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THE EFFECT OF AN INCLUSIVE PROGRAM ON TEACHERS

By  
Anne Grady

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
4/12/00

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

Date Approved April 12, 2000

ABSTRACT

ANNE GRADY

THE EFFECT OF AN INCLUSIVE PROGRAM ON TEACHERS

DR. URBAN

2000

LEARNING DISABILITIES GRADUATE PROGRAM OF ROWAN UNIVERSITY

The purpose of this study was to determine how critical collaborative teams of regular education and special education teachers operate, what strategies are presently in use and what can be done to foster success in the future in inclusive settings. The subjects of this study consisted of eight pairs of regular and special education forming collaborative pairs. All participants volunteered to complete the survey instrument. The responses were analyzed by using content analysis. Many of the educators' responses were positive concerning inclusion and in-class support. However, there are some concerns reported for the implementation of this program in the future. Teachers overwhelmingly agree that support of various kinds including reduced class size and the availability of classroom assistants are fundamental to a successful inclusion program.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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LEARNING DISABILITIES GRADUATE PROGRAM OF ROWAN UNIVERSITY

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of an in-class support program on teachers. Narrative surveys were sent and responses were analyzed. Most of the educators' responses were positive concerning inclusion and in-class support. However, there are some concerns reported for the implementation of this program in the future.

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## Chapter I

### THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction

*“Those who are members of society, and those who are marginalized from society, have a great need for each other’s gifts.”* (Judith Snow at Frontier College, October, 1988).

The placement of students with disabilities, which is referred to as “inclusion” is growing rapidly in the schools. Inclusion is the policy of placing children with disabilities into general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools (Lerner, 1997). The origin of the inclusion movement in the United States is based on the civil rights movement. In 1954, the Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka ruling established the right of all children to equal opportunity for an education. Parents of children with disabilities looked to the U.S. Supreme Court decision to provide a basis for legislation that would protect the rights of their children. In the 1990’s, the discussions regarding regular education and special education “separate but equal” prevalent in the 1950’s and 1960’s were reignited. Parents, educators, and public policy makers scrutinized the separateness of Special Education.

Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 93-112) marked an important shift from permissive to mandatory legislation in stating that persons with disabilities could not be excluded from any program or activity receiving federal funds simply on the basis of their handicapping condition (Harding, McCormick, and Haring, 1994).

A legislative landmark was reached with the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142 (1975). This law made the most sweeping statement the nation has ever made concerning the rights of children with disabilities and their right to full educational opportunity. It guaranteed “free appropriate public education” to all children with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21. This law rejects the practice of excluding exceptional children because of their differences from normal learners. It also defined specific provisions for the kind and quality of education children with disabilities are to receive establishing the obligation to offer an individually planned education to meet the unique needs of each child. The act’s requirement includes a very general statement about how exceptional students should be taught. It mandated that students with disabilities should be placed in “the least restrictive” (LRE) educational environment in which they could learn successfully. This terminology reflects that every student with a disability be offered an appropriate instructional program to meet his or her specific needs. LRE is a broader term than mainstreaming or inclusion and states that although the general education classroom is appropriate for some students with disabilities, it is not the required placement in all cases.

In 1990, the name of the Education of Handicapped Act was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act giving notice that the focus of the law was on individuals not their disabilities. IDEA added emphasis to the mandates stated in the Education of the Handicapped, further defining the least restrictive environment (LRE)

by specifying a “change in the delivery of services from segregated to integrated environments” (Haring, McCormick, and Haring).

The move toward inclusion has been reinforced by recent court decisions. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Court of Appeals in its ruling of *Oberti vs. Board of Education of the Clementon School District* (1991) based its decision favoring full classroom inclusion for an 8-year-old boy with Down’s syndrome and severe mental impairment on its interpretation of IDEA. The court noted the problem between IDEA’s presumption in favor of the least restrictive environment and the requirement that schools provide individualized programs specifically providing for the needs of each disabled child. The court concluded that “The key to resolving this tension appears to lie in the school’s proper use of ‘supplementary aids and services’...” in the regular education setting instead of the segregated special education classroom. How are these aids and services to be utilized in regular education classrooms? How does this impact on regular and special education teachers? Regular education teachers know the curriculum, can manage large groups of students and are aware of how to meet the needs of most “average” students but are they prepared to provide services to the special needs population?

#### PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine how critical collaborative teams of regular education and special education teachers operate, what activity is occurring in the school environment regarding inclusion and what can be done to avoid failure in the inclusive setting in the future.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the main responsibilities that the collaborative teachers share?
2. What are the individual responsibilities that regular and special education have in educating the special needs student?
3. What are the variables that hinder/or help implementation of inclusion?
4. In retrospect, what do the regular and special education teachers see as the benefits and/or the concerns of the inclusion program?

## DEFINITIONS

### *COLLABORATION*

the processes by which people with diverse areas of expertise (such as regular education teachers and special education teachers) work together to find creative solutions to mutually defined problems such as teaching students with learning disabilities in regular education classes.

### *INCLUSION*

special education students receiving instruction in regular education classrooms with use of appropriate supplementary aids and resources.

## LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations that must be taken into consideration when generalizing the results of this study. First, the method of educating special needs students in an inclusive setting has not been in effect in this school district until very recently and most of the teachers involved have little experience with this model of teaching. Secondly, this is not a full-inclusion school district and students are included for a limited number of subjects. Finally, the size of the sample group is small.

In the district involved in this study there is only a small number of special education students receiving services in an inclusive setting.

## Chapter 2

This chapter will review literature involving the participation of collaborating teachers in inclusive education, an overview of critical issues and practices associated with educating special education students in the regular education classroom, and studies concerning regular and special education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion.

As schools move toward the implementation of inclusive schools a very different paradigm of instruction is unfolding. Inclusion is a concept that has been adopted for moral and ethical reasons, not because there is much empirical evidence at present to support it. (Hines and Johnson, 1994). It is believed that inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms is morally imperative that it does not require and cannot wait for, empirical justification (Cook, Semel, and Gerber 1999). It appears that the movement to include disabled students into nondisabled classrooms is being implemented with increasing frequency despite information that has not generally documented desired or appropriate outcomes for students. Caution is warranted regarding inclusion because the lack of support among those charged with its implementation is key to the success or failure of inclusion. A positive attitude of school personnel involved is seen as critical prerequisites for successful inclusion (Cook, Semmel, and Gerber, 1999).

In a recent review of 4 decades of attitudinal research, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reported that 64% of general education teachers supported the concept of inclusion. However, when survey questions were worded in more specific terms an average of only 40.5% of general education teachers agreed with inclusion. Consequently only 38% reported that they had adequate material or personnel support,

expertise or training time for successful implementation of inclusion. This lack of positive attitudes among general education teachers prevent the successful implementation of inclusive reforms.

New methods of teaching students using inclusion are co-planning, co-teaching and collaboration. Different roles require a mutual exchange between general educators and special education (Mick, 1993). Students should not be “dumped” into the classroom without careful consideration of the method of teaching or the match or mismatch between the student characteristics and those of the special education teacher. Responsible integration or inclusion requires taking the demands and expectations of the classroom into account and preparing both the student and the general education teacher (Wong, Kauffman, and Lloyd, 1993). In selecting teachers to be involved in the integration of students with disabilities into general education, the debate is how it is established which teachers will teach the inclusive classroom. An article written by Wong, Kaufman and Lloyd in 1993 presented information regarding including special needs students that suggest special education teachers be proactive in determining how, when and where their students will be integrated into general education. They believe that special education teachers should serve as advocates for students and seek placements that will best meet their students’ needs. Special education teachers are knowledgeable and can be skillful in negotiating and observing possible placements in the regular education setting for disabled students.

If special educators could find “homes” or “fits” that students and their teachers find acceptable it is more likely that the students’ will meet little resistance and be more successful.

Lori Bell Mick in her article, Counterpoint to: Choices for Integration: Selecting Teachers for Mainstreamed Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders(1993) rejects the idea that special education teachers are able to collect information to increase the chances of making the “best fit” between teacher and student. She feels strongly that special educators are not the appropriate personnel to observe, document, interview and select general educators with whom to place students. Factors such as time constraints that interfere servicing special education students’ quality of education and lack of ability in observation skills needed to assess and document the types of skills and behaviors necessary to facilitate successful inclusion prevent the special educators from being in the authoritative position of finding placements for their students. The article emphasizes the need for mutual exchange between the special educator and the general educators instead of an evaluative position on the part of one group or the other.

What are the perceptions of regular education teachers toward including special education students in their classes? Much of the research and current information is found in teacher surveys. Through systematic research synthesis procedures, teachers’ responses can be evaluated to show potential impact of inclusive situations.

In Scruggs and Mastropieri's article, Teacher Perceptions of Mainstreaming/Inclusion (1996), 2/3 of the general education classroom teachers supported mainstreaming/inclusion but their response appeared to vary according to the disabling condition and obligation of the teacher.

It is important to point out that of the general education teachers, 65% support including special education in general education settings. However, 53% of general education teachers actually expressed a willingness to teach the disabled students.

McIntoch, Vaughn and Schumm's article in Exceptional Children(1993) surveyed teachers in order to investigate perceptions and planning practices for teaching mainstreamed and included teachers. Their information found that 98% of teachers K-12 rated their knowledge and skill for planning appropriately for special needs students a rating of excellent to good. Teachers reported little difference planning for mainstreamed and general education students other than ongoing spontaneous adaptations for example providing a little extra help with tests, etc. It was reported that 75% reported a willingness to participate in an inservice program and an interest in improving their ability to work with special education students.

General education teachers in elementary, middle and high schools reported a wide range of reactions toward the desirability and feasibility of making specific adaptations for students in regular education (McIntoch, Vaughn and Schumm, 1993). Teachers considered most adaptations to be desirable and deemed all adaptations feasible. Adaptations considered most feasible related to the social or motivational well being of

the student and required the teacher to make little adjustment of curriculum or instruction.

Fewer teachers (33%) had positive attitudes toward inclusion when survey questions were strongly worded. Questions were answered unfavorably when suggesting that general education was the “best” academic or social environment for students with disabilities or full time mainstreaming or inclusion. The attitudes suggested providing inclusion on a part time basis along with students serviced in resource programs for part of the day.

Teachers’ spent less time in conversation with special needs students than with regular education students. The teachers’ response to interactions with disabled students was more negative and corrective than with students without disabilities.

In examining the interaction between special needs students and regular education students, it was found that students with learning disabilities were less accepted by their peers than were low and average achieving students (McIntoch, Vaughn, Schumm) 1993).

A survey of teachers by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that when asked if students with disabilities would disrupt or be disruptive or detrimental to the class 30% of teachers agreed that students with disabilities could be harmful to the classroom. A substantial number of teachers agreed that students with disabilities could create special classroom problems for them.

It was found that the majority of teachers in the two investigations felt that “significant changes” in the classroom would be necessary to accommodate

mainstreaming. Educators indicated that 68% agreed “significant changes” would be needed. McIntoch et al. wrote, “Teachers perceive mainstreaming as requiring significant changes in their classroom procedures and changes in instruction and curricula which many are not necessarily willing to make.”

Cook, Semmel and Gerber (1999) wrote that positive attitudes of key school personnel are critical prerequisites for success in inclusion. More specifically, the attitudes of special education teachers should be considered in the decision making process to offer insight on how to improve attitudes and the potential success of inclusion.

Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) reported that ½ of general and special educators but no principals felt that the general education classroom was not the best environment for students with disabilities. Literature has been consistent in documenting that general education teachers are relatively less supportive of inclusion than special education teachers. Cook, Semmel and Gerber (1999) wrote that concerning special and regular educators’ involvement in the decision making process “results suggest that the voice of those who will bear the responsibility should also be heard as intensified mainstreaming/inclusive policies are being planned.”

Many surveys indicate that special education teachers and principals disagree most strongly on the basis that the achievement of students with mild disabilities increases when they are included in regular education classrooms. The principals agree to a greater degree and “appear to respond in a more socially appropriate manner than may actually be the case in reality” (Garvar-Pinhas and Schmelkin, 1989). Special



education teachers respond less favorably. When asked if included placements with consultative services are the most appropriate educational environment for students with disabilities, principals also agreed to a higher degree than special education teachers.

Special educators and principals disagree most highly on the idea of resources and services. The special educators expressed greater concern than principals that resources devoted to students with mild disabilities must be protected regardless of setting. Given the roles involved in implementation of inclusion the attitudes between principals and special education teachers may be an explanation for the increase in the implementation of inclusion with less production of positive outcomes. Horne (1983) provided evidence that positive attitudes increase as the implied personal responsibilities decrease. Teachers that exhibit the most pessimistic attitude are burdened by the most responsibilities. The school administrators possess the most optimistic attitudes and do not carry the personal responsibilities of implementing inclusion on a daily basis.

Schumm and Vaughan (1991) state that the “assumption is that the general education classroom setting provides an enriched, normalized learning experience and that classroom teachers can make a variety of adaptations to meet the specific needs of special education students.” Advocates of inclusion and the merger between general and special education acknowledge that the success of the program relies on the teachers’ willingness to make adaptations and modifications for students with special needs. It is

noted that there are basically three ways that general education teachers could make adaptations. Adaptations could be made; 1) by changing the type of task, 2) changing the numbers of items in the task and the particular student performance required for the task, or 3) supplementing the curriculum, simplifying the curriculum and changing the curriculum. Schumm and Vaughn concluded in surveying the teachers that classroom teachers do little to change their instructional methods for students with special needs. The adaptation made the least by regular education teachers is modifying the task until the student makes no errors and/or monitoring the effectiveness of alternative interventions.

Research was performed by Myles and Simpson, 1992 to find information on resources available in the implementation of inclusion. Resources could be in the form of material support services or support personnel for example consultants, resource teachers or paraprofessionals. Only 25% of teachers acknowledged being aware of available resources to facilitate their mainstreaming/inclusion efforts. In general education it was found that 37.6% of the regular education teachers agreed that they had adequate materials for their program however only 11% agreed that they had satisfactory personnel support for mainstreaming and inclusion. In special education 45% of the special education teachers agreed that they had sufficient material resources and 60% agreed that they had personal support services. General education teachers reported an

overwhelming 79% in agreeing to needing a paraprofessional in the classroom for at least ½ day however only 13% reported having this level of paraprofessional support.

Do regular educators possess enough training and/or expertise to teach learning disabled students effectively? McIntoch et al. found that 29% of regular education teachers believed they have sufficient expertise or training to teach special needs students. However, only 22% of special education teachers agreed that general education teachers had sufficient training to be effective. Coursework can increase the awareness of teachers in inclusion and mainstreaming. Only 17% reported being aware of specific techniques for mainstreaming and inclusion prior to taking graduate level courses on special education students and their needs. At the end of the course 98% reported being aware of techniques. After a short period of inservice training to enhance their skills 32% of regular education teachers agreed that they felt confident and possessed sufficient techniques and skills to teach special needs students. Hit or miss inservice training sessions do not prove as effective as longer and more consistent programs to teach inclusive techniques. In an investigation with preservice undergraduate students, the students' attitudes about inclusion became more positive after extended training and these gains transferred to higher percentages of time on task for students with disabilities in their classes (McIntoch, 1997).

Surveys found that regular education teachers believe that class size should be reduced in classes that include students with disabilities by a majority of 71%. An overwhelming 92% believed the class size should be reduced to fewer than 20 students

and 83% agreed that the “number of handicapped children should be limited” in inclusive classrooms.

Cook, Semel, and Gerber, 1999 reported that the best way to improve special education teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion is to improve the likelihood that it will result in successful outcomes. The National Commission on Teaching and Americas’s Future (Darling and Hammond, 1996) report that an improvement in the U.S. educational system would also improve in outcomes associated with inclusion. The report suggests improved preprofessional training (professional development opportunities that go beyond the unproductive “hit and run” workshops), and the reduction of teacher isolation by providing regularly scheduled collegial work and planning time. The commission reported the need for “blurring the distinctions between traditional roles”. General education, special education and principals should be awarded more input and be directly involved in the delivery of instruction. Resources should be streamlined so that proper allocations of resources are accessible to teachers to foster classroom learning. Teachers need to be given greater collective responsibility for student learning. Improved conditions and outcomes would result in improved attitudes toward the implementation of inclusion among special education and general education teachers further improving the prospect of successful inclusion. The importance of shared decision making and changing traditional roles may limit the frequency of inclusion being implemented without the appropriate resources and support therefore greatly improving its chances for a successful outcome.

Cook, Semmel, and Gerber, 1999 reported that the attitudes of the special education teachers be considered in decision making regarding implementation of inclusion. The probability of positive outcomes may improve attitudes of special education teachers toward inclusion, which may improve effects of inclusion reforms. It is noted that principals be observant of the attitudes of significant school personnel especially regular and special education teachers when making policy decisions to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. A wide range of systematic reforms should be implemented to enhance the efficacy of inclusion.

Regular education teachers and special education teachers will continue to teach extraordinarily diverse populations. Success in these settings will surely enhance the classroom teachers' success at making and willingness to make adaptations.

Wood (1998) writes that professionals such as regular education teachers, special education teachers, speech teachers and other professionals working on IEP committees represent particular areas of specialized skills and knowledge. However, roles may become blurred or duplicated and "role overlap" may result. Specialized interests of different professionals who are reluctant to give up their particular role in the educational process may prevent effective inclusion practices. It is critical to the success of collaboration that the responsibilities and expertise of general and special educators be examined to facilitate acceptance of roles and effective implementation of inclusion.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES:

The sample consisted of eight pairs of teachers, with each pair consisting of a special education and regular education professionals who are currently engaged in a collaborative teaching program. All sixteen participants hold credentials appropriate for their teaching position in the state of New Jersey. Each teacher has between two to twenty three years experience in teaching. They have participated in a collaborative program from one to seven years. All participants are affiliated with the same school district but work in two different schools. Each school is under the supervision of individual principals. Both schools are elementary grade schools, grades pre K to sixth grade. They are located in a suburban middle class town in Southern New Jersey.

### INSTUMENTATION

Teachers were asked to participate in the survey. All agreed willingly to do so. The survey instrument consisted of ten questions requiring a narrative response. The questions were based on a review of current literature pertaining to collaborative teaching specifically inclusion and mainstreaming of learning disabled students in the public school system. A copy of the survey is contained in Appendix A.

## COLLECTION OF DATA

Responses to the survey were anonymous and surveys were returned to the researcher through inter-office mail. The information sought involved how teachers felt about inclusion, what they felt to be true, and what they have done in inclusive settings. The survey was composed of open-ended questions to which the teachers responded with their own words. Consideration was given in how the questions were worded to ensure that the questions were uniformly understood, explicit and not vague, unbiased and non-objectionable. The responses will be analyzed by using content analysis. This is a qualitative method of design where the researcher looks for themes or concepts in the words of the respondents.

## SUMMARY

It is the purpose of this study to determine the impact of an inclusive program on teachers. The data will be collected through a survey instrument that consists of ten narrative questions. An interpretation of the data will follow in the next section.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of inclusion on teachers. Sixteen surveys were sent to eight pairs of collaborative teachers. All participants returned the survey promptly and responses were tabulated using a content analysis technique.

The results of this study are presented in a format which attempts to answer the research questions listed in chapter 1. In order to answer these specific questions the following general questions are addressed sequentially.

1. Was participation in an inclusive program considered on a volunteer or appointee basis?
2. Were there any concerns or advantages in working inclusively with special needs students?
3. Was planning a joint or individual endeavor?
4. What hindered efforts to implement collaborative teaching?
5. What strategies were most effective?
6. What modifications were made to the curriculum?
7. What changes have been experienced due to including special needs children in the regular education classroom?



8. Were new and different skills or strategies implemented in the inclusive setting?
9. What were the major benefits of an inclusive program and its effects on teachers and students?
10. What are the major concerns about including special education students in the regular education environment? How could these concerns be rectified?

QUESTION 1: Was participation in the inclusive program on a volunteer or appointee basis? In response to the question, all but one pair of teachers responded that they were assigned to work as a collaborative pair. Participants were asked to comment on how they felt about being chosen as a collaborative pair. Most teachers responded that they expressed an interest in inclusion previously to being chosen to participate. Although formal long-term training was described as an important component of inclusion in the research literature, no formal training was given to teachers involved as a collaborative pair in this survey.

QUESTION 2: Were there any concerns or advantages in working inclusively with special needs students? Regular and special educators alike responded that inclusion is advantageous in that the regular education population gains a better understanding of special education students through increased interaction. Teachers responded with the opinion that special needs students gain an increased sense of self-esteem, improved social skills, and a higher expectation of academic success. One special educator reported an increased frustration level and a sense

of being overwhelmed in her special education students who were mainstreamed. This is consistent with the research literature in that some special education teachers believe that the achievement of students with disabilities may not increase when special education students are included in the regular education classrooms.

QUESTION 3: Was planning a joint or individual endeavor? In the survey it was reported that 90% of the teachers were **not** given joint planning time. Much of the planning was conducted in the hallway before or after class. One pair of regular and special educators reported that in the beginning they were given planning time and supplied by a substitute teacher to cover their classes. Units were planned individually but responsibilities for grading and teaching of units were shared.

QUESTION 4: What hindered efforts to implement collaborative teaching?

With 100% response rate, regular and special educators reported that time was the biggest hindrance to implementing collaborative teaching. There is a lack of quality time for planning, miscommunications about grading and lessons and no time to identify specific needs of individual students. This finding correlates with the research literature that stated the need for regularly scheduled planning time; however, planning time in the surveys was reported as basically non-existent.

QUESTION 5: What strategies were most effective? Strategies used by regular and special educators were reported as being varied in nature and specific to the individual needs of the class grouping, environment and age of the students. One pair of regular and special education teachers reported using lessons where students could work on their own level at their own pace. Another pair of regular and special educators described using various games and activities to keep students engaged in learning. Still another group of teachers listed using learning centers, and small groups to suit the level of all students.

QUESTION 6: What modifications were made to the curriculum? Most groups of collaborative pairs answered that modifications were readily made to the curriculum. One pair of partners reported using more individualized assessments. Another pair of collaborative teachers responded that the volume of work especially in the area of reading for special needs students was reduced. One collaborative pair reported no modifications to the curriculum for special needs students. Some teachers felt that to modify the curriculum was not fair to the disabled student in that they would not be receiving an equivalent education as the regular education students. This is in agreement with the research literature in that teachers reported little difference planning for mainstreamed and general education students other than ongoing spontaneous adaptations.

QUESTION 7: What changes have been experienced due to including special needs children in the regular education classroom? Seven of ten pairs of the collaborative teaching pairs responded to changes in teaching style as well as environment while including special education students in the regular education class environment. Teachers reported a slower work pace in practicing material and developing routines. Team teaching was never experienced by many regular or special educators and effected in a new teaching style for most. Special educators responded an increase in the ability to hold discussion, which led to an increase in participation by her special education students. A portion of regular education teachers needed to change their teaching style to increase the focus of special education students and to foster more on task behaviors. The environmental changes included a decrease of floor and activity space due to an increase in desks and chairs to accommodate special education students.

QUESTION 8: Were new and different skills or strategies implemented in the inclusive setting? A small percentage of regular educators responded that **no** new or different skills were implemented in the inclusive setting and that the special education teacher was responsible for any and all modifications in the class. This correlates with the literature in that special education teachers expressed concern that the lack of modification would hinder the success of the special education student. Most collaborative pairs responded that new strategies were being tried daily to foster improve understanding and success for special needs students. A special education teacher reported implementing a reward system to improve on

task behavior in the regular education classroom. Another regular education teacher noted trying new strategies to help one specific special education student to increase understanding of the material while no new strategies were applied when working with other special education students in the group. The attitudes of the regular education teachers correlate with the research in the literature discussed in that regular education teachers in collaborative pairs are not willing to make changes in instruction or curriculum.

QUESTION 9: What were the major benefits of an inclusive program and its effects on teachers and students? Special and regular educators see the major benefits of inclusion in many different ways. Regular educators on the whole feel as though inclusion betters themselves as teachers, giving them more diversified experiences and a change of pace. Special educators find that the major benefits lie in the relationship formed between their special needs students and the regular education students. They cite a higher expectation in the standard of academic work and in areas of behavior. It provides role models for behavior and socialization skills. Teachers noted children learn to work with one another and help each other. A special educator responded that material is covered in more detail in the inclusive environment as compared to a self-contained multi-grade level classroom.

QUESTION 10: What are the major concerns about including special education students in the regular education environment?

Responses were diverse for both regular and special educators. One regular education teacher noted that her main concern was that regular education students would not accept the special needs students. She continued to say that parents of regular education students would have difficulty accepting students that have physical, mental or behavioral disabilities. Another regular education teacher noted that special education students might need more one on one specialized instruction than what they were presently receiving in the inclusive environment. Another regular education teacher voiced her concern that inclusion works as long as full time assistance by a special education teacher is continued but inclusion would **not** be effective if this assistance is terminated. A special educator responded that her concern is for her students when they are promoted to the higher-grade level and are required to do more reading and writing in the inclusive setting. Also, in the upper grade levels it is a larger class setting and not as much one on one attention is given to special needs students. One special education teacher voiced concern for special needs students in areas of behavior saying that students with behavior problems tend to be more disruptive especially when the lesson or setting is not as structured and that this area needs to be addressed to foster successful inclusion. Most teachers concur that support systems such as those provided by in-class support personnel, para-professionals and administration are vital to successful inclusion. This correlates with the research literature in that allocations of resources and the improved conditions of collaboration would result in improved attitudes toward the implementation of

inclusion among special education and general education teachers further improving the prospect of successful inclusion.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine how critical collaborative teams of regular education and special education teachers operate, what strategies are presently in use and what can be done to foster success in the future in inclusive settings. The subjects of this study consisted of eight pairs of regular and special education forming collaborative pairs. All participants volunteered to complete the survey instrument. The responses were analyzed by using content analysis. Many of the educators' responses were positive concerning inclusion and in-class support. However, there are some concerns reported for the implementation of this program in the future. Teachers overwhelmingly agree that support of various kinds including reduced class size and the availability of classroom assistants are fundamental to a successful inclusion program.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research found in this study, most teachers involved in the implementation of inclusion of special needs students in the regular educational environment find inclusive measures productive and educationally sound. Data collected through surveys and teacher interviews of both regular and special education teachers supported basic elements essential to successful inclusion. Those elements were: 1) in-class support, 2) release time for collaboration and planning and 3) the continued support of administration, parents and nondisabled peers. Modification of the curriculum was an area of disagreement between regular and special educators.



## DISCUSSION

The number of collaborative pairs was limited in this study. More participation of collaborative pairs should be gathered to better support the research presented. Districts with similar programs should also be included in the survey, which would increase the amount of participants. A similar survey could be conducted over a period of time to establish whether or not teacher concerns about inclusion are rectified or if other concerns arise.

The data collected in this study correlate with recent literature on inclusion. Both regular and special education teachers feel the need for in-class support, release time for collaboration and planning and the continued support of administration, parents and nondisabled peers.

Based on the research found in this study, most teachers involved in inclusion of special needs students in the regular class environment seem to find it successful and beneficial to students and teachers alike. With the cooperation of regular and special education collaborative teaching efforts, inclusive programs can be effective.

## APPENDIX A

### I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

YEARS TEACHING:

PRESENT GRADE LEVEL:

REGULAR OR SPECIAL EDUCATOR:

OTHER TEACHING POSITIONS HELD:

YEARS PARTICIPATING IN IN-CLASS SUPPORT:

### II. PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Did you volunteer or were you appointed as collaborator of an inclusive program?
2. How did you feel about your participation in this process? Please indicate any concerns or advantages in working inclusively with special needs students.
3. Did you work with a partner? If so, please indicate whether you planned jointly or individually and the responsibilities that you each had.
4. What hinders your efforts to implement collaborative teaching?

5. What strategies did you find most effective in your situation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What modifications, if any did you make to your curriculum?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What changes, if any have you experienced due to including special needs children in the regular education classroom? (Please note environmental changes as well as teaching style, etc.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Did you feel the need to implement significantly new and different skills or strategies?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What do you see as the major benefits of an inclusive program and its effects on you as well as your students?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What concerns do you have about including special education students in the regular education environment? How would you like these concerns rectified?