upon the purpose for having two teachers in their classroom last year. A summary of their responses is displayed in Table 10. Four out of the six students interviewed mentioned the notion that the second teacher served as a type of "assistant" whose job was either to help students

when they were experiencing problems, or to assist the regular education teacher in performing "teacher tasks", such as distributing papers and completing paperwork.

TABLE 10

Pull-Out Students' Perceptions Regarding Why They Had Two Teachers In Years Past

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
She helped students	2
She was an assistant	2
Not sure	2
"Because Mom wanted to see if I could do better with two teachers in the classroom"	1

Purpose of Attending the Pull-Out Classroom for Reading and / or Mathematics

Every day, the pull-out students interviewed are taught reading and / or math in a small group setting containing four to six students and one teacher. Do these students know *why* they are treated to such individualized instruction? Interestingly, only one student did not know a reason why he was instructed in the small class environment. The other five students accurately pinpointed at least one academic reason for attending the pull-out placement. In their responses, the students identified their need for extra help and the benefit of having instruction that differed in either style or pace from the regular education classroom. For example, one fourth grade student reported, "(the regular education teacher) does a lot of different things than (the pull-out teacher)", while another student in the same class noted, "I need more help on stuff. (The regular education teacher's) class goes a little faster." One fourth grade student demonstrated knowledge

not only of *why* she was in a small class, but she was also able to enunciate exactly *how* she was placed in this class when she commented, "I need extra help. Mom wanted me tested and the child study team guy said I qualified. I have ADHD." The vast majority of the pull-out students interviewed possessed at least a general understanding of the purpose for their participation in the small group classroom setting. A summary of these students' reasons for attending the pull-out class are displayed in Table 11.

TABLE 11

Pull-Out Students' Perceptions Regarding Why They Attend The Pull-Out Class

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
I need extra help	3
The regular education class goes fast	2
The regular and special education teachers do different things	1
Unsure	1

Pull-Out Students' Feelings and Attitude Toward Attending the Pull-Out Class

In order to ascertain the students' feelings toward attending the pull-out class, they were each asked to consider whether they enjoyed attending the small class setting and whether they felt as though they learned better in the pull-out classroom or in the regular education classroom. All of the fourth graders and one out of the two fifth graders responded that they did enjoy the pull-out setting. One fifth grade student responded that he "kind of" liked the pull-out class, but he did have particular notions about what he did and did not like in select subjects taught within that setting. For example, this student

enjoys the subject of reading in the small group, however, he dislikes math in this setting. It was evident that he feels hindered by the slow pace of the pull-out math class when he commented, "I'm done when time isn't half way up."

In their comments about why they enjoyed the pull-out class, many of the students revealed that not only did they recognize the existence of differences between their small class and the regular education class, but also that they enjoyed attending the pull-out class *because of* those differences. These students realized that they are able to receive benefits in the small classroom that cannot be offered to them in the regular education classroom. While some of the benefits afforded in the pull-out class include playing "fun" educational games and receiving treats and prizes, other benefits clearly are more academic in nature. Statements made by two fourth grade students revealed their understanding of how the pull-out class provides them with opportunities for success that are not offered within the regular education classroom:

(The special education teacher) goes slow and we take our time and we don't rush all through the tests and (the special education teacher) reads the directions... I don't think (the regular education teacher) does that.

(The regular education teacher) goes faster than us in math. If we need help (the special education teacher) helps us on more stuff...

Out of the six pull-out students interviewed, only one (a fifth grader) clearly felt that he learns better within the regular education classroom than within the pull-out setting. While this is the same student who is discontented with the pace of the math program in the pull-out class, his reasons for preferring the regular education's learning environment were based around the idea that the regular education class is "funner because we do projects and stuff" in there. This student's view of the regular education setting may be distorted because he participates in regular education for social studies

and science, in which the curriculum calls for numerous engaging projects. He may feel as though these projects are extended into math and language arts as well, and he is missing out on them by attending the small group classroom. The curriculum in the pull-out class, however, mirrors the general activities experienced within the regular classroom. Students' feelings toward attending the pull-out class are summarized in Table 12 and Table 13.

TABLE 12

Pull-Out Students' Attitude Toward Attending The Pull-Out Class

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
"Kind of" enjoy the pull-out class because:	
Pacing is too slow	1
Enjoy the pull-out class because:	
We do fun things	3
Like the books	1
It helps me better than regular education	1
We have less papers to write	1

TABLE 13

Pull-Out Students' Perceptions Regarding The Class In Which They Learn Best

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Pull-Out Class	2
Regular Education Class	1
They both are the same	2
Not sure	1

Social Relationships

In order to investigate the possible impact the pull-out placement may have upon these students' social relationships with their regular education peers, the pull-out students were asked to consider whether they get along with their classmates better in the small group or the whole class setting. With the exception of one fourth grader who believed he interacts better with his peers within the pull-out setting, all of the other students interviewed stated that they maintained friendships with students within both settings. A summary of these students' responses is displayed in Table 14.

TABLE 14

Pull-Out Students' Perceptions Regarding Whether They Get Along Better With Their  
Classmates in the Pull-Out or Regular Education Classroom

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Get along equally well with peers in both classes	5
Get along better with peers in pull-out	1

Feelings Generated By Attending the Pull-Out Class

One of the most hotly debated aspects of placing a student in the pull-out class revolves around how this class may cause the child to feel a stigma that in turn creates a low self-esteem and negative self-image. Despite this popular belief amongst administrators, educators, and parents, when asked how coming to the pull-out class makes them feel, four out of the six students interviewed responded with overwhelmingly positive emotions. A prevailing opinion amongst the fourth grade students interviewed revealed that the pull-out class does make them feel "special"; however, unlike the negative connotation of "special" meaning "different", these students employed the term "special" with the intent of it being synonymous with "lucky". The following responses of two students revealed their positive perception toward being the "chosen few":

I feel special because other kids don't get taken out. It makes me feel good because I won't understand it in (the regular) class.

(The special education teacher) goes more slow. (The regular education teacher) goes quick ... they are ahead of us. I feel proud I can go (to pull-out) and I don't have to stay with a bunch of kids.

One fourth grade student did not possess the same rosy attitude as his three pull-out classmates. Although his response indicated that he realizes that being pulled-out is

for individual benefit and it differs from the norm, he related that he is "not embarrassed by it. I don't care that the whole (regular education) class knows".

Interestingly, the two fifth grade students, who are now in their second year of pull-out, both indicated that although they feel "okay" about the pull-out setting, they did have reservations about a few of its social ramifications. One student shared that he sometimes feels "left out" because he does not get to be with his other friends in the regular education class. The other student provided insight into the hurt feelings that can arise from the insensitivity of regular education peers:

Last year was not as good (as this year) because (the regular education students) picked on us. They called us names. It made me feel mad.  
This year they don't do it because last year they all got in trouble.

Despite his negative experiences last year, this student's comment that he "pretty much" likes the pull-out class this year demonstrates the fact that he continues to value this placement nonetheless. The emotions generated by attending the pull-out class are summarized in Table 15.

TABLE 15

Pull-Out Students' Perceptions Regarding How Attending the Pull-Out Class Makes

Them Feel

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Special / good	2
Okay	3
Proud	1
Excited	1
Not embarrassed	1
Left out of the regular class	1

The Pull-Out Versus Inclusion Preference

The last question posed to all fifteen students explicitly required them each to decide in which placement he or she would ultimately prefer to participate. Although the question presented to all of the interviewed students were the same, when contemplating their answers, the pull-out students were able to draw upon prior experience that the inclusion students lacked. While *none* of the inclusion students had ever experienced what it is like to be placed in a pull-out class, *all* of the pull-out kids had experiential knowledge of what it is like to be in an inclusive classroom situation *and* a pull-out setting.

When asked if they would prefer to remain in the pull-out setting or receive their instruction in an inclusive situation with two teachers, half of the pull-out students elected to remain in the pull-out placement. Of the remaining students, two indicated a

preference for the inclusion class, and one stated that his decision depended upon the individual subject.

The pull-out students' preference for remaining in the pull-out placement were based on academic reasons. These students realized that the pull-out class provides them with a slower pace and the individualized assistance necessary for them to be successful:

If I was in (the regular education classroom) I wouldn't understand anything or learn anything.

(The regular education class) is always ahead of us in math. (The special education teacher) helps us out.

The one student who split his preference for inclusion versus pull-out did so because of a clear understanding of his own personal strengths and weaknesses. He preferred an inclusive situation for math because "I'm faster in math and in (the pull-out class) I am always done before time is up". However, he recognized the academic benefits of the pull-out class for those areas in which he experienced the most difficulties:

(I would choose the pull-out class) for reading and writing because it is a small group so it won't be as loud when I'm reading and I can concentrate better.

The two students who asserted a preference for the inclusion class based their judgments more on convenience than on any outstanding social or academic issues. One fourth grade student felt that attending the pull-out class caused him to miss out on "getting to know my real (the regular education) teacher". One fifth grade student opted for the inclusion class simply because he felt that traveling to the pull-out class "takes up too much time and we don't get enough time to get our (reward) tickets". The pull-out students' preferences for pull-out versus inclusion placements is summarized in Table 16.

TABLE 16

Pull-Out Students' Preferences for The Pull-Out Versus The Inclusion Placement

N = 6

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency of Responses</u>
Pull-Out	3
Inclusion	2
Dependent upon the subject	1

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of special education students toward their placement in inclusion and/or pull-out resource settings. Inclusion and pull-out special education students were interviewed individually regarding their perceptions of the academic and social ramifications of their respective placements. Fourth and fifth grade students (N = 15) currently enrolled in inclusion or pull-out settings from a suburban middle class elementary school were interviewed. The data collected from this phenomenological study was analyzed in order to create broad statements that may be generalized to a more extensive population. This study demonstrated that the majority of inclusion and pull-out students are content with their respective placements in special education. The students in pull-out are cognizant of the academic support offered to them through the pull-out program, and many of them prefer pull-out because of the academic advantages inherent in the small group setting. The students in both types of settings revealed very few social consequences of receiving support from a special education teacher in either placement.

### FINDINGS

This study demonstrates that the majority of inclusion and pull-out students are content with their respective placements in special education. The students in pull-out settings are cognizant of the academic support offered to them through the pull-out

program, and many of them prefer pull-out because of the academic advantages inherent in the small group setting. The students in both types of settings revealed very few social consequences of receiving support from a special education teacher in either placement.

## DISCUSSION

Administrators, educators, and parents of students with special needs are confronted with the challenge of determining the classroom placement that will provide a learning environment that successfully accommodates for each child's unique social, emotional, and academic needs. The arising popularity of the inclusion model has caused many parents and some educators to scorn the restrictiveness of the pull-out classroom. These opponents purport that attending a class separate from regular education causes students to feel stigmatized and rejected, which may ultimately lead to a decrease in self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Proponents of pull-out placements champion this model's ability to most effectively meet the unique academic needs of its students. Strong feelings toward both sides of this dynamic issue have resulted in countless arguments in school districts nationwide.

The purpose of this research study was to search for undiscovered answers to the ever-confounding inclusion versus pull-out placement problem. The search for this treasure of newly revealed answers had not been hidden for all these years, but rather they had never been actively sought or considered. Determining the perceptions of the special education students toward pull-out and inclusion placements provides educators and parents with a completely new theoretical angle on the issue. It is ironic that the most influential people in determining a child's placement have most likely never experienced what it is like in either placement, yet these people can be considered an

"expert" on the subject. Understanding the perspectives of the students who are engaged daily in the realities of these placements is so valuable because their experience is the best teacher. The opinions of special education students are not tainted by scientific theories or philosophical doctrines; the viewpoints of these students are grounded in reality and true emotion. The voices of these students deserve serious consideration, for educators and administrators can only fully contemplate the best interests of the child by first considering the *perceptions* of the child.

The primary reason parents and educators provide for not wanting their child to be educated in a pull-out setting is that they believe this segregation will cause the child to feel "different". In the interviews with the pull-out students, many of them were quite aware that their individual learning situations were "different" from the norm. However, unlike the adults who regard "different" as being negatively synonymous with "inferior", many of these students realize that "different" ultimately means "better" in several ways.

One of the most intriguing realizations that surfaced through the interviews was the extent to which the pull-out students are aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses. These students are fully cognizant of the benefits of pull-out, and they are also aware of when the pull-out model is not the most effective option (for example, one student reported he does not need pull-out in math because he always completes his work early, yet he revealed that pull-out for language arts is necessary because he can concentrate better). The students receiving support in the small group pull-out setting realize the differences between regular education and pull-out, and they enjoy pull-out *because of* those differences. They know that the pace of the regular education class is faster than what they encounter in the pull-out classroom, and they know that they would feel overwhelmed without the more individualized support available in the smaller class.

Interestingly, the reasons the pull-out students gave for wishing to remain in pull-out are the same reasons why special educators and administrators placed them there – primarily to increase understanding and to provide a less strenuous pace. However, the reasons that pull-out students provided for *not* wanting to be placed in pull-out were *not* equivocal to the reasons why parents and administrators purport to avoid placing children in pull-out. While parents and administrators reject pull-out based primarily on social and self-esteem considerations, the students in pull-out based their preference for not favoring pull-out on seemingly less substantial reasons (such as it takes time to walk to the pull-out class and they do not get to know their regular education teacher as well). Contrary to the highly regarded viewpoints of the adults in charge of making the placement decisions, the majority of students in pull-out placements did not relate any negative social impact as a result of being educated in the pull-out setting. The students reported maintaining friendships with students in the regular education and the special education classes. Even the student who reported being made fun of by regular education peers last year reported that he would still prefer to remain in pull-out language arts this year. To the majority of pull-out students, the advantages of receiving individualized assistance in their areas of weakness overrides any social difficulties that may arise as a result of attending the smaller class.

While pull-out is often regarded by adults as the "necessary evil" resulting in academic benefits but social drawbacks, inclusion is often perceived to be the remedy to cure the social maladies inherent within pull-out. When asked if they would prefer to be educated in the inclusion or the pull-out model, it may be expected for inclusion students to maintain the status quo by selecting the inclusion model. Since inclusion is the only model these students have been exposed, they would not be expected to choose a model

with which they may not be able to clearly envision. Therefore, the fact that two inclusion students reported a preference for pull-out based upon the advantages of the small group setting indicates that inclusion is not superior in meeting all the needs of its students. Additionally, while the primary advantage of inclusion is purported to lie within its ability to make its students blend in seamlessly with the regular education population, the interviews revealed that inclusion does not guarantee feelings of high self-esteem and self-worth. On the contrary, one inclusion student reported that the other students were "smarter" than him. Although the inclusion class is supposedly less stigmatizing because the students are not singled out to move to another classroom, the inclusion students are still readily identifiable. All of the inclusion students interviewed who reported specific students with whom the special education teacher works correctly named all of the special education students in the class. So whether or not the students leave the classroom or not, it is still clear who receives the additional assistance. Therefore, the degree of social benefits inherent with inclusion versus pull-out may be called into serious question.

Ultimately, the results of the student interviews revealed that special education students do not radically support one instructional model over another. While the majority of students are content with their current respective placements, they do have definite opinions concerning their preferences. Although a few students voiced slight feelings of discontent over their placement, they all are, for the most part, willing to look past the drawbacks and embrace the advantages inherent within their current placement model. The most lucid conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the viewpoints harbored by the adults involved in the decision-making process are frequently *not* equivalent to the perspectives held by the students themselves. Therefore, adults who

select a placement based solely upon personal opinions or theories cannot be ensured of making a decision focused wholeheartedly in the best interest of the child. The voice of the child rings true and pure; it is up to the adults to let it be heard.

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## Appendix

### Interview Questions for Students Participating in Inclusion Placements

1. Why do you have two teachers in the room part of the day? Who does (name the child's special education teacher) work with?
2. Do you like having two teachers? Why?
3. Do you learn better with two teachers in the room? Why?
4. Does (name the child's special education teacher) sometimes work with you? How does she help you? How does it make you feel when she helps you?
5. Do you feel like you get enough help with your work in school?
6. How do you feel about the other students in your class? How do they feel about you?
7. Some students in our school go with a teacher to her room for reading and math instruction in a small group. Would you rather do that than stay in (name the child's regular education teacher) room with two teachers? Why?

## Interview Questions for Students Participating in Pull-Out Resource

1. Why did you have two teachers in your classroom last year?
2. Why do you come to (name the child's resource teacher) for reading and math?
3. Do you like coming to (name the child's resource teacher) room this year? Why?
4. Do you learn better in (name the child's resource teacher) class or in (name the child's homeroom teacher) class? Why?
5. Do you get along with the other students better in (name the child's resource teacher) class or (name the child's homeroom teacher) class? Why?
6. How does coming to (name the child's resource teacher) room make you feel?
7. If you could choose between staying in (name the child's regular education teacher) room all day or going to (name the child's resource teacher) part of the day like you do now, which would you chose to do? Why?