Increasing the Comfort Level of Teachers Toward Inclusion
Through Use of School Focus Groups

by
Beth Ann Smith

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Beth Ann Smith under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Fischler School of Education and Human Services and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

_____   _____
Diane E. Valovich, EdD   Date
Committee Chair

_____   _____
Mary V. Kealy, EdD   Date
Committee Member

_____   _____
Maryellen Maher, PhD   Date
Executive Dean for Research and Evaluation

Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to increase the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with learning, behavioral, and physical disabilities in general-education classrooms for one high school. Participants included 3 focus groups of teachers with 2 groups consisting of 6 teachers and 1 group consisting of 7 teachers. One special-education teacher was represented in each group. Although all special-education teachers were participating in inclusion, all of the general-education teachers were not.

Using a researcher-made rubric, each individual teacher's comfort level was calculated, averaged with other members of the same group, and the preinterview and postinterview results were compared. To analyze the responses to the open-form questions asked during the focus-group interviews, the researcher developed a category system to draw out major themes, look for core insights, common phrases and words, and specific mood or tone to group interaction. Direct quotes were used to support the researcher's narrative report.

Results of the study indicated that the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion increased after participating in focus groups. After group interviews, teachers were found to be most comfortable with students with learning disabilities and least comfortable with students with behavioral disabilities. In addition, comments from the focus group demonstrated that teachers did not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in inclusion classes. Overall, students with disabilities are unsuccessful in general-education classes taught by coteachers. Lack of planning time was one of the greatest frustrations for the teachers. However, they were willing to learn new ways to teach and discipline students who are higher functioning than students with more severe or profound disabilities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting

The setting for this study was one high school situated in the rural Southeastern United States. According to the school district's narrative of progress, in an effort to increase the number of students with special needs who were removed from general education less than 21% of the time, the district implemented a plan that was developed by stakeholders as part of a continuous monitoring improvement process. Since the beginning of the plan's implementation during the 2004-2005 school year, the district saw a slight increase from 32.52% to 34.78% of students who were removed from general education less than 21% of the time.

Although meager in appearance, the district made a concerted effort to improve the inclusion program, including contracting with an educational consultants firm that provided inclusion, or coteaching, training, and continued to monitor the effectiveness of the coteaching process. Administrators were trained on how to schedule, plan, and monitor the inclusion effort within a system, and coteachers were coached and observed. Everyone walked away from the initial training feeling prepared to proceed with the second year towards this effort. After the training on coteaching, participating teachers were given a day of common planning time per semester. Teachers felt that this was not adequate time; therefore, the common planning time was increased. At the high school and middle school, the first year for inclusion was the 2004-2005 school year. For the 2005-2006 school year, the elementary and primary school began coteaching, and the high school and middle school have increased the number of classes with coteaching. Due to the success stories, the elementary school administrators also wanted to jump on board with the inclusion effort. When they heard of the improved standardized test scores

for students with disabilities, they wanted to begin inclusion in the upcoming school year. For the 2006-2007 school year, all high school students receiving special-education services, with the exception of five students with severe or profound disabilities, will receive special-education services and support in general-education academic classes taught by coteachers.

At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, when inclusion was first implemented, some general-education teachers expressed concern that the students with disabilities were causing the lessons to drag and that their mediocre performance was not worth the effort. However, after approximately 6 months the teaching teams began to work well together, and the special-education teachers had time to convince the general-education teachers that the students were performing much higher than they had been performing in the self-contained or resource environments.

If students can learn to read more proficiently, they can be more successful in the general-education environment due to the ability to read instructions. As a result, they will spend more time in the general-education environment. A system-wide effort was made to increase reading scores by using the Science Research Associates (SRA) Direct Instruction Program, with the expectation that students with disabilities will have an improved ability to read. More special-education students are participating in general-education classes for more of their instruction. Therefore, they are exposed to better instruction from the content specialist, while the special-education teachers are there to provide any accommodations or modifications that need to be made.

Participants

Participants included three groups of certified high school teachers with each group consisting of either 6 or 7 teachers. The high school has 694 students and employs

19 faculty members in the academic departments of math, science, and English. Group 1 focused on inclusion of students with learning disabilities. Group 1 members included 1 female special educator, 2 male general educators, and 4 female general educators, all of Caucasian descent. Three of the 5 general educators in Group 1 were currently coteaching or have cotaught within the past 2 years. Group 2 focused on students with behavioral disabilities. Group 2 members included 1 Caucasian female special educator, 5 Caucasian female general educators, and 1 African American female general educator. Five of the six general educators in Group 2 were currently coteaching or have cotaught within the past 2 years. Group 3 focused on students with physical disabilities. Group 3 consisted of 1 female special educator, 1 male general educator, and 4 female general educators, all of Caucasian descent. Four of the 5 general educators in Group 3 were currently coteaching or have cotaught within the past 2 years. Among the participants, teaching experience ranged from those having begun their careers within the past 2 years, to teachers eligible for full retirement, but who had continued to teach. In the high school being studied, students with disabilities were being included in general-education classes as much as possible, with instruction delivered by coteachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to increase the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with learning, behavioral, and physical disabilities in general-education classrooms, for one high school in the rural Southeastern United States. Research strongly suggests inclusion works when teachers support it, are willing to accept it, and have positive attitudes toward having students with disabilities in regular classrooms (Anderson, Chitwood, & Hayden, 1997).

When making curriculum decisions, time and available resources are influential

factors (Morrison, Ross, & Kemp, 2004). Because inclusion was being newly implemented, curriculum decisions were being made, changed, and often changed again. Because the State Department of Education demanded increasing the time special-education students spend in general-education settings, the district was required to act immediately as part of the school improvement plan. Therefore, instructors were coteaching with minimal training.

The curriculum decision had been made to educate students with special needs in the same classroom as their peers. Therefore, general- and special-education teachers had to be trained to coteach, with substitutes being paid to cover for the teachers as they were being trained. Time was short, just as were tempers. To help the process of starting an inclusion program, the school district hired an independent educational consulting firm that observed and assisted the teachers as they began teaching in their new roles. Because the school district had available resources, substitute teachers and the consulting firm, the decision to implement inclusion was made. Districts lacking money for or access to such resources may not be able to make the same curriculum decision. The results of this study were intended for use to improve and expand the existing inclusion program in the high school being studied.

Problem Statement

Because there is an increasing demand that special-education students spend more time in general-education settings, the district was required to act immediately as part of the school improvement plan. Therefore, instructors were coteaching with minimal training. Due to the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2001), the number of students with disabilities served in the general-education classes will continue to increase, requiring general- and special-education teachers to change where and how

students with special needs are served. While literature is replete with evidence that teachers can and should make only those changes that they are comfortable with, it was clear that the comfort levels of teachers in this high school toward special-needs children is quite low. This, of course, lowered effectiveness and impeded desirable change.

Possible Causes

Schools are moving toward full inclusion for all students with disabilities, and many teachers report feeling uncomfortable, even hostile, toward having all students in general-education classrooms. To fulfill requirements of the NCLB, general- and special-education teachers are working together as equal partners, with both involved in all aspects of planning, teaching, and assessment. Traditionally, education has been an isolated activity, with both general- and special-education teachers seeing themselves as the center of a particular group of students.

Hypothesis

Backlash to inclusive education reveals societal attitudes and assumptions that some children are more worthy of teaching than others. The presence of children with disabilities is viewed as lowering school standards, and the child with a disability is educated at the expense of nondisabled students (Smith, 2001). This holds true for children who are not the norm, as these children are often considered as less worthy of education and are accused of lowering school standards and squandering precious resources. Based upon results from the Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale developed by Wilczenski (1992) and administered in a study by Kwapy (2004), teachers have the greatest concerns with students who have behavioral disabilities and students who are more than 2 years behind academically. Teachers are far more tolerant of students in their classes who have physical disabilities. Based upon Kwapy's study, this

researcher expected the results to show that teachers were most comfortable with students who have physical disabilities and least comfortable with students who are 2 or more years behind academically or have behavioral disabilities. As measured by a researcher-made rubric (Appendix A), the mean comfort level for each group was expected to increase after the focus-group interview.

Outcomes

The following outcomes are expected in this study:

1. As measured by a researcher-made rubric, the comfort level of Group 1 toward inclusion of students with learning disabilities will increase from the current mean of 17.5%. Additionally, the comfort level of Group 2 toward inclusion of students with behavioral disabilities will increase from the current mean of 21.2%. Finally, the comfort level of Group 3 toward inclusion of students with physical disabilities will increase from the current mean of 3.8%.

2. Common themes will be identified regarding the degree to which teachers are effectively providing for students included in their classroom.

3. Common themes will be identified regarding what can be done to address teachers' inability to respond effectively to included students.

4. Common themes will be identified regarding problems this organization and others have faced with respect to inclusion.

Solution Strategies

In educational research, either the qualitative or quantitative approach can be effective. The researcher selected a qualitative approach to obtain and analyze teachers' comfort level with inclusion. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), qualitative research, such as the utilization of focus groups, is used to develop knowledge by

collecting primarily verbal data through intensive study of cases. Researchers using focus groups are finding that the interactions among participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually. Qualitative researchers prepare interpretive reports that reflect researchers' constructions of the data.

The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions in a way that would not be feasible using methods such as observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys (Gall et al., 2003). These attitudes, feelings, and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs, and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context. Compared to observation, a focus group enables the researcher to gain a larger amount of information in a shorter period of time. Observational methods tend to depend on waiting for things to happen, whereas the researcher follows an interview guide in a focus group.

When used correctly, focus groups can be an empowering process for both researchers and participants. Focus groups may also generate rich data that might not be accessible from other research methods in order to facilitate decision making and provide useful information for the development, evaluation, and modification of curriculum, learning tools, and programs (Williams & Katz, 2001). It was the hope of this researcher that the use of focus groups would result in the improvement and expansion of the existing inclusion program in the school that was studied.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions advanced in this study:

1. After participating in focus groups, will there be an increase in the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities, and physical disabilities?

2. To what degree are teachers effectively providing for included students in their classrooms?

3. What can be done to address teachers' inability to respond effectively to included students?

4. What problems have this organization and others faced with respect to enabling effective inclusion?

Definitions

Accommodation. An adaptation or modification that enables students with disabilities to participate in educational programming, to the extent possible, as if they were without a disability.

Behavioral disability. This is a behavior disorder, also known as emotional disturbance that indicates students are acting in inappropriate or disruptive ways that interfere with their own education or that of others, and that are casually connected to a disability.

Free appropriate public education (FAPE). These are special education and related services that have been provided at public expense, in the least restrictive environment, provide an education that is appropriate, but not the best possible, and is available to all children without regard to severity of disability.

General education. This is an established curriculum of academic subjects offered

in essentially the same fashion for all children and youth; also called regular education.

Inclusion. The placement of children with disabilities in a general-education class, with chronological age peers, so that they may have access to the general curriculum.

Individualized education program (IEP). A written document ideally developed in a collaborative and cooperative effort between parents and school personnel, which describes the child's abilities, disabilities, and needs, and recommends the placement and services designed to meet the child's unique needs.

Learning disability. This is a disability that results in a student being unable to achieve in a specific learning area, on the same level as other students, with the same or comparable mental ability and educational opportunities; it impairs the ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

Least restrictive environment (LRE). This is the maximum extent appropriate that children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Mainstreaming. In mainstreaming, only students with disabilities deemed academically and emotionally ready with little to no support or accommodations are allowed to participate in the general-education environment.

Paraprofessionals. These are individuals who provide special-education support services and who are supervised by a professional educator.

Physical disability. This is any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic

disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting the body systems; neurological, musculoskeletal, sense organs, respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitor-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

Related services. These are developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that are required for a student with disabilities to benefit from special education; includes speech pathology, audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, school health services, recreation services, social work services, parent training, student and parent counseling services, and early identification and assessment of disabilities in students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview of Special Education

Educating students with disabilities has progressed from neglect, to placement in institutions, and from residential schooling or other isolated classes, to pullout programs. Recently, educating students with disabilities was often done through mainstreaming and is now continuing in the direction of full inclusion for all students with disabilities so that they may have access to the general curriculum (Bradley, King-Sears, & Tessier-Switlick, 1997). According to Reynolds and Birch (1982) and Turnbull (1990), it was not until the middle of the 20th century that parents of children with disabilities organized for political action and that state and federal governments began to demonstrate support for special-education programs in the form of research, training, and legislation. Special education is specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with disabilities, including instruction conducted in the classroom, home, hospitals, institutions, and physical education settings (Kwapy, 2004).

Legislation

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 recognized that the federal government would pass policy addressing educational services in public schools (Sands, Koleski, & French, 2000). ESEA provided funding to school systems so that they could offer free and reduced lunches to children from impoverished families and provided additional teachers to schools in impoverished communities. By targeting children who due to poverty, lack of opportunity, or disability needed extra services and support to benefit from public education, this law established the foundation for more specific legislation that addressed the needs of children with disabilities (Sands, Koleski, & French).

In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, which required that children with disabilities be guaranteed a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE; Bradley et al., 1997). In response, many schools created segregated programs, which still exist today, by providing services in the regular school, but not in regular-education classes. Generally, LRE is the appropriate placement for a child with a disability that most closely approximates where the child, if nondisabled, would be educated. Next, the regular education initiative (REI) was developed, which is based on the premise that children with mild disabilities should be viewed as the shared responsibility of all educators rather than as sole responsibility of special educators, and considers all students as capable of learning in most environments even though they may differ in intellectual, behavioral, or physical characteristics (Bradley et al.). To affirm and respond to the denial of educational opportunities, there are court cases that have led to legislation that protects the rights of all students (Osborne & Russo, 2003).

In *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), the Supreme Court struck down state-sanctioned racial segregation because it violated the students' rights to equal protection under the 14th amendment. *Brown* set the stage for later developments, including those leading to the protection of the rights of students with disabilities (Osborne & Russo, 2003). In the landmark case, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children* (PARC), 13 children with mental retardation and PARC filed suit against the state of Pennsylvania on behalf of all children with mental retardation in the state (Osborne & Russo, 2003). The courts ruled that states have an obligation to place each child with mental retardation in a free public-education program that is appropriate to the child's capacity. This case established the foundation for what developed into the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA; Osborne & Russo, 2003).

The IDEA of 1990 stated that students with disabilities be educated in the general-education environment while accompanied by any needed supports and services written into an individualized education plan (IEP; Knoblauch & Sorenson, 1998). An IEP is a plan developed for each child receiving special-education services that must include an evaluation of the child's academic performance and learning characteristics, social and emotional performance, health and physical development, annual goals, short-term objectives to meet those goals, school environment and service recommendations, a detailing of the extent to which the student will participate in other school activities, any related service recommendations, and a detailing of the extent to which the student will participate in state- and city-wide assessments, either with or without modifications (Least Restrictive Environment Coalition, 2001). IDEA requires that students with disabilities be placed in special classes, separate facilities, or otherwise be removed from the general-education environment only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that instruction in general-education classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily, even with supplementary aids and services (Osborne & Russo, 2003).

Students must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who do not have disabilities. Educators must consider four factors when determining the LRE: the educational benefits of placing a child with a disability in a general-education classroom, the nonacademic benefits of the placement, the effect that the student's presence would have on the teacher and other students, and the costs of an inclusionary placement (Osborne, & Russo, 2003). Still, over parental objections, courts have approved segregated settings where IEP teams demonstrated that students with disabilities could not function in general-education classrooms or would not benefit even

with supplementary aids and services.

IDEA 1997, signed by President Bill Clinton, mandated FAPE for students with disabilities, and included a mandate for planning transition to adult life (Sands et al., 2000). The bill authorized funding for teacher preparation programs at the higher-education level, as well as expenditures to school districts that assisted in providing the range of services necessary to guarantee equal access for all infants, toddlers, and students with disabilities (Sands et al.). When Congress enacted the IDEA of 2004, they made many significant changes to the law (Wright, 2005).

The most important statute, according to Wright and Wright (2006), stated that all children with disabilities will have available a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, while preparing them for continuing education, employment, and independent living. In addition, the mission statement ensured the rights of children with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities are protected. IDEA 2004 communicated that special-education students are no longer the responsibility of the special-education teacher alone, but that everyone in the school system is accountable for every student (Brooks, 2005).

Signed into law on January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001) sets in place requirements that cover all states, school districts, and schools that accept Title 1 federal grants. Title 1 grants fund remedial education programs for poor and disadvantaged children. The law contains President George W. Bush's four basic educational reform principles for K-12 education: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work. NCLB requires that special-education students have access to the same standards as general-education students, and all will be

proficient by the 2013-2014 school year (NCLB; 2001). According to IDEA 1997, special-needs students should be working on the curriculum stated in the IEP, but there is no large-scale test of accountability that measure progress on IEP goals. As a result, the field of special education is struggling with the capacity to meet the requirements of both NCLB and IDEA 1997. NCLB required every state to set clear and high standards for what their students in each grade should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects of reading, math, and science. For the first time, it was mandated that students with disabilities be included by general education and special education in accountability systems (NCLB).

The NCLB required early intervention, particularly in the area of literacy, which may lead to a reduction in the number of students referred for special-education testing due to reading problems, especially in kindergarten through Grade 3 (Elliott, 2003). General-education and special-education teachers are being teamed up for the benefit of students and must meet three criteria for being highly qualified. All must hold at least a bachelor's degree and have passed a state test of subject knowledge in order to teach the core subjects. Also affected by NCLB, paraprofessional educators must obtain an associate's degree or higher, complete 2 years of course work at a higher education institution, and meet a standard of quality by demonstrating, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of, and the ability to assist in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Parents are offered important insight and new options under the NCLB Act (2001). First, parents will know their children's academic strengths and weaknesses and how well schools are performing in order to make well-informed choices for their children, more effectively share responsibility with their children's schools, and help

those schools develop effective and successful academic programs. If a child attends a

school that has not met goals in 2 consecutive years, the parents have the option of

transferring their children to a successful school in the district.

Skill Diversity

     Educational opportunity for all. When observing the interactions among students,

curriculum, and instruction, it is evident that individual children respond differently to the

curriculum content and to the instructional methods (Banks & Banks, 2004). Some

children learn quickly and easily and are able to apply what they learn to new situations.

Other children need repeated practice to perform a simple task and may have difficulty

completing the same task the very next day. Some children begin a lesson with many

relevant experiences and adequate background knowledge, while others come to the same

lesson with little or no prerequisite skills or knowledge. When skill differences are

excessive, and the social or academic skills of children differ to such an extent that

typical school curriculum and teaching methods are neither appropriate nor effective,

equitable access to, and benefits from, educational programs are at stake. Students, who

are different because of race, culture, gender, language, and disability have all been

denied access to educational opportunities.

     Teacher response to diversity. According to Puchach and Seidl (1998), a

sociocultural framework provided a way for children to bridge cultures and to possess the

knowledge and personal agency to decide when crossing those bridges back and forth is

appropriate. Daily, children from certain economic backgrounds see the long-term

economic benefits of education and bring a motivational framework related to that

connection. However, children from lower socioeconomic communities do not always

make the connection between education and economic resources. Therefore, they may

bring a different motivational framework to the educational process and may need a specific and explicit bridge through which to see education as a worthy investment. In order to serve not only students with disabilities, but all students with special needs, teachers need to adopt teaching methods that will allow students to absorb an enormous amount of information in a limited amount of time. Because every student comes from a unique background, all will not be equally successful socially and academically.

Overview of Inclusion

Montgomery described mainstreaming "like pulling a fish from a stream and trying to put it back in the same place. You couldn't because the water had moved on" (Skylight Training and Publishing, 2001). Although often used interchangeably, mainstreaming and inclusion greatly differ, with inclusion meaning participation by all in a supportive general-education environment that includes appropriate educational and social supports and services (Bradley et al., 1997). Mainstreaming has traditionally been interpreted as participation in the general-education environment when deemed academically and emotionally ready. An inclusive school maintains an open-door policy to all students regardless of abilities and disabilities. Instruction is designed around individual strengths and needs rather than the placement of students in already existing programs where instruction is based on the type and severity of disabilities, and there is an attitude of acceptance of all students as members of the school and classroom environment.

Today, teachers are facing increasingly greater challenges in meeting the diverse needs of the students in their classrooms (Torres-Valesquez, 2000). While the number of students in classrooms who speak a language other than English is continually increasing, IDEA promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general-education classroom and stresses the importance of providing the core curriculum for all students,

including those with disabilities. These factors lead to the need for creation of a modern educational paradigm for educating children today as well as in the future. Classroom teachers must learn new ways to accommodate students with diverse learning needs so that they may benefit from their educational experience to the greatest extent possible. Realistically, these hopes can only be fulfilled with the desire and commitment of the classroom teachers. The goals of quality inclusive education are to teach children to appreciate and value the contributions of others, have respect for perspectives that differ from their own, and accept responsibility for the role they play as members of a larger society (Banks & Banks, 2004). Equity, justice, quality of life, and full participation in a pluralistic and democratic society are concerns of special education (Park & Lian, 2001).

Sapon-Shevin (2003) suggested that by seeing beyond inclusion as a special-education concern, there is the potential to challenge and transform far more within our schools and society. Inclusion is not only about disability or schools, but about social justice that can teach important lessons far beyond individual students and help to create an inclusive, democratic society. Sapon-Shevin developed four ways to create an inclusive school. First, challenge exclusion with the idea that exclusion is not about difference, but about responses to difference. Second, respond to teasing and bullying with an explicitly educational and public response, such as labeling the student's actions as harassment. Third, teach students to try seeing things from other perspectives. Fourth, foster courage and challenge oppression. Inclusive classrooms can be places in which students learn to take powerful stances against oppression of many kinds by recognizing their own power to change the world.

Successful Inclusion

Ultimately, the goal of public education is to equip students with skills and

knowledge for their adult lives, and students' success in the outside world directly relates to their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses (King, 2000). During a 6 to 7-year period, Eastern Technical High School was able to move from self-contained special-education practices to 100% inclusion (King). To ensure that all students received the support they needed, the school operated a resource center staffed by special-education teachers and paraprofessionals. Resource centers were usually seen as a support only for special-education students, but at Eastern Technical High School the resource center was available to all students, as well as to teachers who wished to discuss pedagogical methods for individual learning differences (King). The principal reported that the resource center was especially busy on Fridays and during exams, when parent volunteers provided additional assistance. Students knew the center was there to help them and were encouraged to take advantage of it as needed. The school stressed that self-advocacy is one of the keys to learning, and the goal was to ensure students felt comfortable walking into the center to get the help. The reasoning behind this goal was that this is how the workplace works, so this is how the school works (King).

At a high school in Pittsburgh, teachers played a critical role in initiating change, and coteaching was a major component of the school's reform practices (King, 2000). Ten years ago, when a general-education social studies teacher and a special-education teacher decided to include some special-needs students in a general-education classroom, the process of inclusion began. The result was the development of a successful program in which 10th grade special-education students were included in the social studies class. By breaking tradition and trusting the skills of teachers, the school met the challenge of getting all students to succeed. The principal suggested that to maximize the potential of each student, it was imperative that schools understand the implications of school culture

on the educational opportunity for all students and develop optimal learning conditions to accommodate the individual differences of special-needs students. Any evolutionary process has challenges and takes time and getting the same results for all students is not an easy task. Still, the evolution to a culture of inclusion must go beyond mainstreaming students into general classes.

Benefits of Inclusion

Sapon-Shevin, Dobbelaere, Corrigan, Goodman, and Mastin (1998) found that by taking the social climate in their classrooms and school seriously, teachers could challenge existing patterns of exclusion and isolation and help children develop new kinds of friendships. The study explored the social climate of the classroom relative to issues of exclusion, friendship, and connection by addressing the overall classroom community, rather than by focusing on one particular child. Results indicated that as schools become more diverse, many teachers were becoming increasingly aware of the importance of creating a sense of community in their classrooms. Physical inclusion did not guarantee social inclusion, and many students with disabilities, as well as students from other marginalized groups, were seen as "islands." Teachers and students needed to focus on figuring out how, not whether, to include students.

Fisher and Meyer (2002) found that students with severe disabilities participating in inclusive settings made gains on measures of development and social competence. Participation in these inclusive programs was at least as good as, if not somewhat better than, self-contained placements. On the developmental measure, participants made minimal gains in the traditional motor-skill and social-communication domains, and moderate gains in personal-living and community-living domains. On the measure of social competence, participants made significant gains with respect to initiating contacts

and coping with negative situations. Results suggested a positive influence associated with the inclusive programs on adaptive behavior and the more traditional developmental domains.

Seeking to find strategies that can be used to encourage friendships between students with and without disabilities, Chadsey and Han (2002) conducted interviews with middle-school, general-education students who were friends with peers who had disabilities. The students urged teachers to have students with disabilities included in their classes more often, as well as suggested that teachers create programs, especially after-school programs, that were of interest to students with and without disabilities. The students stressed the importance of having informal opportunities to interact with others in order to form social relationships, and many stated that a volunteer program designed to help students with disabilities would be useful. However, rather than having a student with disabilities paired with just one student, it would be better if the student with disabilities could be included in a group of students who are friends. Other suggested strategies simply included having students with disabilities talk about their personal experiences, and allowing them to take the same bus as general-education students. Overall, the students who were interviewed believed that those who had friends with disabilities needed to encourage other peers to have a positive attitude toward, and also become involved with, students with disabilities.

Barriers to Inclusion

Barriers to the development of an inclusive school are changes in instructional preparation, delivery, and assessment, which lead to general educators feeling uncomfortable in their new role. Traditionally, education has been an isolated activity, with both general- and special-education teachers seeing themselves as the center of a

particular group of students. Inclusion requires general- and special-education teachers to work together as equal partners, with both involved in all aspects of planning, teaching, and assessment, a process of coteaching. During the transition to inclusion, teachers express feelings of reluctance, fear, nervousness, apprehension, anger, or worry about their changes in roles. Despite the mandates from federal and state officials regarding inclusion, some teachers still believe they do not have to include the students with disabilities if they choose not to include them.

When a school makes the change to include students with disabilities in general-education classrooms, there are several issues that educators must face. First, the way in which staff and materials are used needs to be reconfigured. That involves role changes for people, resources, and distribution of materials. Methods for coordinating curriculum delivery under the new context of a diversified curriculum and techniques for heterogeneous instruction are essential. When planning such changes, school officials must explicitly address support for individuals. As they change, educators need formal and informal forums in which to share their experiences and accrue personal and professional support.

Personal Change

Rather than programs, materials, technology, or equipment, change is primarily about individuals, their beliefs, and their actions. The idea of change, to many educators, brings to mind thoughts of reform, restructuring of schools, new initiatives, and school improvement efforts. Because a change to inclusive schooling challenges traditional education practices, educators may react to those types of messages in very personal ways. The thought of including students with disabilities in regular classes causes teachers a great deal of anxiety. When transitioning from schools that educate students

with disabilities in separate programs, to schools that welcome and include all students, hopes are raised, but fears are generated. It is not unusual for educators to worry about their competence and their ability to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Many feel overwhelmed by sympathy and sadness for the child. Some resent the fact that they must work with children with disabilities on top of all their other tasks. One of the reasons for the resistance to change is that it challenges competence and power. Teachers may worry about making mistakes, looking foolish, and feeling an initial awkwardness when implementing new programs and procedures. Both special educators and general educators may find themselves going through a range of emotions from grieving for lost practices and programs, to discomfort or ambivalence. One special-education teacher expressed joy in having a self-contained classroom, with individualized lessons, and personal cares or worries. Even if teachers and administration are initially enthusiastic, sustaining the change is difficult and requires strong support systems committed to the process (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004).

In the field of education, without the commitment of teachers as street-level bureaucrats, curricular change has little chance of taking hold let alone being sustained over time (Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Stoll & Fink, 1996). If change in education depends on what teachers do and think, it is crucial for change agents to pay close attention to the thoughts and actions of teachers. Due to being given multiple, and contradictory directives, it is common for teachers to resist new programs. However, they hold valuable knowledge about the system and good ideas about what should change and how change should occur. They know where teachers experience the most stress (Fullan, 2001). Researchers recognize that in some instances teacher commitment follows, rather than precedes, changes in practice (McLaughlin, 1998). Ultimately, teacher ownership of

change is critical to the success of school reform. People need to be supported by one another and by their organization as they undergo valid, necessary, and uncomfortable reactions to change.

Curriculum

Titone (2005) conducted focus groups composed of individuals experienced with inclusion with the purpose of determining the knowledge prospective teachers need to know, or interventions they must be able to do in order to be successful in kindergarten through 12th grade inclusive settings. Emergent and significant themes from the study suggested adapting curriculum and pedagogy, learning to monitor one's own attitudes, collaborating with others, as well as changes in courses and field experiences for teacher education students. Although the teacher must understand and care for his or her students, more is required. He or she must succeed at teaching the child subject-area content. Curriculum development is an important component in this endeavor because the curriculum is the map that guides the educational process. Participants in the study agreed that it is not sufficient to develop and adhere to a good curriculum, but teachers must know how to adapt or change curriculum to meet the needs of all students in the classroom as well as in the community, when appropriate. The best curriculum decisions can be made only through collaboration of special- and general-education teachers.

Teacher Concerns

Classroom teachers fear being put in the position of being caught between inclusion and test score accountability (Bradley et al., 1997). Changes in instructional preparation, delivery, and assessment are often required to meet the needs of such a diverse group. General educators often report feeling uncomfortable as they move into new roles that include providing meaningful educational and social experiences for

students with disabilities, dealing with special-education jargon and paperwork, and working with more comprehensive record keeping systems. General educators sometimes anticipate that inclusion as a mandate will require them to do more with less. Some general educators fear a lack of support from special educators and some have expressed fear that these supports will be eliminated altogether.

Friend and Cook (1990) found participation in collaborative programs must be voluntary for all involved in order for the programs to be accepted, and that administrator acceptance and encouragement will help to a great extent. Making successes known and promoting the benefits that have taken place may encourage even the most reluctant teachers to put forth their best effort. First, though, it is important to involve people right from the start in needs assessments, planning efforts, and evaluations in order to instill a sense of ownership in the changes being proposed.

*Teacher Attitude*s

Kwapy (2004) studied teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in a Colorado Springs school district. A random sample of special-education and general-education teachers, currently teaching in elementary, middle, and high schools were surveyed regarding their attitudes toward including students with academic, physical, behavioral, or social disabilities into the classroom. Teachers expressed that students with behavior and aggression problems would be the most difficult to have in a general-education class setting and were most comfortable with students whose academic achievements were only 1 year below the other students in the grade. Teachers felt that students who are shy and withdrawn should be in the general-education class. Also, the findings indicated that teachers were frustrated by the heavy workload of meeting standards and benchmarks, covering all material, and individualizing work for students with individualized

functional academic programs in everyday reading and math.

Teacher Responsibilities

By law, all teachers must actively participate in the IEP development of accommodations and modifications and implement or provide them as specified on the IEP (Anderson & Ward, 2005). An IEP should indicate who is to develop or provide accommodations and modifications in the classroom and when they will be provided, if relevant. Accommodations change how instruction or information is presented; assessment is administered; students respond to instruction or assessment activities, or demonstrate what they have learned. Examples of accommodations include text on audiotape, reduced number of spelling words, calculator or multiplication chart for word problems, word bank on tests, word processor for writing assignments, and use of a spell-checker. The goal of an accommodation is to establish a "level playing field" for a student with a disability and should not give a student undue advantage over others. The use of accommodations may be used in conjunction with, but should not take the place of learning basic skills such as listening instead of reading.

Modifications are a significant change in what the student is expected to learn or demonstrate. Modifications significantly alter grade level, complexity, or performance criteria. Examples of modifications include lower grade-level textbooks, alternate spelling list of easier words, calculator for calculation problems, easier test items, writing sentences instead of essays, and alternate software for computer-based instruction. Further examples of accommodations and modifications include shortened assignments, reading software, graphic organizers, study guides with page numbers, tape recorder for dictation, and lower grade level, highlighted, large-print or Braille textbooks (Anderson & Ward, 2005).

Accommodations are preferred over modifications, when possible, due to the effects on learning and high stakes involved, such as graduation tests, or the decision to promote or retain a student. Accommodations and modifications used for statewide testing should be consistent with classroom accommodations and modifications. The IEP team should consider the level of personnel support, such as a coteacher or paraprofessional, needed in each classroom in order to provide the needed accommodations and modifications. Each school day, the classroom teacher must make the conscious decision to provide accommodations and modifications as stated on the IEP (Anderson & Ward, 2005).

In addition to receiving accommodations and modifications in the classroom setting, students with disabilities are entitled to participate with their peers, who are nondisabled, in extracurricular activities such as counseling, recreation, athletics, transportation, health services, and clubs. If modifications are required for participation, they must be considered reasonable. Often, students with disabilities repeat grades and are then older than other students at the same grade level. If a student fails a grade as a direct result of his or her disability, or due to an inappropriate IEP, a court may agree that enforcement of age requirements may be discriminatory. However, most courts have upheld age requirements (Anderson & Ward, 2005).

When students have disabilities in the following learning processes, teachers may be required to make certain accommodations (Fayette County School System, n.d.). An auditory processing disability manifests as inability to recognize differences in phonemes, inaccurate pronunciation of new vocabulary words, spelling problems, or difficulty following multistep oral directions. Recommended accommodations are pairing visual and auditory cues, using graphic organizers with lectures and giving preferential

seating where distractions are minimal, providing note-taking assistance, simplifying oral directions by breaking into sequential steps, using manipulatives, and reducing the penalty for spelling on in-class assignments. Poor organization, limited vocabulary, or quality and quantity of language that is not developmentally appropriate, indicate a verbal reasoning disability. Recommended accommodations are preteaching or previewing vocabulary, use of graphic organizers, and using summarizing strategies.

A visual processing disability is evident if students have difficulty interpreting what is seen, such as difficulty distinguishing between look-alike words, reversal of letters, numbers, or words, problems distinguishing color, size, shape, and direction, spelling problems, inaccurate copying, trouble interpreting maps or charts, and problems sequencing plots of stories. Recommended accommodations are note-taking assistance for accuracy, reduced penalty for spelling on in-class assignments, use of an index card to follow print, and using active verbalization for memorization. A disability concerning visual motor integration results in a clumsy appearance, illegible writing, inaccurate copying, eye-hand coordination problems, and losing materials. Recommended accommodations are organizational assistance, use of word processor, note-taking assistance, use of graphic organizers, and extended time for writing assignments or tests. Students who have an abstract reasoning disability show difficulty solving unique problems, have good decoding skills but poor comprehension, and are verbally expressive, but do not do well with concrete thinking. Recommended accommodations are use of concrete examples, listing steps for problem solving, use of manipulatives to develop concepts, and preteaching or previewing vocabulary.

It is apparent that students have a long-term memory disability when they have difficulty storing and retrieving previously experienced visual and auditory information,

are prone to forgetting details, have work retrieval problems, and difficulty memorizing poems, speeches, or facts. Recommended modifications are graphic organizers, activation of prior knowledge, mnemonic aids, and the breakdown of tasks into manageable parts. Trouble taking accurate notes, poor spelling, difficulty remembering information just heard or seen indicates a short-term memory disability. Recommended accommodations are note-taking assistance, reduced spelling penalty for in-class assignments, use of a tape recorder for lectures, and breaking down of tasks into manageable parts.

Although there are repercussions for not following the IEP, only the person who directly delivers the services holds the power to make the final decision to implement the IEP as written. Ultimately, delivery of services is carried out by the teachers who interact with students with disabilities in the classroom, or other designated educational setting on a daily basis.

Failure to Follow an IEP

It is not uncommon for a subject-matter teacher in high school to take the position, "I don't discriminate; every student in my class is treated the same with regard to teaching and testing" (Fayette County School System, n.d., ¶ 5). Educators who cling to this position are leaving themselves wide open to a lawsuit. The following case illustrates the repercussions of not following the IEP.

When he was in fourth grade, Douglas Doe was diagnosed as learning disabled (Zirkel, 1994). As established in his IEP, Douglas remained in general-education classes and received services in the learning disabilities resource room. In the fall of 1990, he entered high school and received low grades in most subjects during the first grading period. Douglas's parents were concerned about his performance and arranged to meet with all of his teachers to discuss his IEP and to stress the need for him to be tested orally

by the learning disabilities teacher. As a result of the Doe's actions, all teachers complied with the testing accommodations except his history teacher, Michael Withers. Withers was a state senator, given leave approximately 60 days each year while the legislature was in session. Withers administered approximately nine written tests to Douglas, most of which he failed. Although Douglas passed all other courses that semester, he failed history and was therefore banned from participating in extracurricular activities. In early 1991, Withers went on leave to serve in the state legislature and the substitute teacher promptly complied with the testing modifications. Douglas' grades in history dramatically improved.

The Does filed a grievance with the high school principal, and after pursuing the matter through the required levels of the superintendent and the board of education without satisfaction, they applied for a hearing at the state education department. In December 1991, they received a ruling in their favor, with the school district ordered to prepare Douglas for the administration of an oral test covering the subject matter of his first semester, providing all necessary tutoring and reteaching, and to grant credit should he pass the oral test.

The Does then filed suit in state court, claiming that Withers, the principal, superintendent, and school board had violated Douglas' rights under IDEA and the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The courts granted the defendants' motion for a directed verdict with regard to the principal, superintendent, and the school board, but not Withers. The judge decided that the Does had not established the requisite level of intentional conduct on the part of these other school officials for liability. Withers rested his case without additional testimony. The jury returned a verdict of $5,000 in compensatory damages and $30,000 in punitive damages. The district's liability insurer

paid the judgment.

Coteaching

    Benefits of coteaching. According to Anderson and Ward (2005), both special

educators and general educators benefited from coteaching due to the ability to provide

more direct instruction to small groups and individuals, while offering a variety of

instructional activities and differentiated content. Help with planning and preparation,

reduced student-teacher ratio, professional learning opportunities, and less discipline

referrals, lead to an overall sense of support. In addition to academic achievement and

test scores, students with disabilities had increased social skills, self-esteem, and

participation in general-education classrooms. As teacher expectations increased,

behavior problems decreased, and there was reduced fragmentation and missed activities.

Benefits for students without disabilities included exposure to a wider range of

instructional strategies and activities, additional help for those who needed assistance,

and increased tolerance of human differences. Achievement of average and gifted

learners was not impeded.

    Coteaching challenges. In a case study of a high school history coteaching pair, by

Nowacek (1992), a middle-school pair of coteachers reported planning and teaching

effectively. Still, their roles changed throughout the year. They illustrated their success

by stating that all but one of the special-education students gained at least 1 year in

spelling. In a case study of another high school history coteaching pair, in the same

report, results showed the special educator took on the role of disciplinarian instead of

instructor. Consequently, the program was terminated after the second year. In a case

study of one general educator who cotaught with 2 different special educators in 2 years,

Trent (1998) described two very opposite experiences. In the first year, 2 teachers formed

a successful partnership by planning, teaching, and problem solving together. On the contrary, in the second year the general educator reported that the special educator was not a content specialist and was not interested in delivering instruction. Again, the special educator became the disciplinarian and eventually stopped showing up for class.

Based on extended observations and interviews with more than 70 general-education and special-education teacher teams, Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) identified several issues that coteachers must address if they are to be successful. The general-education teacher was responsible for all of the students in the class, but how the responsibilities changed regarding students with special needs had to be determined. For example, who gave grades and how they were given, whose classroom management rules to use, and how the classroom space was divided were aspects of coteaching that had to be compromised and agreed upon. Next, teachers were often unsure about how much information should be given to the students and how the parents might react to having a special-education teacher in the classroom for all or part of the day. Vaughn et al. (1997) suggested students were informed that they had 2 teachers, both teachers had the same authority, and the special-education teacher was a learning abilities specialist who would be working with all of the students occasionally. When parents were brought in early and were part of the planning process, there was a better chance that the program would be successful. Parents of average- to high-achieving students may have expressed concerns that their child's education might be hampered because students with special needs are placed in the classroom, but teachers reported that these students fare as well or better academically and socially when students with disabilities were in the general-education classroom, and all students benefited from the support provided by the special-education teacher.

Finally, the most pervasive concern of both general- and special-education teachers was found to be obtaining sufficient time during the school day to plan and discuss instruction and student progress. Teachers reported that planning often came on their own time, even when a designated period was established for coplanning, because this time often got taken away for meetings and other school management activities. One suggestion made by several teacher teams was to designate a day or a half-day every 6 to 8 weeks when teachers could meet extensively to plan and discuss the progress of students as well as changes in their instructional practices.

Most teachers accept some level of accountability as long as they feel they are in control of their classrooms (Dyck, Sundbye, & Pemberton, 1997). However, engaging in coteaching requires giving up some control. Like a cook who prepares a meal without using recipes, most teachers intuitively know what needs to be done to produce a fine outcome and are not in the habit of communicating their lesson plans to another person. This approach is inadequate in a coteaching situation, and without systematic planning, teachers run the risk of allowing students to be in the classroom but not included in the lesson. The difference in the way special educators and general educators plan may result from the difference in training based on individual versus group needs, leading to conflict between coteachers in inclusive schools. Exclusively using group planning may overlook the needs of some students who need more individualized plans. Likewise, exclusively using individualized planning can create a situation in which coteachers cannot find time to prepare several individualized lessons. Teaching content may also be a potential barrier, with general-education teachers concerned about students mastering standards to score well on achievement tests, but because special-education teachers are accountable for the progress of their students toward meeting those goals, they focus on addressing

the goals and objectives on their students' IEPs.

Changing Roles

After interviewing special-education teachers and observing their roles in cotaught and special-education classrooms, Weiss and Lloyd (2002) identified recurrent patterns that suggested a description of coteaching definitions, roles, and instructional actions and then compared this description to roles and actions in a special-education classroom. Special educators were found to take on various roles when coteaching, that were different from the roles that they reportedly assumed when they were teaching in special-education classrooms. The differences between these roles were influenced by personal definitions of coteaching and perceived pressures from the classroom, administration, and professional community. During cotaught classes, special educators may simply have provided support for students in the general-education classroom, taught the same content in a separate classroom, taught a separate part of the content in the same classroom, or team taught with the general educator.

In coteaching situations, teachers engaged in actions that helped students get through assignments and instruction given to the entire class, whereas in special-education classrooms teachers' additional instructional actions included more specific explanations, questions, help, and feedback. In the general-education classroom, special-education teachers spent much of their time circulating, presenting content, and managing the class, as opposed to using direct instruction, strategy instruction, and behavior modification routines to meet their instructional goals in the special-education classroom.

In high schools that use inclusive environments, unique and significant challenges arise. The established roles of teachers are very specific because the focus is on subject matter and graduation requirements. It is easy for special-education teachers to be

identified and to identify themselves as educators who only work with students who have disabilities. Often, teachers who are focused in a certain subject are perceived as very bright. Many believe that you do not have to be smart to teach special education. The suggestion of coteaching is often initially out of the question. The transition to maintaining ownership of all students with differing abilities is a paradigm shift that often requires a great deal of diligence and support for the high school teacher.

Coteaching Strategies

Coteaching demands a new model for daily lesson planning that addresses the needs of all students in the classroom without undue time demands on the coteaching teachers (Dyck et al., 1997). The Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities (1995) reported the reality of teacher planning indicated a tension between what teachers believe should be done and what can be done, or is being done, for some students. The report summarized four federally funded studies about the way classroom teachers engaged in coplanning. It was suggested that the answers to three questions identified individual and class learning needs:

1. How can I teach this group of students? Teachers often focus planning on group learning, but are not sure how to plan for students with disabilities.

2. What will we do today? Most teachers plan units rather than lessons. Planning focuses on the activities that support the flow of instruction and when those activities will happen during the school day.

3. How should I help them learn? Teachers are willing to implement strategies that target the entire class, but they often do not view teaching of learning strategies as feasible. They value having students learn how to learn and students want to acquire learning strategies, but traditional school practices can inhibit a learn-to-learn perspective

(Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities, 1995).

Vaughn et al. (1997) observed more than 70 coteaching classrooms and identified typical teaching practices that teachers implement. Grazing and tag-team teaching were two practices that needed modification to provide the most efficient use of time and effective use of skills. In grazing, one teacher stood in front of the room providing instruction and the other teacher moved from student to student checking to see if they were paying attention or following along. In tag-team teaching, one teacher stood in front of the room providing instruction and the other teacher either stood in the back of the room or sat at a desk involved in another activity. When the first teacher had completed the lesson or presentation, they switched positions in the room. Vaughn et al. suggested teachers replace grazing with teaching on purpose, giving 60-second, 2-minute, or 5-minute lessons to individual students, pairs of students, or small groups of students.

Teachers kept a written log of information for each special-education student who needed follow-up work that may relate to key ideas, concepts, or vocabulary from the lesson or unit. If selected students were still unsure of critical information, teachers approached the student, checked for understanding, then followed up with a brief lesson. Because students quickly adjusted to the role of the second teacher, they often wanted the teacher to check in with them.

Anderson and Ward (2005) found there were pros and cons for all coteaching strategies. For instance, station teaching involved teachers dividing content or instructional activities and teaching at different stations. The general-education teacher provided instruction at one station and the special-education teacher provided instruction at another station. A third station allowed students to work independently. Students were divided into groups and rotated among the different instructional stations. Pros included

lower student-teacher ratio, a variety or instructional activities, and opportunity for differentiated instruction. Cons included noise and distraction and extensive upfront planning. Parallel teaching involved dividing the class into two heterogeneous groups with each teacher leading the same activity or teaching the same content to half the class. Pros included lower student-teacher ratio, the ability to separate students with behavior problems, and requiring less time to cover content or complete an activity. Cons included noise and distraction, and the requirement that both teachers must have extensive knowledge of the content.

Alternative teaching involved one teacher leading the whole group instruction, while the other teacher taught a smaller group or provided individual tutoring (Anderson & Ward, 2005). Pros included opportunity to provide needed preteaching, reteaching, specialized instruction, proactive activities, opportunities for enrichment, and time for teaching important content to students who had been absent. However, there were time concerns in regards to pacing. Complementary teaching involved both teachers delivering instruction and interacting with the entire class at the same time in a coordinated fashion. Teachers alternated lead and complementary roles. Pros included different teaching styles meeting the needs of more students, enhanced student engagement, and classroom management. Cons included challenging interpersonal skills and the possibility of not maximizing two teachers.

Effective Coteaching

Because of NCLB and IDEA mandates for access, LRE, and highly qualified teachers, interest in coteaching is higher than ever before (Friend & Hurley-Chamberlain, 2006). Although practice should be guided by data that indicates what works and what does not, few studies have been published that demonstrate the effectiveness of

coteaching. Information about what constitutes coteaching and how to create and sustain coteaching programs is valuable, but it is not evidence of effectiveness. Largely, studies of coteaching have focused on the perceptions of teachers and students. Generally, students respond positively to coteaching while teachers recognize the value of classroom partnerships, but express concern about its appropriateness for some students, its feasibility given pressures for high-stakes testing, and its practicality given current funding for special-education programs.

Local school districts are using their own measures to demonstrate that students' achievement and behavior improves in cotaught classes (Friend & Hurley-Chamberlain, 2006). Still, formal research is needed that directly addresses whether students with disabilities achieve at the same, or a higher rate, in cotaught than other service options, what the impact of coteaching is on other students, and if student behavior improves in cotaught classes. Friend and Hurley-Chamberlain recommended districts create their own evidence of effectiveness by ensuring coteachers receive professional development so they maximize the contribution of both partners, use curriculum based and other measures to document the amount of educational progress for both students with and without disabilities, and gather other related information such as student behavior or discipline referrals to provide insight into the impact of coteaching on students' ability to succeed in general-education settings. While considering all the factors that influence coteaching outcomes for students, it is also important to track student progress across time and grade levels. Outcomes for coteaching may be influenced by ages or grade levels of students, content being taught, instructional strategies teachers use, teachers' knowledge and skills as professional educators, amount of shared teaching time each day, length of time the partnership has existed, and extent of administrative support.

School Culture

  Collaborative schools. Saphier and King (1985) listed characteristics of a

collaborative school culture with norms and expectations that supported change and

improvement. Characteristics included collegiality, experimentation, high expectations,

trust, support, expanding knowledge base, appreciation and recognition, celebration,

humor, honesty, traditions, and protection of what is important to the organization as a

whole. A high school in Maryland integrated all students into every aspect of school life

by sending a message that all students belonged and contributed (King, 2000). Regarding

special education, the principal suggested that all people compensate for something, and

by incorporating this idea into the school's culture and environment, special-needs

students were empowered to participate in the school's clubs and organizations. Efforts to

create a mutually beneficial learning environment have inadvertently expanded the

meaning of inclusive learning. Schools are realizing that all students can gain from the

same accommodations that are required by special-needs students. For decades, there has

been a movement to ensure that special-education students are offered the same

educational opportunities as all children. Although inclusion was an important

component in this movement toward educational equity establishing a school

environment that embraces inclusion is not always easy. To replace the special-education

culture of separation with a culture of inclusion, while still taking into account the

individual needs of special-education students, students, teachers, and staff must be

encouraged to look past differences and acknowledge similarities.

  Leadership. The principal at a technical high school in Maryland captured the

essence of the changes in special education by suggesting that all students have special

needs, that students receiving special-education services have strengths their classmates

can grow from, and that the culture of special education has gone through an evolution. Organizational culture shapes the beliefs and assumptions about the way work gets done, how change occurs, who is powerful, and is key in affecting individual and group differences (Ashkensay, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

An effective principal is not only an instructional leader, but also a leader in a culture of change (Fullan, 2002). In addition to being energetic, enthusiastic, hopeful, and coherent, the culturally changed principal has a moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve relationships, and the skills to create and share knowledge. Principals focus on student learning, but are constantly aware of external ideas that could potentially contribute to school reform. By embracing these individual challenges, the most complex of problems can be solved. However, improving relationships is the most important factor in the change process. By building effective learning communities, principals will be able to guide teachers to create and share knowledge, therefore, allowing them to focus on the moral purpose of teaching to ensure every student benefits from the educational system to the greatest extent possible.

Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) studied the attitudes and knowledge of principals toward inclusion. Specifically, they asked 115 principals in the state of Illinois, how they defined inclusion, which populations of students they applied that definition to, what their attitudes were toward inclusive education, what leadership approaches they most commonly exhibited, and to what extent they used and perceived effectiveness of activities and educational practices that are identified as important for successful inclusion. Principals were asked to rate the extent to which 21 programs, activities, and strategies were being used in their schools and the extent to which they perceived those practices to be effective for inclusion. It was found that no clear definition of inclusion

emerged from the data collected by the survey used. Regarding the 13 educational practices, significant differences were found between extent of use and perceived effectiveness with the higher rating in perceived effectiveness.

Staff Development

 Resolving conflict. Hoerr (2005) suggested educators lack skills to contain conflict, but because resources in schools are scarce, it is wasteful to spend valuable time and energy disagreeing with one another. In contrast, glossing over differences to reduce tensions and avoid disagreements may bring short-term comfort, but even as teachers leave these collaborative meetings with a happy front, their true opinions on issues may go unaddressed. Conflict arises when any participant in an organization views the current system or relationship as not working (Melamed & Reiman, 2000). At least one party is so dissatisfied that they are willing to speak out, in hopes of improving the situation. Simply expressing perspectives is not enough; participants must feel heard. Only then, are people in conflict willing to consider new ways of resolving the situation. In true collaboration and conflict resolution, everyone can have their truth and still come to an agreement.

 Resistance to change. Over a 5-year period, Silin and Schwartz (2003) studied how staff developers helped teachers generate strategies for reading and dealing effectively with district demands, so they could simultaneously fulfill school official's directives and implement progressive classroom practices. The staff developers viewed resistance as a form of communicative action to be interpreted, rather than a roadblock to overcome, and enabled teachers to function as street-level bureaucrats who determined how policy would be implemented in their classrooms. As a result of staff developers learning to mediate district policy with and for teachers, a peer culture flourished that

supported independence, responsibility, and collaborative learning among teachers and staff developers. Teachers successfully experimented in their classrooms with inquiry-based units that engaged students in thinking, questioning, and researching. The units were often prompted by participation in staff development initiatives designed to demonstrate the integration of literacy and meaningful content in the core curriculum areas. With a genuine understanding of the constraints under which teachers worked, staff developers explicitly acknowledged the differences in power that separated them from teachers.

According to Lieberman (as cited in Rust & Friedus, 2001), there were two key dilemmas relevant to the staff development process. It was imperative to employ change agents who are collegial, as opposed to authoritarian, and have had the goal of simultaneously helping to develop the project's vision as well as the teachers' vision. Rust, Ely, Krasnow, and Miller (as cited in Rust & Friedus, 2001) applied this idea as they described the collision between teachers who now feel empowered and want to change and the top who will not let them, or do not do enough about it to keep it going. In their study of Head Start teachers, they explained that in spite of these smashups, change agents helped teachers feel strong enough to try new things in their classrooms and see themselves as professionals. In this study, the staff developers focused primarily on improving the teachers' sense of their own ability to make and implement independent judgments about classroom practice.

School Improvement Efforts

A high school near Portland, Oregon, serves 1,483 students in Grades 9 through 12 (Butler & Dixon, 2001). Since 1983, the school had implemented a long-term school improvement plan, first as a pilot, then as a participant in the Northwest Regional

Educational Laboratory Onward to Excellence (OTE) program. The program utilized a 10-step process to use student performance data in an effort to set school-wide improvement goals, with success measured by changes in the levels of student achievement, behavior and attitude. When school administrators agreed to undertake the improvement process, the school faced possible problems such as reduced resources, increased pressures for excellence, and low staff morale.

Using the OTE process to manage school improvement, the school established a leadership team which included the principal, a central office representative, and key teachers. The team collected data on student performance, worked with faculty to determine a school-wide improvement goal, selected and implemented practices supported by research that would contribute to meeting the goal, and monitored progress toward meeting the goal. In 1984 and 1986, information on the school's application of the OTE approach was collected through interviews with selected administrators and staff and staff-wide questionnaires. According to the data collected, the use of the OTE process contributed to improving the school's culture. The establishment of the leadership team and the involvement of staff in school improvement greatly increased the collaborative, cooperative, and collegial efforts in the school. The leadership team presented an opportunity for teachers to participate in decision making as they worked to move the school through the improvement steps. They met frequently to learn new skills, collect and share data on the school, and develop ways the staff could work together to focus on school improvement.

In another move toward staff involvement, an existing communications network was redesigned to facilitate collegial work. In the course of working through the OTE process, the principal and leadership team restructured the Faculty Senate, in which

representatives from content area departments met to learn about new requirements from the principal and discuss other administrative matters of school-wide significance. Each leadership team member was assigned one group of faculty and became responsible for creating and maintaining an open two-way communication system between staff and team members. These groups met periodically, and members of the leadership team reported comments, decisions, or concerns back to the leadership team. This approach created a way for information to reach staff quickly, and for systematically collecting staff feedback on improvement issues. As a result of these efforts at the school, there were three expectations developed that were shared school wide. First, improvement efforts that are of high priority should be ongoing and should be driven by the results of effective schools research. Second, all staff members can, and should, be involved in the school improvement process. Third, the focus of school improvement is to improve student performance.

All staff had been informed about the need for improvement and had been introduced to the effective schools research as a resource for improving instruction and student performance. In 1986, through interviews or written questionnaires, every staff member expressed awareness of the areas of student performance which had been the focus for improvement, cited a new belief across the school that the school was working in an organized fashion, and the process had an effect that is more than improving selected goals; it got people working together toward common goals (Butler & Dixon, 2001). Managed school improvement had been a catalyst for change, had provided a meaningful process for involving others and building ownership, and had resulted in decisions becoming shared responsibilities.

Conclusion

Coteaching is not a special-education teacher working with students with disabilities at the back of the room on different assignments on a daily basis, one teacher teaching while the other sits and watches, taking turns teaching, or a special-education teacher seated next to, or walking around a group of student with disabilities while the general-education teacher provides instruction to the entire class (Anderson & Ward, 2005). Coteaching is an inclusive service-delivery option for students with disabilities in which one certified special-education teacher and one certified general-education teacher both plan and deliver instruction and assessment, in a shared classroom, with collective resources and joint accountability, for a blended group of diverse students.

Change is unavoidable and with positive change comes excitement, exhilaration, and accomplishment, as well as anxiety, uncertainty, and loss of confidence at early stages (Fullan, 1991). Puchach and Seidl (1998) believed there must be a commitment to provide equitable education for all children, which requires nothing less than full engagement toward the goal of culturally supportive and appropriate education. All general and special educators must engage in a coherent and interconnected effort to fully critique the patterns of operation and the relationships that perpetuate the system.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

The theoretical perspective, disability inquiry, was used to address the meaning of inclusion in one high school in the rural Southeastern United States. Research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants by addressing the specific issue of empowerment. Because it is assumed that collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem, a mixed methods approach was used to determine the increase in comfort level of teachers toward inclusion, as well as common themes that emerged during focus-group interviews (Creswell, 2002). Seeking to elaborate and expand on the quantitative findings, a sequential procedure was used to gather qualitative data.

In this mixed-methods study, the grounded theory approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. It was developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) who indicated that case studies can be used to build theory, which, in turn, indicates the population to which the theory applies (Gall et al., 2003). Case study researchers who use the principles of grounded theory derive categories directly from their data instead of from theories developed by other researchers. Categories are grounded in the particular set of data collected and seek to describe and explain the phenomena that are observed. Because the emphasis is on explanation, the categories are considered theoretical. Even if the categories are only descriptive, the procedures used in grounded theory are applicable. As applied to this study, this theory expects that, after participating in focus groups, teachers' comfort level toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general-education classes would increase. Researchers using focus groups find that the interactions among participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not

express if interviewed individually.

Some researchers believe that qualitative research is best used to discover themes and relationships at the case level, while quantitative research is best used to validate those themes and relationships in samples and populations (Gall et al., 2003). According to Barbour and Kitzinger (1998), a number of key characteristics led to the increased use of focus groups in the last 20 years. Generally, as is the case for most qualitative methods, it is the focus group's ability to access the knowledge, ideas, story-telling, self-presentation, and linguistic exchanges within a given cultural context that makes it a refreshing challenge to traditional quantitative approaches. Quantitative work, such as the collection of survey data through a process of measurement, experimentation, and variables, transfers the original voices of its research subjects into statistical data, mathematical relations, or other abstract parameters, leaving little understanding of the context in which particular practices occur (Shratz, 1993). In contrast, qualitative methods such as focus groups, participant observation, case studies, and individual interviews pay more attention to the original voices of people in their everyday life, allowing researchers to observe and present a broader view of reality within their research practices. Focus groups help to capture those experiences that cannot be meaningfully expressed in numbers (Berg, 1995). Krueger and Casey (2000) identified the following characteristics of a focus group, also called a focus-group interview:

> [It is] a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. It is conducted with approximately seven to ten people by a skilled interviewer. The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion. (p. 18)

Procedures

  First, the researcher obtained permission from the school district to implement the mixed-methods study, which was primarily based on a study conducted by Kwapy (2004). Only teachers who signed a consent form were permitted to participate in the study.

Data Collection

  For the quantitative part of the study, data was collected using the same procedure as 4 months prior. In response to a prompt (Appendix B), each participant was asked to write one to three paragraphs describing a personal experience with a student with a disability in the general-education classroom. Group 1 was prompted to choose a student with a learning disability; Group 2 was prompted to write about an experience with a student who has a behavioral disability; Group 3 was prompted to write about an experience with a student who has a physical disability.

  For the qualitative part of the study, the researcher followed the eight steps that Gall et al. (2003) suggested should be used when conducting interviews for educational research. The following is a description of those eight steps:

  Step 1: Defining the purpose of the interview. Group interviews, or focus groups, were used to address questions to a group of teachers who had been assembled for the specific purpose of increasing their comfort level with inclusion of students with disabilities in general-education classes. The moderator asked questions to initiate discussion, but then allowed participants to take major responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the views of others in the group. Participants in Group 1 were interviewed regarding students with learning disabilities; Group 2 was interviewed regarding students with behavioral disabilities; Group 3 was interviewed regarding

students with physical disabilities.

Step 2: Selecting a sample. The sample size in qualitative studies typically is

small, with the purpose in selecting the case, or cases, to develop a deeper understanding

of the topic being studied. Purposive sampling is particularly useful when developers and

policy makers want their programs to be effective for the great majority of those

involved. A purposeful sampling strategy, typical case sampling, was used to develop a

deeper understanding of the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with

disabilities in general-education classes. As Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004)

suggested, purposive sampling is not used to generalize to a larger group, but to

understand and explore some issues with a small group, a case, or cases.

Participants included 3 groups of certified high school teachers with each group

consisting of only 6 or 7 teachers. The high school has 694 students and employs 31

faculty members in the academic departments of math, science, English, and social

studies. Group 1 members included 1 female special educator, 2 male general educators,

and 4 female general educators, all of Caucasian descent. Group 2 members included 1

Caucasian female special educator, 5 Caucasian female general educators, and 1 African

American female general educator. Group 3 consisted of 1 female special educator, 1

male general educator, and 4 female general educators, all of Caucasian descent.

Teaching experience ranged from those having begun their careers within the last 2 years

to teachers eligible for full retirement, but who had continued to teach. Represented in

each group were teachers who were currently coteaching, or have cotaught in the past 2

years, as well as teachers who had never taught in an inclusive setting.

Step 3: Defining the interview format. The researcher lead a standardized open-

ended interview by asking the same set of questions, in a predetermined sequence, to all

respondents in the focus group (Gall et al., 2003).

Step 4: Developing the questions. The researcher used an interview guide that specified the questions as well as the sequence in which they were be asked (Appendix B). The questions asked to Focus Group 1 were intended to encourage discussion regarding inclusion of students with learning disabilities in general-education classes. Teachers were asked to share their ideas, opinions, and feelings about whether or not students who are academically behind should be in general-education or special classrooms, how they modify lessons for individualized instruction for students academically behind, and if they felt able to meet all students' academic needs in general-education classes. The questions asked to Focus Group 2 were intended to encourage discussion regarding inclusion of students with behavioral disabilities in general-education classes.

Topics included identifying the kinds of behavior problems exhibited in their classrooms, the negative effects of those behaviors on others, how severe behaviors were dealt with, and what needed to be done to minimize those behaviors. The questions asked to Focus Group 3 were intended to encourage discussion regarding inclusion of students with physical disabilities in general-education classes. Teachers were asked to discuss obstacles they had faced, what other challenges they anticipated would arise, how capable they felt of handling emergency situations, and whether or not students with physical disabilities should be self-contained.

Step 5: Selecting and training interviewers. The researcher became familiar with the guidelines for conducting a research interview (Appendix C) and studied the interview guide so as to become familiar with the wording and format so the interview could be conducted in a conversational manner without hesitating, backtracking, or

needing to reread or study the guide. Next, the researcher conducted practice interviews and received corrective feedback until the performance became polished and reached the desired level of standardization or structure, objectivity, and reliability.

Step 6: Pilot testing the interview. To ensure they would yield reasonably unbiased data, the interview guide and procedures were pilot tested (Appendix D). If there were questions or procedures perceived as threatening, they were modified to lower or eliminate their threat value. As defined by Bradburn (1981), a question was considered threatening if 20% or more of the respondents felt that most people would be very uneasy talking about the topic. The think-aloud technique, requiring participants to verbalize their thoughts and perceptions while they engage in the interview, would be helpful for determining whether participants were interpreting the items the way the researcher intended (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The goals of the pilot test were to help the researcher gain information needed to begin the study and provided the opportunity to implement the data analysis strategies.

Step 7: Conducting the interview. After reviewing the guidelines for conducting a research interview, the researcher considered how to present oneself, and establish rapport, in order to gain the trust of participants. The researcher took on the role of interviewer, as opposed to special educator, during the focus group sessions. Superficial rapport may have been sufficient if the group appeared comfortable with the interview process, but stronger rapport may have been needed for the group members to reveal deeply personal or sensitive information. Because trust can be an important factor in the interview process if sensitive topics, such as inclusion, are to be discussed, the researcher determined the need to establish a deep level of trust in order to obtain the desired data. Only attending to verbal communication, the researcher confirmed a good understanding

of the language of the respondents, such as use of special-education terminology, and asked for clarification if not comprehending.

Tape recording sped up the interview process and provided a complete verbal record that could be studied much more thoroughly than data in the form of interviewer notes. Also, tape recording reduced the tendency of the researcher to make an unconscious selection of data favoring personal biases. Before the interview began, the researcher carefully explained the purpose of tape recording and gained the confidence of the group members so as to minimize undesirable effects, such as respondents being less likely to express their feelings freely if they knew that their responses were being recorded.

Step 8: Analyzing the interview data. To analyze the responses to the open-form questions, the researcher transcribed field notes from the tape recordings and developed a category system to draw out major themes, look for core insights, common phrases and words, and specific mood or tone to group interaction (Williams & Katz, 2001). Constant comparative analysis was used by first breaking the text into units of information that served as the basis for defining categories; a process of unitizing (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Next, those units that relate to the same content were brought together into categories, rules were devised that described category properties, and each category presented as internally consistent, with the entire category being mutually exclusive.

Using the grounded-theory approach, following transcription of field notes and tape recordings, data was analyzed through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, after labeling important words and phrases, the researcher used open coding to examine, name and categorize discrete elements in the

data. Second, during axial coding, concepts were developed into categories and the categories were organized to find what themes appeared from the data gathered during the interviews. Third, through selective coding, main ideas were identified by reflecting on the data and results produced during open coding and axial coding. In addition, the researcher searched published literature for additional ideas to consider in developing the grounded theory, as well as to understand broader significances of the grounded theory. Data analysis concluded when theoretical saturation occurred.

Data Analysis

As the researcher had done 4 months prior, a researcher-made rubric was used to score the paragraphs to determine each individual teacher's comfort level toward inclusion of students with disabilities. The categories included on the rubric were overall mood, the number of positive and negative statements, correct use of special-education terminology, self-appraisal of competence, and predisposition toward students with special needs. Paragraph content was rated from 0 (*no experience*) to 4 (*very comfortable*). The overall mood of the paragraphs was determined to be very negative mood, negative mood, positive mood, or very positive mood. The number of positive statements were calculated and scored as 0 positive statements, 1 to 2 positive statements, 2 to 3 positive statements, or 4 or more positive statements. The number of negative statements were calculated and scored as 4 or more negative statements, 2 to 3 negative statements, 1 to 2 negative statements, or 0 negative statements.

Use of special-education terminology was scored according to the number of terms used correctly, self-appraisal of competence was scored according to the number of positive statements, and predisposition toward students with special needs was determined to be very unfavorable, unfavorable, favorable, or very favorable. Any

teacher who failed to complete the paragraphs received a score of 0 (*no experience*) in each category. For each individual rubric, the raw score was divided by the total possible points to determine the measure of central tendency, presented as a mean percentage. The mean percentage of each individual rubric in Group 1 was averaged together to determine the mean comfort level of Group 1. The same process was used to determine the mean comfort level of Group 2 and Group 3.

The mean of each group's preinterview comfort level and postinterview comfort level was compared to determine an increase or decrease, from the former to the latter. In addition, the results of Group 1, dealing with learning disabilities, Group 2, dealing with behavioral disabilities, and Group 3, dealing with physical disabilities, were ranked to determine which types of disabilities teachers were most comfortable with and least comfortable with.

Reporting of Results

Using an objective writing style, results were presented in a narrative analytic report, highlighting common themes and supporting those themes with direct quotes taken from the focus-group interview (Gall et al., 2003). The narrative outcome was compared with existing theories and the general literature on inclusion of students with disabilities in general-education classes (Creswell, 2002).

Chapter 4: Results

Quantitative Findings

   Question 1. The following question governed the collection of quantitative data:
After participating in focus groups, will there be an increase in the comfort level of
teachers toward inclusion of students with learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities,
and physical disabilities?

   Outcomes. As measured by a researcher-made rubric (see Table below), the
comfort level of Group 1 toward inclusion of students with learning disabilities increased
from the current mean of 17.5% to 78.5%. Six of the 7 teachers asked to participate in the
focus group returned a signed consent form. Immediately after the focus group discussion,
the participants were asked to write a paragraph describing an experience with a student
with a learning disability in the general-education classroom. According to the rubric used
to score the paragraphs following the focus-group interview, the mean comfort level of
the group was 78.5%, which was an increase of 61%.

Table

*Preinterview and Postinterview Percentages for Teachers'
Comfort Level*

_____

Focus group	Preinterview	Postinterview	Range
Learning	17.5	78.5	+61.0
Behavioral	21.2	33.0	+11.8
Physical	3.8	46.0	+42.2

_____

The comfort level of Group 2 toward inclusion of students with behavioral disabilities increased from the current mean of 21.2% to 33%. Five of the 6 teachers asked to participate in the focus group returned a signed consent form. Immediately after the focus group discussion, the participants were asked to write a paragraph describing an experience with a student with a behavioral disability in the general-education classroom. According to the rubric used to score the paragraphs following the focus-group interview, the mean comfort level of the group was 33% an increase of 11.8%.

The comfort level of Group 3 toward inclusion of students with physical disabilities increased from the current mean of 3.8% to 46%. Although 6 teachers were asked to participate in the focus group; only 2 returned the signed consent form. Immediately after the focus group discussion, the 2 participants were asked to write a paragraph describing an experience with a student with a physical disability in the general-education classroom. According to the rubric used to score a paragraph following the focus-group interview, 1 participant was at a 92% comfort level. The other participant reported never having had an experience with a student with a physical disability in the general-education class and received a score of 0 (*no experience*). Therefore, the mean comfort level of the postfocus-group interview was 46%, an increase of 42.2%.

Before the focus-group interview, according to the rubric, teachers were most comfortable with students with behavioral disabilities and least comfortable with students with physical disabilities. Following the focus-group interviews, according to the rubric, teachers were most comfortable with students with learning disabilities, and least comfortable with students with behavioral disabilities.

Qualitative Findings

The following were research questions used to collect qualitative data:

1. To what degree are teachers effectively providing for included students in their classrooms?

2. What can be done to address teachers' inability to effectively respond to included students?

3. What problems have this organization and others faced with respect to enabling effective inclusion?

Focus Group 1: Academic. The following questions were asked to the participants:

1. Do you believe that students that are two or more academic years behind should be included into the general-education classroom, or should be in special classes only? Why or why not?

2. How do you modify lessons to individualize instruction for students that are academically behind? What successes have you observed in a student receiving modifications? What challenges have you met while modifying lessons for students?

3. Do you feel you are able to meet all students' academic needs in your classroom? What supports are you lacking? Who do you believe should provide those supports?

According to the teachers, students with less than a second or third grade reading level should be in self-contained special-education classes, while students who are only 3 or 4 years behind may benefit from being in the general-education classroom (see Appendix E for complete list of responses). On the other hand, now that the high school fully includes all students with disabilities, inclusion is much more difficult to implement properly. Overall, the students are unable to overcome very low reading levels. However, students with low reading levels, who put forth their best effort, may perform well in a

class such as mathematics. Students are considered successful for simply earning a passing grade. Again, with the implementation of full inclusion, there are fewer passing grades being earned.

The general-education teachers expressed that even though they have received some instruction on how to accommodate students with disabilities, they still feel unprepared to participate in coteaching. The teachers visualize inclusion as the special-education teacher in the role of learning specialist while the general-education teacher delivers the content. Due to the limited amount of planning time allotted for coteachers to collaborate on how to implement the modifications stated on an IEP, it is easier for the coteachers to modify assignments for the entire class. Delivering the same instruction to all students, whether or not they have a disability, contributes to fewer behavior problems. Students who have previously been educated in self-contained settings fear being in the general-education classes. But, based on past experiences, students with mild intellectual or learning disabilities have a better chance of settling in and being successful.

Group 1 common themes. Results of this focus group indicate that teachers believe students with very low reading levels do not benefit from inclusion. However, depending on the subject matter and intrinsic motivation of the student, there may be exceptions. Especially important to teachers is the amount of time they have to prepare together as a coteaching team. Students would benefit most from well-planned instruction, a process that requires a great amount of time, which the teachers stated they do not have.

While they stated that they have received some training, the comments from this focus group suggest that teachers do not feel prepared to teach in an inclusive setting. Although inclusion requires the general- and special-education teachers to share

responsibilities equally, they believe that the special-education teacher is supposed to be the learning specialist, while the general-education teacher is responsible for delivering the curricular material. This is a delicate balance that the teachers do not feel they have achieved, mainly based on the number of students with disabilities that are failing their classes. When only the higher functioning students were included in general-education classes, the teachers saw a lot of success. Now that all students with disabilities are taught in the general-education classroom, with instruction delivered by coteachers, there are few success stories.

Focus Group 2: Behavioral. The questions asked to group were the following:

1. What kinds of behavior problems are exhibited in your classrooms? What effect do negative behaviors have on the other students? What effect do negative behaviors have on your ability to teach?

2. How do you deal with severe behaviors in your classroom? Should all teachers be trained in specific behavioral modification techniques?

3. What needs to be done to minimize severe behaviors in the classroom? What behavior modification techniques have you successfully used?

The teachers commented that although some students with disabilities have a positive attitude toward being included in general-education classes, they are often still easily distracted (see Appendix E for complete list of responses). Because these students are not able to comprehend some material, the teachers see students acting out or sleeping, behaviors that are also exhibited by some general-education students. Well-behaved general-education students become frustrated or act out when they believe students with disabilities are causing the lessons to be delivered at such a slow pace. Teachers are having difficulty covering the entire required curriculum that students must

be taught in order to be prepared for standardized tests. Because the teachers spend a great amount of time making sure the students are organized and have all of their materials, less time is spent on instruction. The teachers are frustrated that their ability to teach is hindered, just as is the learning of other students.

When students have behavioral disabilities, the teachers are unsure of how to deliver discipline appropriately. They lack the skills needed to implement behavior modification techniques and are unsure about what types of consequences are appropriate based on the IEP. They are willing to be trained on how to handle behavioral issues, but want the training delivered by the special-education teachers at the school. They want to learn techniques that they can implement immediately in their classrooms, instead of delivering discipline through trial and error. The teachers expressed that they do not know enough about discipline and special education to even know if they are delivering appropriate consequences.

Group 2 common themes. The findings from this focus group indicate that teachers feel the learning of others, as well as their teaching abilities, are negatively affected by students acting out. However, they point out that general-education students sometimes exhibit the same behaviors. Much of the time, the well-behaved students become frustrated with the slow pace of the class and therefore act out. The teachers agreed that the students with disabilities should be disciplined the same as general-education students. Still, they question whether or not that is the right thing to do. The comments from this group suggest that teachers are unsure of how to serve students with behavioral disabilities, often doubt the decisions they make regarding discipline, but are willing to learn. As opposed to an outside source, they want to be trained by practicing special-education teachers who can share real life examples.

Focus Group 3: Physical. The following questions were asked of this group:

1. Assuming you all have, or had, students in your classroom who have severe physical disabilities and cannot often move around by themselves, or cannot speak, see or hear, what are the biggest obstacles you face with these students as the classroom teacher? If you have not had a student with a physical disability in your classroom, what challenges do you anticipate would arise?

2. How trained do you feel to handle these students in an emergency or if their paraprofessional is not there?

3. What kinds of physical disabilities are the most difficult to deal with in the classroom, and should those students be self-contained?

The teachers responded that they have little experience teaching students with physical disabilities in general-education classes and would not feel prepared to handle emergency situations that may arise when a paraprofessional is not there (see Appendix E for complete list of responses). They did state that students with severe or profound disabilities would benefit educationally only in a self-contained class, not in the general-education classroom. Students with less severe physical disabilities could be easily accommodated through use of technologies such as laptop computers or voice recognition devices, and by eliminating physical barriers by providing tables instead of desks for students who use wheelchairs. The teachers said that there would likely be a social benefit for students with physical disabilities who are included in general-education classes, but that benefit would not apply to students with severe or profound disabilities.

Group 3 common themes. Results show that the teachers in this focus group have had very few, or no experiences with students who have physical disabilities. Therefore,

they do not feel prepared to handle any emergency situations that may arise. The comments from this group suggest that they have some knowledge about the kinds of accommodations that may be required by students with physical disabilities, but feel these accommodations are only beneficial to students who do not have severe and profound disabilities. Overall, they believe that these students would best be served in a special-education resource room and that merely being present in a regular classroom is almost worthless. However, they do recognize that even if there is no academic benefit, there may be a social benefit.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to increase the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with learning, behavioral, and physical disabilities in general-education classrooms, for one high school in the rural Southeastern United States. When inclusion was first implemented, some general-education teachers expressed concern that the students with disabilities were causing the lessons to drag and that their mediocre performance was not worth the effort. However, after approximately 6 months the special-education teachers had time to convince the general-education teachers that the students were performing much higher than they had been performing in the self-contained or resource environments. For the 2006-2007 school year, all high school students receiving special-education services, with the exception of five students with severe or profound disabilities, are receiving special-education services and supports in general-education academic classes taught by coteachers. Four months into the school year, both general- and special-education teachers are disappointed, frustrated, and disheartened by how poorly many of the students with disabilities are performing in the inclusive settings.

The researcher used focus groups to obtain and analyze teachers' comfort level with inclusion, and writing samples to determine which type of disabilities teachers were most comfortable with and least comfortable with. To determine if the comfort level of teachers increased from before to after the focus-group interviews, the researcher used a rubric to score the writing samples and compare preinterview and postinterview comfort levels. Then, to determine which type of disability teachers were most comfortable with and least comfortable with, academic, behavioral, and physical disabilities were ranked

from most to least based upon the mean percentage of each focus group.

Research Question 1

After participating in focus groups, will there be an increase in the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with learning disabilities, behavioral disabilities, and physical disabilities?

The high school has 694 students and employs 19 faculty members in the academic areas of math, science, and English. Therefore, there were a limited number of teachers available to participate in the study. However, smaller focus groups correspond to the fact that only 694 students attend the school. The findings of this study indicate that after sharing knowledge, ideas, and feelings during focus-group interviews, the comfort level of teachers toward inclusion of students with disabilities increased. This proved true for students with academic, behavioral, and physical disabilities as well. Before the interviews, after comparing Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3, it was found teachers were most comfortable with students with behavioral disabilities and least comfortable with students with physical disabilities. Following the focus-group interviews, and compared again, teachers were most comfortable with students with learning disabilities, and least comfortable with students with behavioral disabilities.

Research Question 2

To what degree are teachers effectively providing for included students in their classrooms?

The findings of this study indicate that teachers are observing poor performances by students with disabilities in cotaught classes. They attribute this to lack of adequate coplanning time, behavior problems exhibited by both students with disabilities and students without, and extremely low reading levels. Due to the great amount of time spent

making modifications to the curriculum for some students and providing classroom accommodations to others, teachers communicated that they are not able to teach what they believe to be a good lesson, for the class as a whole. The larger area of physical space, necessary for small group interaction, is also a barrier. Classrooms are not large enough so that each group can successfully function without noise and distractions. Teachers had the most faith in their ability to teach students with mild physical disabilities, so that they may benefit both socially and academically, while being educated with age-appropriate peers. However, they had little experience teaching students with severe physical disabilities.

Research Question 3

What can be done to address teachers' inability to effectively respond to included students?

The findings of this study indicate that teachers are willing to receive intensive training on teaching strategies used for students with disabilities, appropriate behavioral interventions, and also about various disabilities in general. However, the training should be lead by practicing special-education teachers, particularly the special-education staff at the high school in which they are employed. The information delivered should consist of real life experiences about what has worked in the classroom for teachers and what has not. Specific teaching strategies and behavioral interventions should be clearly outlined and presented in a manner that would allow teachers to quickly refer to on a daily basis.

Research Question 4

What problems have this organization and others faced with respect to enabling effective inclusion?

The findings of this study indicate that administration and teachers have different

ideas about how to prepare for inclusion. While administration has hired an external

consulting firm to improve the inclusion program, teachers would rather be trained by

special-education teachers who are employed in the district. There are also logistical

problems related to the implementation of effective inclusion, such as the great amount of

time needed for planning and delivering special-education services. Lack of a large

enough physical space to implement small group work, or individualized instruction, can

also be a problem. A large classroom is needed to reduce noise and distractions.

Implications of Findings

Researchers using focus groups are finding that the interactions among

participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not

express if interviewed individually (Gall et al., 2003). Focus groups can be an

empowering process for both researchers and participants, and generate rich data to

facilitate decision-making and provide useful information for the development,

evaluation, and modification of curriculum, learning tools, and programs (Williams &

Katz, 2001). It can be concluded that when given the opportunity to express ideas,

feelings, and attitudes toward inclusion, teachers comfort level toward students with

disabilities may increase. In this study, focus group discussion allowed for concerns to be

addressed and recommendations to be made regarding the inclusion program at the high

school. As a result, when teachers reflected on experiences in the general-education

classroom with students with disabilities, the overall comfort level of each focus group

increased.

Kwapy (2004) found that teachers were most comfortable with students with

learning disabilities and least comfortable with students with behavioral disabilities. Also,

the findings of both studies indicated that teachers were frustrated by the heavy workload

of meeting standards and benchmarks, covering all material, and individualizing work for students with individualized functional academic programs in everyday reading and math. Teachers believe students with very low reading levels do not benefit academically from inclusion. If students can learn to read more proficiently, they can be more successful in the general-education environment due to the ability to read instructions and better understand what they have read. Simplifying the material too much renders it useless for preparing for standardized tests. Coteachers need planning time to confer about what information it is crucial to cover. Presently, due to the slow pace of the lessons, teachers are not covering the material needed to prepare students for standardized tests. Classroom teachers fear being put in the position of being caught between inclusion and test score accountability (Bradley et al., 1997).

The way staff and materials are used needs to be reconfigured when a school prepares to include students with disabilities in general-education classrooms. That involves role changes for people, resources, and distribution of materials. Titone (2005) investigated the knowledge prospective teachers need to know, or interventions they must be able to do, in order to be successful in inclusive settings. Emergent and significant themes from the study suggested adapting curriculum and teaching methods, learning to monitor one's own attitudes, collaborating with others, and changes in courses and field experiences for teacher education students. In this study, one teacher suggested teacher education programs should include classes about teaching strategies and behavioral interventions specific to students with disabilities.

Participants in Titone's (2005) study agreed that it is not sufficient to develop and adhere to a good curriculum, but teachers must know how to adapt or change curriculum to meet the needs of all students in the classroom. The best curriculum decisions can be

made only through collaboration of special- and general- education teachers. Students, of course, would benefit from well-planned instruction. However, according to the teachers interviewed for this study, the time allotted for planning is not nearly enough to make it a reality. The Joint Committee on Teacher Planning for Students with Disabilities (1995) reported the reality of teacher planning indicated a tension between what teachers believe should be done, can be done, or is being done for some students. Modifying lessons for students, possibly several in the same class, requires so much preparation time that the simplest thing to do is to modify the entire class. Again, the key is to balance the amount and kind of modifications with the material that the students must become proficient in to be able to pass the standardized tests. A task some teachers find to be impossible.

The thought of including students with disabilities in classes in which this has never been done before has created a great amount of anxiety in teachers. Although the teacher must understand and care for his or her students, more is required. During the transition from a school that educates students with disabilities in separate programs, to a school that welcomes and includes all students, hopes are raised and fears are generated. Educators worry about their competence and their ability to meet the needs of children with disabilities, while feeling overwhelmed by sympathy and sadness for the child. Teachers recognize that because the material is at such a level it is nearly impossible for students with intellectual disabilities to comprehend, and their frustration may manifest as passive or aggressive behaviors. One teacher recalled that when children with learning disabilities were first included, they appeared scared and uncomfortable in the general-education classroom. After some time, though, they adjusted to the general-education classroom and would no longer be satisfied in a self-contained setting.

To meet the needs of such a diverse group, changes in instructional preparation,

delivery, and assessment are required (Bradley et al., 1997). General educators often report feeling uncomfortable as they experiment with new ways to provide meaningful educational and social experiences for students with disabilities, learn how to deal with special-education jargon and paperwork, and are required to work with more comprehensive record keeping systems. As they go through the change process, educators need formal and informal forums in which to share their experiences and accrue personal and professional support. Although some has been provided, teachers desire more training focusing on real-life examples, preferably delivered by special-education teachers in the district. However, Silin and Schwartz (2003) found that with a genuine understanding of the constraints under which teachers worked, staff developers explicitly acknowledged the differences in power that separated them from teachers.

Fisher and Meyer (2002) found that students with severe disabilities participating in inclusive settings made developmental and social gains, that participation in these inclusive programs was at least as good as, if not somewhat better than, self-contained placements. Results suggested a positive influence associated with the inclusive programs on adaptive behavior and the more traditional developmental domains. However, the teachers in this study reported opposite results. Overall, students with disabilities are making little, if any, progress in general-education classes taught by coteachers. Because the focus is on academic achievement, gains in adaptive behavior and social competence are down played. Although the majority of experiences shared in the focus groups are negative, some positive experiences were shared. For instance, there have been students with intellectual disabilities that have put forth their best effort. Teachers appear to appreciate this very much. Even though they are rarely perfect students, even the slightest successes are celebrated.

According to Anderson and Ward (2005), both special educators and general educators benefited from coteaching. Help with planning and preparation, reduced student-teacher ratio, professional learning opportunities, and less discipline referrals, lead to an overall sense of support. Students with disabilities had increased academic achievement, social skills, self-esteem, and participation in general-education classrooms. As teacher expectations increased, behavior problems decreased, and there was reduced fragmentation and missed activities. While achievement of average and gifted learners was not impeded, benefits for students without disabilities included exposure to a wider range of instructional strategies and activities, additional help for those who needed assistance, and increased tolerance of human differences. Contrary to Anderson and Ward's findings, teachers in this study reported that their ability to teach and the learning of general-education students were both negatively affected by the accommodations required for the students with disabilities. The slow pace of the lessons frustrated both teachers and students, often leading to general-education students acting out to vent their feelings.

Limitations

A greater number of teachers could have been invited to participate in the focus-group interviews, therefore increasing the chances of positive responses. However, the number of available participants was limited, as the high school only employs 19 faculty members in the academic departments of math, science, and English. Therefore, the number of teachers available to participate in the study was rather limited. For Group 1, only 5 of the 6 teachers invited participated. One teacher was unable to participate due to a school-related commitment. For Group 2, all 7 of the teachers invited, participated. However, for Group 3, only 2 of the 6 teachers invited chose to participate. Therefore, the

results for Group 3 cannot be considered to have acceptable validity.

Because this research study was only implemented in the high school of one rural school district in the Southeastern United States, the findings cannot be generalized to high schools in other school districts. Morgan and Krueger (1993) cautioned against using focus group research for decision-making. However, this warning is clarified by noting that, while decisions should never be made within an actual focus group itself, the input received from a focus group can be extremely useful when trying to make decisions before, during, or after a particular planning process, such as for a needs assessment, a pilot test, or an outcome evaluation. Although focus group research has many advantages, as with all research methods there are limitations. Careful planning and moderating can overcome some, but others are unavoidable and peculiar to this approach. The moderator, for example, has less control over the data produced than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing. The moderator has to allow participants to talk to each other, ask questions and express doubts and opinions, while having very little control over the interaction other than generally keeping participants focused on the topic. Focus group research is open-ended and cannot be entirely predetermined. It should not be assumed that the individuals in a focus group are expressing their own definitive individual view. They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. This too is a potential limitation of focus groups. The method of focus group discussion may also discourage some people from trusting others with sensitive or personal information. Finally, focus groups are not fully confidential or anonymous, because the material is shared with others in the groups. These limitations lay the groundwork for future studies.

Recommendations

Teachers state they do not feel prepared to implement teaching strategies, in the general-education classroom, that benefit students with disabilities. Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends teachers receive training on teaching strategies specific to teaching students with disabilities in the high school setting. Future studies are needed that focus on teachers' self-assessment of the skills required to educate students with disabilities in the general-education setting.

Teachers are dissatisfied with the training they have received thus far regarding behavioral interventions appropriate for students with disabilities. Instead of an outside consulting firm, they asked that practicing special-education teachers conduct the training. Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends administration plan intensive training for general-education teachers, presented by practicing special-education teachers, targeting behavioral interventions specific to teaching students with disabilities in the high school setting. Future research is needed to chart the effects that intensive training has on ability to effectively discipline students with disabilities in the general-education classroom.

Teachers expressed that to implement inclusion properly additional planning time is needed. Currently, lack of adequate coplanning time is negatively affecting teaching on a daily basis. Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends that administration and teachers together, devise a plan to schedule more planning time. Future research is needed to assess the effects that adequate planning time, as defined by the coteachers, has on self-perception of teaching skills needed for effective inclusion.

While the number of students with disabilities included in general-education classes continue to increase, teachers are reporting that they frequently feel unprepared to

handle classroom situations that are unique to teaching students with disabilities. Their lack of skills regarding teaching strategies, behavioral interventions, and discipline, foster feelings of reluctance, frustration, and disappointment in the poor performance of students. However, teachers appear willing to learn and practice new ways of teaching inclusion classes, so that both students with disabilities and students without disabilities may benefit from their educational experiences to the greatest extent possible. At this time, they are dissatisfied with the quality of education being delivered in the coteaching classes.

They acknowledge that physically being in the classroom does not necessarily mean the student is being fully included in the lesson. Based on the results of this study, the sharing of knowledge, feelings, and ideas regarding students with disabilities, increased the comfort level toward inclusion for the teachers in this high school. The researcher recommends a continuance of such exercises. As the inclusion program grows, it appears communication between the teachers and between the teachers and administration will better the chances of successful implementation at this high school.

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Appendix A

Rubric

Teachers Comfort Level Toward Inclusion of Students
With Learning Disabilities in the General Education Classroom

	No Experience 0	Very Uncomfortable 1	Somewhat Uncomfortable 2	Somewhat Comfortable 3	Very Comfortable 4
Overall Mood	No Experience	Very Negative Mood	Negative Mood	Positive Mood	Very Positive Mood
Positive Statements	No Experience	0 Positive Statements	1-2 Positive Statements	2-3 Positive Statements	4 or more Positive Statements
Negative Statements	No Experience	4 or more Negative Statements	2-3 Negative Statements	1-2 Negative Statements	0 Negative Statements
Special Education Terminology	No Experience	Used 0 terms correctly	Used 1 term correctly	Used 2 terms correctly	Used 3 or more terms correctly
Self-Appraisal of Competence	No Experience	0 Positive Statements	1 Positive Statement	2 Positive Statements	3 Positive Statements
Predisposition Toward Students with Special Needs	No Experience	Very Unfavorable Predisposition	Unfavorable Predisposition	Favorable Predisposition	Very Favorable Predisposition

Group # _____

Date _____/_____/_____

Appendix B

Study Prompt

Group 1 Prompt
Write 1-3 paragraphs describing an experience you have had in the general-education classroom with a student who has a learning disability.

Group 2 Prompt
Write 1-3 paragraphs describing an experience you have had in the general-education classroom with a student who has a behavioral disability.

Group 3 Prompt
Write 1-3 paragraphs describing an experience you have had in the general-education classroom with a student who has a physical disability.

Appendix C

Guidelines for Conducting an Interview

Guidelines for Conducting a Research Interview (Gall et al., 2003)

1. Inform respondents of confidentiality before beginning the interview.

2. Build rapport by engaging in small talk before beginning the interview and by using an everyday conversational style.

3. Save complex or controversial questions for the latter part of the interview after rapport has been established.

4. Explain the potential benefits of the study to the respondents.

5. The interviewer should talk less than the respondent. As a rule, the less the interviewer talks, the more information is produced.

6. Pose questions in language that is clear and meaningful to the respondent.

7. Ask questions that contain only a single idea.

8. In phrasing questions, specify the frame of reference you want the respondent to use in answering the question.
   Example) Ask "What do you think of the way your child's teacher handles parent-teacher conferences?" rather than "What do you think of the teacher your child has this year?" The latter question might be appropriate, however, if the goal is to determine the respondent's salient frames of reference.

9. Use simple probes when appropriate.
   Example) "Can you tell me more about that?"

10. Avoid contradicting or appearing to cross-examine the respondent.

11. If a respondent seems threatened by a specific topic, move on to another one. Try returning to the topic later, with different phrasing.

12. When posing threatening or sensitive questions, ask the respondent about the behavior of friends as well as about the respondent's own behavior.

13. Do not ask many closed-form questions in succession.

14. Do not change interview topics too often.

15. Avoid leading questions.
    Example) Ask "What is your opinion of federal aid to education?" instead of "Do you favor federal aid to education?" However, in some cases a leading question may be asked to elicit a particular type of information from the respondent.

Appendix D

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Introduction:
The purpose of today's focus group is to discuss your thoughts and experiences regarding teaching students with disabilities in the general-education classroom. Tape recording the discussion will speed up the interview process and provide a complete verbal record that can be studied much more thoroughly than data in the form of interviewer notes.

Group One
Students with Learning Disabilities
1.   Do you believe that students that are 2 or more academic years behind should be included into the general-education classroom, or should be in special classes only? Why or why not?
2.   How do you modify lessons to individualize instruction for students that are academically behind?
      a.   What successes have you observed in a student receiving modifications?
      b.   What challenges have you met while modifying lessons for students?
3.   Do you feel you are able to meet all students' academic needs in your classroom?
      a.   What supports are you lacking?
      b.   Who do you believe should provide those supports?

Group Two
Students with Behavioral Disabilities
1. What kinds of behavior problems are exhibited in your classrooms?
      a.   What effect do negative behaviors have on the other students?
      b.   What effect do negative behaviors have on your ability to teach?
2. How do you deal with severe behaviors in your classroom?
      a.   Should all teachers be trained in specific behavioral modification techniques?
3. What needs to be done to minimize severe behaviors in the classroom?
      a.   What behavior modification techniques have you successfully used?

Group Three
Students with Physical Disabilities
1.   Assuming you all have, or had, students in your classroom who have severe physical disabilities and cannot often move around by themselves, or cannot speak, see or hear, what are the biggest obstacles you face with these students as the classroom teacher?
      a. If you have not had a student with a physical disability in your classroom, what challenges do you anticipate would arise?
2.   How trained do you feel to handle these students in an emergency or if their paraprofessional is not there?
3.   What kinds of physical disabilities are the most difficult to deal with in the classroom, and should those students be self-contained?

Appendix E

Responses of Focus Groups

The responses elicited from the Focus group 1 included:

> I believe that if students are under a second or third grade reading level, it might be better for them to be in special-education classes. Above a third grade reading level, they are better able to be instructed.

> In my experience, those students that were probably 3 or 4 years behind, they did OK and I think they benefited from being in the general-education classroom. But, I don't have inclusion this year and what I am hearing since we went full inclusion, is that it is much, much more difficult. Those that have very, very poor reading levels are not getting it.

> If the student's reading level is OK, but math skills were very low, it would depend on the class they were in as to how they perform. We do have a student with a Mild Intellectual Disability that I was thinking of, that does very well and tries very hard.

> I think you could say that your entire class becomes modified. You run into this huge problem; you just don't have time to teach your other classes, do a good job in them, and modify for three different kids. You have your regular classroom set, you modify for three kids. That is four preps for just one class if you're doing it textbook correct. However, it probably is beneficial for the whole bunch.

> Once you start modifying, you have a kid that's got one worksheet, a kid that has a different worksheet, which contributes to your behavior problems. So it becomes, you might as well just give them all the same stuff. But, we do have one kid that is way off the chart, that we give alternate assignments.

> When you take a student who is in special education, has been previously in the resource room, and you bring him into the regular classroom, the fact that their passing on their own should be considered a success. When it was just students with specific learning disabilities in my room, the first few days, if they could have run out, they would have. Now, they wouldn't be anywhere else but in a regular classroom. They are not A or B students a lot of times, but they are solid C students, and they are passing on their own. But, this year is a different situation with full inclusion. There's going to be some of those students that I don't care what you do…

> They need one-on-one instruction, drill and repetition. When you're in inclusion classes all day, besides your planning period, you don't have time to do that. It would mean you pulling that one student out and not servicing the others, or leaving it all up to the general-education teacher to constantly service…It's just impossible to do.

> The special-education teacher is supposed to be the learning specialist and should know how to accommodate those students more so than the regular-education teacher. I don't care that we've had "exceptional child" classes and everything else; we're not prepared for that.

You have to spend time with your coteacher to know what material is important and that you're not cutting out the wrong thing; simplifying to a point that the material becomes invaluable for the standardized tests.

The responses from Focus group 2 included the following:

I have a special-education student that can not be quiet, and he's never been. He's so excited being in there, because he has never been in general education before.

Some of my special-education students can easily be distracted, which is difficult but, the same goes for general education. Some of the special-education students cannot handle the work in the classroom, so they act out to cover it up. They have no clue what you are talking about; you can see it on their faces. They sleep, or act out, but general-education students can do that, too.

The well behaved regular-education students get frustrated, they sigh, and they have verbal outbursts when the others misbehave. You don't want to come down on those students for verbalizing their frustration, because it is accurate how they describe it.

The body language and facial expressions of regular-education kids says they want to move on in class. I've had some come to me and ask for permission to read ahead when we are reading slowly.

We have to make sure that the regular-education kids, who don't have modifications, are prepared for the standardized tests. Right now, we are moving so slowly, we haven't gotten through what we need to this first semester.

It's frustrating. I feel like I have so much to cover and it's hard to move on. I feel a little flustered in class sometimes just because of kids being off task and I feel it takes time away. I spend time making sure everyone has their book and worksheet.

If the special-education students misbehave, I write them up. At the beginning of the school year, I didn't know what to do, and I just wanted to write them up like anybody else. They have to follow the rules.

I feel they should be held accountable for their behavior. Just because their potential is limited, it does not mean they don't have any. They can do some things. I sent a student out one day, for constantly talking. He was disrespectful and argumentative and he went to the office like anybody else would. He can learn not to do that. He may need tests and such modified, but that does not mean he can be disrespectful.

Even though we have coteaching going on, I feel frustrated not really understanding special education. We may have taken one course, but I don't remember anything.

None of us have ever been trained to deal with these kinds of things, whereas the special-education teachers have a lot of training and methods for coping with those kinds of discipline problems.

If we are going to have inclusion, all teachers should be trained in behavioral modification techniques. I've seen some colleges that are moving towards that.

I think there was one course I had to take a long time ago, the "Exceptional Child". One course was all I had in college, but, if we are going to have inclusion, they should make it a requirement for certification. They need to add on, and then for those of use that haven't had it, if we're going to keep it here, we should probably have it and let it replace some of those things that aren't so necessary, because this one is.

Even a one day workshop would be helpful; a workshop that involves talking about cases and specific things to do. It is a waste of my time to sit there and have somebody tell me why I need to do it. I already know why, because I'm in it. I just need someone to say, look, here are some things you can do, here are some real examples.

I want the special-education teachers to teach a behavior modification course; not consultants or people who have written a pretty little text book and have a lot of theory, but people who have actually been in the classroom, worked with these kids, and can say, "this is what I have done".

I have girls that always forget their book, and I don't enforce my rule. I always question it because I wonder if it is a part of their plan. Should they be allowed to go get it? It's the little things like that I always question.

These kids who are severely disabled…well, I say severely but I don't even know if that is the correct special-education term. The kids who have reading levels of kindergarten, or math skills at kindergarten or first grade, they might get something out of it. But by the end of the school year, they are going to cause more problems for all of the other kids than they will ever get out of that class. I've heard about getting some of these kids into a job program, where they get hands on stuff in the vocational technology classes and then get a job. More of that needs to be done.

I don't know if my behavior modification techniques have been successful. I don't know enough about it to know if I've done it successfully.

I have been in public education all these years, and I have done this one other year back in the early 1990s, we had a thing…what was it called...mainstreaming? We did this for one year and it didn't work, so we went back to regular-education and special-education classes. Now it's coming around again. When I did it, the only special-education student I had was a paraplegic. He wasn't a behavior problem, but he couldn't write or anything, so I could just work with him verbally. I didn't even have a coteacher. I just had to do it myself somehow.

We have rearranged seating a few times, unsuccessfully, so we rearranged it again. The coteacher has had to go and sit next to a regular-education student.

We have a student who consistently forgets his materials. I give him paper and pencil and he throws the paper on the floor.

I have one student who is an absolute doll, but she gets emotional once in a while. You can't do a thing with her. Out of the blue she just gets fired up. She just talks, and talks, and talks. The special-education coteacher helped me to understand what was happening and to remember that the next time she has a problem, just let her calm down and maybe go out in the hall and vent out there.

The responses from the Focus group 3 were the following:

I have never had a student with a physical disability in my class. I would not feel trained at all to handle an emergency with a student whose paraprofessional is not there.

There was a student who was in a wheelchair, due to an automobile accident, and had a different desk. You can also use different teaching tools and technologies such as a laptop, voice recognition devices, or a special calculator if the student had a motor skills problem.

From my observations, students with severe and profound disabilities would be the most difficult to deal with. I wonder if some of those students even know where they are. I think it is great that those students are in the classroom, but I don't know if they could not work with them more in a resource room one-on-one. They could get more interaction in the resource room than in the classroom where they just sit there and don't know what is going on around them.

I'm sure the interaction is good. But for students with severe and profound disabilities in an academic classroom, I really don't see any benefit from that; maybe some social skills.