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The Inclusive Classroom: Perceptions of General and Special Educators'
Preparedness to Meet the Needs of Students with Disabilities

A dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by
Allecia A. Frizzell
May 2018

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Dr. Don Good

Keywords: Special Education, Inclusion, Preparedness,
Attitudes, Efficacy, Support

ABSTRACT

The Inclusive Classroom: Perceptions of General and Special Educators'

Preparedness to Meet the Needs of Students with Disabilities

by

Allecia A. Frizzell

This study was designed to determine whether kindergarten through eighth grade general education teachers and special education teachers were prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Conducted in Northeast Tennessee, an online survey was used to collect responses from participants in six school districts. The survey focused on four dimensions including perceptions of preparedness, attitudes towards inclusion, perceptions of administrator support and perceptions of self-efficacy. Data collected from 180 respondents were analyzed and informed the results of this study.

Findings indicated that special education teachers reported significantly higher levels of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom than general education teachers. There was not a significant difference in perceived levels of preparedness between elementary educators and middle school educators. Survey responses revealed a significant, positive correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion; preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support; preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; attitudes towards inclusion and administrative support; attitudes towards inclusion and self-efficacy; and administrative support and self-efficacy.

DEDICATION

I have not traveled this journey alone...the sacrifices and successes of this endeavor have not been my own, but that of my family. As this journey draws to a close, words cannot express my feelings of gratitude. To my parents, John and Laure Craddock, I want to thank you for a lifetime of encouragement. Your perseverance and integrity established a foundation, giving me the confidence to expand my horizons. To my husband, Jake, you have always believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. Thank you for the years of steadfast support and encouraging me to pursue my dreams; this accomplishment would not have been possible without you. To my children, Lawson and Liana, you are the blessings that brighten each day. Thank you for being such good helpers and cheering me on; I love you very much. To all of my family, thank you for all of your love and support; I dedicate this work to you.

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To my mentor, Dr. Susan Belcher, thank you for your wisdom and support. Your educational philosophy and ardent devotion to special education continues to inspire my mission to improve education for students with disabilities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Our nation’s ability to compete successfully in the global community depends on the meaningful inclusion of all citizens in our educational system, including students with disabilities....Every child is a precious resource whose full potential must be tapped” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010, p. 12).

The history of educating students with disabilities has been riddled with both tribulations and triumphs (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010). Throughout the twentieth century, perceptions of equity in education were drastically altered as revolutionary events of the early and mid-1900s shaped what it meant to provide an equitable education (McLaughlin, 2010). Landmark court decisions determined that the parity of resources and exposure did not equate to equal benefits (McLaughlin) and set the standard for educating children of varying backgrounds, including children with disabilities (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). Though progress was made, disparities in the education of children with disabilities continued to exist across the United States until the inception of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Later reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, this comprehensive law required that students with disabilities participate in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible (National Council on Disability, 2000).

As participation of students with disabilities became common place, the focus shifted from intentional participation to increased achievement. Closing the achievement gap among subgroups was a priority as national and international tests continued to demonstrate a disparity in student outcomes (Stone, Barron, & Finch, 2012). As schools sought to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, inclusion in the general education classroom became one of the primary methods of service delivery (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). When implemented with efficacy, inclusion proved successful in improving achievement for students with disabilities (Hawkins, 2007) and typically developing peers (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004).

With the majority of students with disabilities participating in inclusive, general education classrooms, educators became responsible for facilitating student access to grade level curriculum (Abery, Tichá, & Kincade, 2017). General and special education teachers were faced with numerous challenges and generally struggled with the unfamiliarity of making inclusive classrooms successful for students (Friend, 2007). Inclusion required committed and competent teachers, however, many educators reported that they were not prepared for meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Benedict, Brownell, Park, Bettini, & Lauterbach, 2014; Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer, 2007; Smith, Robb, West, & Tyler, 2010; Zion, 2014).

Educators experienced challenges, struggling to provide meaningful learning opportunities for students with disabilities (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010; Feustel, 2015; Keefe & Moore, 2004). In addition, many educators lacked a consistent

understanding of what it meant to provide an inclusive education, resulting in poor attitudes and frustration (Idol, 2006; Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010). Poor attitudes towards inclusion also negatively effected confidence levels and perceived levels of self-efficacy to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). To cultivate an inclusive, collaborative learning environment conducive to struggling learners, district and school administrators bore new responsibilities for the success of including students with disabilities (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Evans, Bird, Ford, Green, & Bischoff, 1992; Lynch, 2012; Praisner, 2003; Ryan & Gottfried, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The increased expectations for students with disabilities have been accompanied by a heightened focus on high quality instruction in the general education classroom (McNulty & Gloeckler, 2011). Educators have been under added pressure to ensure that all students have meaningful access to and participation in the inclusive setting (Shepherd, Fowler, McCormick, Wilson, & Morgan, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether kindergarten through eighth grade, special education and general education teachers were prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Conducted in districts located in Northeast Tennessee, survey responses were used to determine perceived levels of preparedness; whether there was a significant difference in preparedness between elementary and middle school; and perceived levels of preparedness between general educators as compared to special educators. The study was also conducted to determine if there was a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of

preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion; teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support; teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support; attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; and teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

Guiding Research Questions

The following research questions guided this quantitative study to determine educator perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom:

1. Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general education elementary educators (K-4) and general education middle school educators (5-8)?
2. Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between special education elementary educators (K-4) and special education middle school educators (5-8)?
3. Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between all general education educators (K-8) and all special education educators (K-8)?

4. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion?
5. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support?
6. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?
7. Is there a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support?
8. Is there a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?
9. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

Significance of the Study

There has been a sense of urgency to provide all students meaningful access to high quality core curriculum (Shepherd et al., 2016). With increased expectations and outcomes for students with disabilities, general and special educators required a new skillset, taking on additional responsibilities to effectively instruct a vastly diverse group

of learners (Smith et al., 2010). The results of this study added to the existing research regarding perceptions of educator preparedness in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. In addition, the findings of this study provided implications for teacher preparation programs in coursework design and field experience for student-teachers. Study results also offered implications for school and district level administrators responsible for improving teacher capacity and ultimately learning outcomes for students with disabilities.

Definitions of Terms

Accommodations - “A change in how a student with a disability participates in the educational program... [and] does not alter what a student is expected to learn, only how a student participates in the learning activity” (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017, p. 69).

Inclusion - A collaborative environment in which students with disabilities are educated alongside typically developing peers in the general education classroom (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - A document developed by the IEP team containing pertinent programmatic information including present levels of performance, annual goals, services, accommodations, modifications, transition services, parent input and medical information (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – “... a related set of requirements aimed at providing individuals with disabilities: the greatest interaction with children, youth and adults without disabilities; the appropriate education; and the special assistance needed for success in the general education setting” (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017, p. 76).

Special Education - “... instruction and interventions designed to meet the individual needs of each child with a disability” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010, p. 1). Provided at no cost, special education may include adapted instruction, content or methods to provide meaningful access to general curriculum (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

Limitations

This quantitative study was conducted in six school districts in the Northeast Tennessee region, including four county and two city school systems. Conducted during the 2017-2018 school year, survey results reflect the responses from participants in select districts which may not reflect the perceptions of educators in other regions of Tennessee or the nation. Respondents participated voluntarily and those unwilling to participate may have provided differing responses than those who chose to respond to the survey instrument.

Overview of the Study

This quantitative study was designed to determine whether special and general education teachers were prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. The study has been organized into five chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides an Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Guiding Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Definition of Terms, Limitations and Overview of the Study.
- Chapter 2 provides a Literature Review including the History of Individuals with Disabilities, Inclusion of Students with Disabilities, Attitudes about Inclusion, Teacher Efficacy and Students with Disabilities, Educator Preparation for the Inclusive Classroom, and Chapter Summary.
- Chapter 3 provides Research Methods including Guiding Research Questions and Null Hypotheses, Population and Sample, Instrumentation, Data collection, Data Analysis, and Chapter Summary.
- Chapter 4 provides Results of the Study and Chapter Summary.
- Chapter 5 provides Statement of the Problem, Conclusions and Discussions, Implications for Practice, Recommendations for Further Research and Chapter Summary.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter establishes the historical context including the treatment of individuals with disabilities, participation in public education, and progress of special education programs. In recent decades, inclusion has become one of the primary methods of service delivery for students with disabilities (Gehrke, Cocchiarella, Harris, & Puckett, 2014). While inclusion has been cited as one of the most effective methods for meeting the needs of students with disabilities (McNulty & Gloeckler, 2011), studies indicated that general and special educators were not prepared to provide access to grade level curriculum in the inclusive general education classroom (e.g. Brownell et al. 2010; Jobling & Moni, 2004; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Obiakor, 2011; Shady, Luther, & Richman, 2013). Teachers reported a general lack of preparedness, correlated to poor perceptions of efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion (Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010). Further exacerbated by poorly trained administrators and a lack of training, educators struggled to deliver instruction to students with disabilities in the inclusive environment (Berry, 2012; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002).

The History of Individuals with Disabilities

For thousands of years, individuals with disabilities were excluded from society and forced to endure the most inhumane conditions (Winzer, 1993). Until the early 1800s, members of society had not considered the plight of individuals with disabilities in the United States nor their right to an education (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). That time

period marked an initial educational reformation as separate schools were developed to educate individuals with sensory disabilities including the deaf and blind. Although progress was initially made, the trend back toward a society free of individuals with disabilities presided, as much of society considered such individuals a nuisance (Spaulding & Pratt).

In the late 1800s, there was a movement to rid communities of the disabled as a method to improve society. To alleviate the country of the "feeble-minded" mandatory sterilization became the standard solution. Tens of thousands of individuals with disabilities received operations that prevented them from bearing children; eliminating reproduction (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Spring, 2011). This idea stemmed from Darwin's theory of the animal kingdom through which he maintained that the majority of all characteristics were inherited. As applied to humans, the common idea was that a strengthened society was a society free of disability and deviance, therefore certain individuals must be prohibited from breeding (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Spring, 2011; Winzer, 1993). By the early 1900s, twenty-nine states in the U.S. had participated in the sterilization of people with disabilities in an effort to ride the nation of the disabled (Spring, 2011).

Participation in Schools

In the early twentieth century, compulsory education was mandated by all states however the majority of children with disabilities were excluded from attending regular schools (Horn & Tynan, 2001; Yell et al., 1998); a practice unchanged since the colonial era (Horn & Tynan, 2001). Many families hid their children with disabilities for fear of

shame and embarrassment while others were institutionalized or subjected to cruel treatment (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017). Educators assumed that children with disabilities were “backward” and problematic, not worthy of an education (Spring, 2011). As states slowly began including children with disabilities in schools, teachers became frustrated with the burden of teaching children who did not learn as easily and supported segregation by ability (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). At the time, even well-intentioned educators supported segregation and separation of the disabled into specialized learning environments due to their concern for students’ potential exposure to incessant teasing and social challenges (Spaulding & Pratt).

Similar to students attending segregated schools due to differences in race and ethnic origin, children with disabilities were largely excluded from attending public schools (Spring, 2011). For most children with disabilities, participation in schools was severely limited until the Civil Rights Movement (Yell et al., 1998). The landmark court decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954, pressed changes in legislation and redefined equal access. No longer was equity based on equitable resources and exposure to similar opportunities; equity meant equal educational benefit (McLaughlin, 2010). While the case was focused on segregation of students by race and ethnicity, the standard set by the case influenced momentous changes in the educational expectations for children with disabilities. Still, school districts across the nation continued to hold inconsistent theories of exactly how children with disabilities were to be educated (Yell et al., 1998).

Prior to the 1970s, federal law did not include protections for individuals with disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012). In 1970, only an estimated one in five students with

disabilities participated in public schools. Approximately one million students were prohibited from public education and an additional 3.5 million were prevented from receiving an appropriate education due to disabilities (Horn & Tynan, 2001; National Council on Disability, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010). Grossly ostracized from public education, children with disabilities attended special schools and institutions due to the common fallacy that they were not capable of learning and were disruptive or disturbing to others (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017; Spring, 2011). Misconceptions caused many to view the education of students with disabilities to be a futile endeavor since these individuals would still be dependent upon others and unable to contribute to society (National Council on Disability, 2000).

The Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was a giant leap forward in the steps taken to educate individuals with disabilities. In essence, the Rehabilitation Act banned discriminatory practices in states that received federal funding (Aron & Loprest, 2012). At about the same time, pressure from parents and increased litigation created a sense of urgency for legislators. Members of Congress recognized that states were not making ethical educational decisions for students with disabilities prompting federal action (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017; Mead & Paige, 2008).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act

In 1975, Congress sought to end segregation and exclusion of children with disabilities from public schools through a revolutionary legislation known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Horn & Tynan, 2001; Kanter & Ferri, 2013; Mead & Paige, 2008; Sullivan & Castro-Villareal, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010; Yell et al., 1998). Signed into law by President Ford, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) set into motion a momentous, national directive to include all students with disabilities and guarantee their access to a Free *and* Appropriate Public Education (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). Also outlined within EAHCA was a plan to provide federal funding for the education of students with disabilities (Mead & Paige, 2008; Yell et al., 1998). For the first time in history, there were regulations and funding for educating students with disabilities. Moreover, EAHCA introduced the idea of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as the expectation changed from intentional separation to intentional participation in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible (National Council on Disability, 2000).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Prior to the inception of EACHA, four out of five children with disabilities did not participate in public schools and of those who participated, the majority were isolated, sent to segregated facilities or denied an appropriate education (Aron & Loprest, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010). Later known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990), this

legislation dramatically increased the participation for children with disabilities and radically altered the educational participation and physical barriers that once excluded students with disabilities (Kanter & Ferri, 2013).

Upon the 1990 reauthorization, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) disbanded the term “handicapped student” and instead emphasized a person-first vernacular. As a replacement for handicapped child, the customary language became child with disabilities (Yell et al., 1998). When the IDEA was reauthorized in 1997, the focus shifted again as the expectations centered around educational outcomes and achievement for students with disabilities (Damore & Murray, 2009; Yell et al., 1998). Though progress was made to ensure that students with disabilities were provided a public education, in 2000 the National Council on Disability estimated that 88% of schools failed to provide appropriate transition services, 80% failed to deliver Free Appropriate Public Education and 72% did not afford student access to the Least Restrictive Environment.

The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, included additional guidance for school districts and defined special education as:

...specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability...specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction (34 CFR.300.39).

Also embedded in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, was the philosophy that decisions were to be made on an individual basis while taking into consideration the strengths, weaknesses, goals and supports necessary to ensure success for students

with disabilities. This required districts to increase flexibility in programming, expectations and the learning environment. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed through a team approach, addressed the extent of supports necessary to provide equitable, meaningful access to grade level curriculum. According to the U.S. Department of Education regulations, only 1% of students with disabilities who were the most significantly impaired were allowed to receive modified curriculum standards. The remaining 99% were expected to receive equitable, beneficial access to grade level curriculum (McLaughlin, 2010).

No Child Left Behind Act

Over the years federal mandates forced progression in the equality of access to education, however students with disabilities continued to underperform (Sullivan & Castro-Villareal, 2013). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) began an era of accountability that required schools to demonstrate progress for all students, including those with disabilities (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McLaughlin, 2010; Russell & Bray, 2013). To measure academic progress and hold schools accountable, students were required to complete a series of standardized tests. Based on grade level assessments, students were compared by subgroup to determine disparities in performance and students with disabilities were held to the same standards for learning (Aron & Loprest, 2012; McHatton & Parker, 2013).

The NCLB also introduced new terminology to describe student performance. Referred to as the achievement gap, the discrepancy between subgroups and non-subgroups placed an emphasis on ensuring that students with disabilities not only

received equal exposure, but equal learning opportunities and progress (McLaughlin, 2010; Russell & Bray, 2013; Stone et al., 2012). With heightened levels of accountability in force, the NCLB shifted the focus toward the significant disparity in test results between students with disabilities and typical developing peers (McLaughlin, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2016; Stone et al., 2012). No longer was participation enough. The NCLB put systems in place to measure the progress of students with disabilities and held districts accountable for their achievement; mandating meaningful access (McHatton & Parker, 2013).

Although special education services and participation of students with disabilities had progressed tremendously, the majority of students identified for services continued to require services for the duration of their educational career which provided evidence that students with disabilities required more than just physical integration into schools and classrooms (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). To improve student achievement, many districts adopted a new approach to special education services, offering a menu of services ranging from the self-contained special education classrooms to consultation (Russell & Bray, 2013). With pressure from the IDEA and NCLB, schools began adopting inclusion. A new and controversial form of service delivery, students with disabilities were included in the general education setting (McHatton & Parker, 2013; Obiaker, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). As participating increased, students with disabilities began performing better on standardized achievement tests (Feng & Sass, 2013).

Participation in General Education

Federal mandates sent the message that students with disabilities were the responsibility of all educators; not just the special education department (Sullivan & Castrol-Villareal, 2013). With accountability data and disparities in student outcomes among subgroups, some began questioning whether schools were benefitting students with disabilities (McLaughlin, 2010). Though many students with disabilities were afforded access to a continuum of services, additional steps needed to be taken to support general and special educators to improve participation in the general education classroom.

An issue of equal access and equal participation, the philosophy behind inclusion was founded on the ideals of social justice (Obiakor, 2011; Thomas & Loxley, 2007). When the majority of students with disabilities were educated separately, educational programs and student success had little accountability and failed to prepare students for life after school (Obiakor, 2011). In 2015, approximately 13% of all school aged children received special education services. Of the nearly 6.6 million identified students, about 95% attended regular schools as compared with less than 20% in the early 1970s. Over the past few decades, the percentage of students with disabilities who participated in the general education setting at least 80% of the time dramatically increased. In 1990, only 33% of students with disabilities were participating in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day; by 2015, that percentage had almost doubled (McFarland et al., 2017).

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandated that school systems find ways to instruct students with disabilities in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible to comply with the Least Restrictive Environment (Obiakor, 2011; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012). Inclusion was based on the premise that all students were to be included and provided supports to ensure access to the general education curriculum (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Effective inclusive classrooms were characterized as a collaborative environment in which special educators and general educators worked together to provide a continuum of support tailored to the needs of each child (Burstein et al., 2004). This required the schools to ensure students with disabilities were educated alongside typical developing peers in the general education classroom (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007). Giangreco (2003) delineated the characteristics of the inclusive classroom as:

1. An embracing classroom located in the child's homeschool, that included necessary accommodations and supports;
2. A class where student demographics mimicked the school community and the population of students with disabilities did not exceed 10-12% of the class;
3. Students were educated with same age peers;
4. All students were provided necessary supports and scaffolds to ensure access shared educational opportunities;
5. Students participated with general education peers in inclusive general education settings;

6. Children received an individualized education, tailored to meet the specific needs of the whole learner (e.g., academic, adaptive, social); and
7. A place where students with disabilities participated in the inclusive classroom consistently.

Inclusion Confusion

As teachers sought to provide effective inclusive environments, they found that the responsibility befell upon both general and special education teachers, as well as administrators (Obiakor et al., 2012). New NCLB accountability and IDEA mandates altered the roles of both general and special education teachers, requiring all educators to successfully instruct students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Strieker, Gillis, & Zong, 2013). Educators found themselves in uncharted territory as they attempted to muddle their way through the task of creating an inclusive environment (Abery et al., 2017; Gehrke et al., 2014; Rimpola, 2014; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). This lack of preparedness stifled further development of systems and student progress (McNulty & Gloeckler, 2011). Practices and environments of inclusive classrooms varied from school to school and without common understanding, educators became frustrated, negatively affecting attitudes and implementation (Idol, 2006; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010). Far from an intuitive process, much of the success of inclusion relied upon preexisting conditions which included teachers' self-efficacy and perceptions of teaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Rimpola, 2014).

To increase access to core curriculum and typical developing peers, many schools adopted inclusion as the primary form of special education service delivery (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). However, effective inclusion in the general education classroom required more. Effective inclusion required skilled educators, competent in meeting the needs of students with disabilities (McLaughlin, 2010; Smith et al., 2010). With a change in roles, educators expressed concerns about their individual responsibilities in educating students with disabilities, blurring the lines of general and special education teachers (Burstein et al., 2004).

Gehrke et al. (2014) found that although inclusion had been in use for decades, there was still a pervasive lack of clarity on behalf of both general and special educators, as well as administrators. Gehrke et al. also found that effective inclusion required trained educators with experience. To accomplish this, districts required clear expectations of educator responsibilities and guidelines for inclusive learning environments. However, there was argument about the expectations for inclusion and how to best accomplish the practice in the general education classroom (Shepherd et al., 2016).

In addition, Shepherd et al. found that an effectively cotaught, inclusive classroom was difficult to duplicate due to the personalized nature of the work. Inclusion also required time, training, and necessary supports from administrators. In other words, defining inclusion and the expectations for its success was a contentious debate of varying perceptions. The use of evidence based practice was also difficult to apply in every situation due to individualized nature of the instruction best suited to the learner. This resulted in additional challenges as fidelity of evidence based practice in

inclusion was difficult to ensure on a large scale. Many felt that the answer lay in the hands of teacher preparation programs, placing responsibility upon institutions to educate the workforce and clarify roles (Shepherd et al.).

In a similar study, Hines (2001) noted one of the most significant barriers to inclusion was the knowledge gap of the general educators working with individuals with disabilities. General educators asserted that they were not up to the task of working with students receiving special education services nor were they qualified to do so. Hines found that these feelings of unpreparedness were particularly strong at the middle school level. Conversely, special educators were at a disadvantage when working in content heavy classrooms. Lacking specific content knowledge, in many instances special educators in which they were forced to act as instructional assistants instead of working as experts in their field.

Comparatively, Bender, Boon, Hinrichs, and Lawson (2008) noted that demographic information of teachers did exhibit a relationship to the frequency of effective inclusion instruction. Bender et al. also found a relationship between the size of the class and the frequency of effective inclusion strategies which implied that the smaller the general education class, the better the inclusion service. There was also a significant correlation between middle school teachers' attitudes and frequency of effective strategies. Middle and high school teachers self-reported minimal to infrequent use of effective inclusion strategies, indicating that elementary grade levels were superior in fostering the inclusive setting.

Roles and Responsibilities

McNulty and Gloeckler (2011) affirmed that inclusion was one of the most beneficial methods for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. However, effective inclusion required a shared understanding and ownership of responsibilities. Teachers and administrators needed clearly defined expectations for students, common planning times for special and general education teachers, and honest communication about beliefs and classroom management. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) detailed the requirements for both general and special educators' responsibilities and necessary skills, including effective communication, planning and content knowledge. Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) acknowledged that before effectiveness of inclusive practices could be evaluated and improved, a common clear understanding of inclusion and the responsibilities of staff members must first be established. A lack of clarity impeded the progress of inclusion and coteaching as many educators struggled to understand their roles (McLaughlin, 2010; Strieker et al., 2013). Moreover, educators were not provided time or support necessary for adequate preparation (Bettini et al., 2017).

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Stecker (2010) described the roles of inclusive educators as a blurred effect. The "blurring" of special education was essentially an intermingling of programs as general and special education teachers began collectively providing instruction to students with disabilities. Fuchs et al. depicted special educators as unleashed from their special education, self-contained settings, instead set free to collaborate with general educators in the regular classroom. This blurred collaboration between general and special education was necessary to planning for meaningful instruction, developing IEPs, and revolutionizing service delivery. As Fuchs et al.

described, blurring was a collaborative effort that allowed individuals to cross barriers in environments and required a new view of the roles and responsibilities of school teachers and staff as they sought to improve education for students with disabilities.

Brownell et al. (2010) described the lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of general and special educators. Both lacked the skills necessary to be effective in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive environment. As more students with disabilities participated in the general education classroom, both general and special educators became responsible for their success. With legislatures adding additional pressure to produce improved achievement results, Brownell et al. encouraged general and special educators to collaborate in order to improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities.

Collaborative Practices

Equal access to high quality instruction also required access to grade level assessments. This forced educators to closely consider the use of accommodations and modifications without lowering standards for student learning (McNulty & Gloeckler, 2011). Only through shared responsibility, collective ownership and understanding could students succeed in the inclusive environment (McNulty & Gloeckler, 2011; Rimpola, 2014). Rimpola (2014) described collaboration as imperative to successful inclusion; the very underpinning of the inclusive classroom. Conversely, Rimpola also stated that true collaborative planning did not naturally occur when multiple individuals were placed in the same space. Collaboration relied upon the cocommitment of coteachers as they interpreted student data and planned for learning to occur. In order

for teachers to become masters of inclusion, they required continuous coaching and scheduled collaboration (Shady et al., 2013).

Rimpola (2014) substantiated that student learning relied upon the successful collaboration of teachers and emphasized that the planning phase was instrumental to improved student outcomes. Though some educators crafted alternative methods for communicating, (e.g. email), research showed that collaborative planning could not be replaced and was in fact necessary to meeting the needs of struggling students. Solis et al. (2012) also found that for effective inclusion to occur, educators must be provided sufficient time to collaborate, however, the majority of educators were providing instruction in a spontaneous manner, which was ineffective. Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010) stated that for inclusion to have the most meaningful impact, collaboration between colleagues must be commonplace. However, collaboration largely hinged upon personalities and philosophical beliefs of those charged with its implementation which either helped or hindered inclusive instruction. Moreover, for teachers to increase their levels of self-efficacy in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, effective collaborative practices were a necessity (Rimpola, 2014).

Telfer (2011) asserted that gaps in student performance between students with disabilities and typically developing peers not only indicated a gap in student learning but a gap in implementation. Districts noted as “high performing” shared responsibility for achieving goals. Shared responsibility took the place of separate silos as districts progressed towards building a collaborative culture, working together to grow staff and students (Shady et al., 2013; Telfer, 2011).

Similarly, Blanton, and Perez (2011) affirmed that general and special educators who consistently participated in collaboration, such as professional learning communities, felt a shared sense of responsibility for all students. In a collaborative culture, general educators reportedly gained an understanding of special education related topics and instructional strategies. Special educators in the study also benefitted from professional learning communities with general education colleagues as they gained a deeper understanding of grade level curriculum. Focused on rigorous standards and expectations for learning, special educators were valuable assets to professional learning communities, contributing knowledge of strategies and tacit understanding of students (Many & Schmidt, 2013).

Challenges of Collaborative Teaching

Efforts to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom compelled interest in the use of collaborative teaching (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). Though general educators and special educators made attempts, collaborative teaching was accompanied by its own set of challenges. Research confirmed that while initial efforts to coteach were well-intended, many educators were unhappy with the resulting relationship as general educators took on lead roles, special education teachers resembled instructional assistant (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Solis et al., 2012). The domination of one teacher caused concern, as special educators failed to take an active role in general education classrooms. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) found that inequality in coteaching relationships had a negative effect on attitudes and practice; further emphasizing the need for clarity in roles and responsibilities. To foster

a positive coteaching relationship and student success, special educators needed to exhibit their talents and skills while advocating for struggling students (Scruggs & Mastropieri).

DeSimone and Parmar (2006) found that general education teachers of inclusive classrooms considered collaboration to be their most valuable resource. Ranging from other general educators to special education teachers and school psychologists, inclusion teachers gained an understanding and benefited from collaboration with other professionals. Moreover, teachers stated that they were more likely to persevere in challenging learning situations when given access to a collaborative environment.

Likewise, Keefe and Moore (2004) found that the interpersonal relationship between coteachers had an impact on the communication and collaboration in the inclusive environment. Reminiscent of other research, Keefe and Moore found that in situations in which the special educators played a subordinate, less-effective role, the special educator did not possess the content knowledge necessary for meaningful support in the inclusive setting. Additionally, neither the general education teachers nor special education teachers were up to the task and requested additional training in order to collaboratively teach in the inclusive classroom. Special educators also found that their lack of content knowledge left them underprepared for taking an active, effective role in the inclusive classroom.

Attitudes about Inclusion

Underperforming students and students with disabilities were at a disadvantage due to the disparity of their academic performance when compared to typically

developing peers (Sullivan & Castro-Villarreal, 2013). In addition, students with disabilities often displayed behaviors not considered age or environmentally appropriate to the general education setting. At times, educators experienced anxiety associated with implementing IEPs and ensuring grade level curriculum while accounting for these individualized needs (McLaughlin, 2010). Many teachers voiced concerns about a general lack of competency and confidence. Poor perceptions of self-efficacy resulted in anxiety that affected teacher attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011).

Gibbs (2007) described the importance of internally held attitudes and beliefs in more finite terms asserting that inclusive practice could not coexist with a segregationist philosophy. Ryan and Gottfried (2012) affirmed that even after all of the progress made in the field of special education, there was still a great divide among educators. As many pursued an inclusive environment, some individuals desired to separate students with disabilities from typical developing peers. Negative teacher attitudes and perceptions were shown to effect instructional practices, ultimately becoming a barrier to the inclusive classroom (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007; Ryan & Gottfried, 2012; Shady et al., 2013). Also, Burke and Sutherland (2004) found that teacher attitudes effected inclusion to the extent that without positive teacher attitudes, successful inclusion programs would cease to exist. Only with a positive attitude would teachers have the commitment and wherewithal to persevere in the inclusive classroom. Shady et al. (2013) determined that teacher attitudes also effected the level of peer acceptance, which either positively or negatively affected students with disabilities.

Damore and Murray (2009) found that, while the majority of general education teachers considered inclusion and collaborative teaching a positive practice, their perceptions were notably lower than special education counterparts. Researchers also noted a disparity between teacher beliefs about inclusion and everyday practices, citing an implementation gap in collaborative practice. Thought to be a major contributing factor to the gap, general educators were not as well-equipped or knowledgeable as special education teachers in the processes necessary for effective inclusive practices.

Monsen, Ewing, and Kwoka (2014) found no direct correlation between the background information of teachers and the concept of inclusion. Conversely, teachers with very positive attitudes towards inclusion were notably younger than those with poorer attitude ratings. Researchers substantiated that understanding teacher attitudes had implications for improving inclusive practices due to the significant impact of teachers' willingness to provide an effective inclusive environment. The level of support provided to teachers also had a significant correlation to attitudes towards inclusion. This provided evidence that increased levels of support led to improved attitudes towards inclusion. In comparison, those individuals who received less adequate support had poorer attitudes towards inclusion resulting in less conducive environments for inclusion.

Burstein et al. (2004) observed that general education teachers reported that their perceptions of inclusion were heavily influenced by their experiences with students with disabilities and level of support provided by special education teachers. Conversely, special education teachers reported that inclusive classrooms and a collaborative culture cultivated their knowledge of the general education curriculum and

expectations. Through additional experience and special educator support, general education teachers were able to develop the skills necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities, positively effecting teacher attitudes. Burstein et al. also substantiated that the success of the inclusive environment was contingent upon the willingness and attitudes of individual teachers and leaders. The individualize nature of inclusion made positive inclusive classrooms difficult to duplicate.

Teacher Attitudes and Administrative Support

Traditionally, it has been customary for principals to bear the responsibility for general education students while Special Education Supervisors cared for the well-being of students receiving special education services (Lynch, 2012). With increased accountability and a changing educational landscape, principals came to bear more responsibility for students with disabilities within their schools. Lynch asserted that for principals to foster a positive learning environment for students with disabilities, principals required more preparation than previously provided. Only by building capacity of principals could school districts overcome the high attrition rates of special educators and the special education teacher shortage.

Though the inclusion mission had the opportunity to benefit all students, it also imposed difficulties for principals. The role of the principal was monumental in ensuring success or failure as districts sought to progressively work toward an inclusive learning environment (Lynch, 2012; Praisner, 2003). Time and again, inclusion either failed or flourished based on the attitudes and values of building level administrators (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Evans et al., 1992; Praisner, 2003; Ryan & Gottfried, 2012). In

addition, Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, and Scheer (1999) found that educators who reported a lack of support from administrators had poorer perceptions of self-efficacy in teaching students receiving special education services. Ryan and Gottfried (2012) asserted that administrators were responsible for fostering positive attitudes by addressing the training needs of each teacher thereby increasing knowledge and cultivating progressive attitudes.

Praisner (2003) discovered that the success of inclusion was largely influenced by the principals' internal beliefs about educating students with disabilities. While IEP teams made decisions about the services provided, the perspective of the principal strongly influenced the outcome and final IEP document. Praisner also found that principals with positive attitudes tended to prefer less restrictive options for service delivery than principals with reportedly negative attitudes. The study revealed that the types of experience influenced principals' attitudes more than the number of years of experience. Principals with positive experiences with students with disabilities were more likely to prefer inclusive learning environments and exhibit a positive attitude towards inclusion. Additionally, ongoing special education inservice had a relationship to principals' attitudes. Praisner confirmed that increased inservice and exposure to special education topics equated to better attitudes towards the inclusive environment.

Berry (2012) reported that levels of support and satisfaction correlated to levels of teacher efficacy and commitment to special education. Specifically, levels of satisfaction and efficacy were correlated to support from administrators and other educators in the building. This implied that support was necessary for fostering teacher efficacy in teaching students with disabilities. Berry emphasized the need for leaders to

promote shared responsibility, positively influencing teacher commitment, satisfaction and self-efficacy; all characteristics of predicting teacher attrition.

Teacher Efficacy and Students with Disabilities

As participation increased, general educators assumed more responsibility for educating students with disabilities (Shepherd et al., 2016). Ranging from mild disabilities to severe cognitive impairments, students with disabilities posed a challenge as general educators sought to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population (Feustel, 2015). Research provided evidence that general educators with feelings of success in teaching struggling learners held increased feelings of self-efficacy and were more willing to include students with disabilities in the inclusive setting than those with feelings of inadequacy (e.g. Buell et al., 1999; Mackey, 2014). Forlin and Chambers (2011) observed a significant correlation between teachers perceived levels of efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion. Expressly, teachers who reported high confidence levels in working with students with disabilities supported inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Teacher efficacy, described as the feelings a teacher holds about their personal ability to instruct students, has been shown to have a direct impact on student learning (Buell et al., 1999). Buell et al. conducted a study to determine whether there was a correlation between teachers' reported levels of self-efficacy as related to students with disabilities working in the inclusive classroom. Research revealed that there was a strong relationship between teachers' ideas of inclusion and perceived levels of efficacy.

Efficacy was also shown to effect teacher opinion or feelings of acceptance towards students with disabilities.

Special education teachers reported higher levels of self-efficacy in providing instruction to students with disabilities in the general education setting than general education teachers (Buell et al., 1999). Conversely, general educators reported lower levels of efficacy and held feelings of inadequacy in altering classroom materials, modifying instruction, and providing individualized support academically and behaviorally. Buell et al. confirmed that teacher efficacy as related to inclusion of students with disabilities was created through teacher training and a positive experience with students in the inclusive education classroom. Implementation of effective inclusion required knowledgeable general and special education teachers who regularly participated in collaborative planning, a critical component of any special education program.

Mackey (2014) documented that there was an additional set of challenges presented to the inclusive classroom at the middle school level. Concerns with the number of students taught and the duration of instruction, led to added challenges in meeting the needs of struggling learners. Mackey determined that general educators indicated that undergraduate programs had not satisfactorily prepared them for the inclusive setting. All respondents in the study reported having taken only one special education course. Teachers reported that with increased experience with students with disabilities, their use of instructional strategies actually improved, positively affecting all learners. Mackey also found that the level of experience correlated to perceived levels of self-efficacy and teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Mackey encouraged districts

and schools to include professional development for both teachers and instructional support staff, in order to cultivate a collaborative relationship and provide additional administrative support.

Cameron and Cook (2013) found that teachers set more rigorous expectations in areas of strength or areas in which they had higher perceptions of self-efficacy. Many general education teachers were comfortable setting expectations and providing instruction to students with mild disabilities and held them to the same learning standards as typical developing peers. Conversely, students with moderate to severe disabilities were held to different standards as general educators focused on social development. Cameron and Cook also found that depending on the outward appearance of the child and perceptions of the disability, teachers experienced feelings of inadequacy. Educators with higher levels of efficacy typically persevered with students who find learning to be a challenge (Almog & Shecktman, 2007).

Educator Preparation for the Inclusive Classroom

Research indicated that special education students benefited from the same pedagogy as did typically developing peers in the general education setting, including frequent feedback and explicit instruction (Horn & Tynan, 2001). The greatest influence on all student academic achievement was the quality of the instructor, especially for struggling students, yet numerous educators were not given professional development opportunities necessary to improving skills essential for instructing students with disabilities (Benedict et al., 2014). Charged with implementing inclusion, teachers and

school leaders struggled to provide appropriate instruction and service delivery for students with disabilities (Feustel, 2015).

Successful inclusion consisted of more than just allowing individuals to be educated in the same space. Inclusion required teachers to ensure meaningful participation (Nolan, 2005) and educators were unprepared for the task (Jobling & Moni, 2004; Shady et al., 2013). Researchers learned that many general education teachers failed to implement strategies in which instructional activities were tailored to allow for individual student success (Brownell et al., 2010; Keefe & Moore, 2004). In addition, special education teachers behaved as instructional assistants, lacking the knowledge and skills necessary for successful inclusion in the general education classroom (Keefe & Moore, 2004; Obiakor, 2011).

Preparation of Special Education Teachers

Before the inception of IDEA, special education student-teachers were prepared to work in residential settings, requiring a much different knowledge base and range of responsibilities (Shepherd et al., 2016). With new expectations for student participation, successful instruction necessitated increased knowledge on behalf of the special educators, requiring deeper knowledge than their general education counterparts. Unlike general educators, special education teachers required extensive knowledge of general education curriculum and an implicit understanding of how each child's disability affected him or her in the classroom (Brownell et al., 2010; McLeskey et al., 2017).

The NCLB Act of 2001 mandated that all educators be considered highly qualified to teach and included updated licensure requirements, as well as standards for

subject-specific knowledge (Sayeski & Higgins, 2014). Though NCLB clearly defined highly qualified status for general educators, there was a lack of clarity as to how highly qualified status affected special education teachers. The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 provided further guidance and described the highly qualified special educator as an individual who not only had knowledge of students with disabilities and strategy instruction, but also an understanding of general education content (Sayeski & Higgins).

In 2016, the Bureau of Labor Statistics described the role of special education teachers:

Special education teachers work with general education teachers, counselors, school superintendents, administrators, and parents. As a team, they develop IEPs specific to each student's needs. IEPs outline the goals and services for each student, such as sessions with the school psychologists, counselors, and special education teachers. Teachers also meet with parents, school administrators, and counselors to discuss updates and changes to the IEPs...

(para. 2)

In inclusive classrooms, special education teachers teach students with disabilities who are in general education classrooms. They work with general education teachers to present the information in a manner that students with disabilities can more easily understand. They also assist general education teachers to adapt lessons that will meet the needs of the students with disabilities in their classes. (para. 6)

Similarly, Brownell et al. (2010) described high quality special educators as individuals with extensive knowledge in:

- Areas of disability and the impact on student learning;
- Evidence based intervention strategies to address deficit areas; and
- General education curriculum as it related to specific student needs.

McLeskey et al. (2017) developed an extensive list of high-leverage practices implemented by special education teachers. Composed of practices established to be imperative to improving the achievement of students with disabilities, the description of an effective special education teacher included an updated depiction of responsibilities:

...special education teachers use content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge (including evidence-based practice), and data on student learning to design, deliver and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.... Effective special education teachers are well versed in general education curricula and other contextually relevant curricula, and use appropriate standards, learning progressions, and evidence-based practices in conjunction with specific IEP goals and benchmarks to prioritize long- and short-term learning goals and to plan instruction...delivered with fidelity,...designed to maximize academic learning time....

Effective special education teachers base their instruction and support of students with disabilities on the best available evidence, combined with their professional judgement and knowledge of individual student needs. (McLeskey et al., p.17)

As more students with disabilities began participating in the general education classroom, special educators experienced increased responsibilities and demands (Shepherd et al., 2016). The role of special education teachers drastically changed, as

special educators were required to have expansive knowledge of special education, general education curriculum, assessment and collaborative skills (Shepherd et al.). New skillsets and increased expectations exacerbated the plaguing shortage of highly qualified special educators (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004). As states sought to solve the shortage of highly qualified special educators, alternative certification methods and provisional licenses increased the number of graduates entering the field. Many of these individuals deprived of the skills necessary for instructing students with disabilities in the inclusive environment (Nichols, Bicard, Bicard, & Casey, 2008).

Leader-Janssen, Swain, Delkamiller, and Ritzman (2012) acknowledged that special educators in the inclusive setting were successful in their craft when they focused on improving access to grade level curriculum. Necessary to ensuring access, collaboration among educators was paramount as general and special educators joined to integrate instructional strategies and foster generalization. Leader-Janssen et al. emphasized that ultimately, both general and special educators needed to be acutely aware of the learning outcomes and expectations for participation in order to improve student access to grade level curriculum.

Brownell et al. (2010) substantiated that for special education teachers to reach a level of expertise, it was imperative for teacher preparation programs to provide preparation in both special education and general education throughout the course of the special education teacher preparation. To help meet the needs of general and special educators, some colleges began providing integrated programs focused on preparation for inclusion (Brownell et al.). Though some universities began offering integrated programs of study, the integrated approach tended to exclude specific

departments from sharing role specific information, such as the special education department (Zion, 2014). Zion called for collaboration among districts and colleges in order to ensure that student teachers were prepared for the task.

Feng and Sass (2013) found that job-embedded teacher training had a positive impact on students with and without disabilities. Researchers also found that instruction provided by individuals with more experience also benefited students with disabilities. There was a notable difference in student performance between teachers with traditional teacher preparation training versus those obtaining certification by other means. Results indicated that teacher preparation programs for special educators improved the effectiveness of special education teachers. Researchers concluded that students with disabilities benefitted from participating in the inclusive general education setting and receiving instruction from certified special education teachers. Special educators from traditional preparation programs with experience had the greatest effect on student achievement.

Preparation of General Education Teachers

Cochran (1998) found that as the state of education continued to change, general education teachers were not only responsible for the general education curriculum but in essence, had become special educators charged with providing a special education service. Though general educators began assuming additional responsibilities in the inclusive environment, the training and preparation for these teachers had changed very little (Cochran). According the United States Government Accountability Office (2009), teachers reported that they had little to no coursework that

included content specific to special education or the inclusive classroom. The study also indicated that most student teachers were only required to observe students with disabilities during their teacher preparation. Deprived of guidance in how to provide instruction, results indicated that general educators were unprepared to meet the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms.

General education teachers experienced the strain of additional responsibilities in the push to address individual learning needs for students with disabilities (Brownell et al., 2010). Apprehension surrounding participation in the general education classroom stemmed from general educators' ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Brownell et al., 2010; Strieker et al., 2013). Furthermore, general education teachers struggled to collaborate with other professionals, voicing anxiety and lack of self-efficacy (Strieker et al., 2013). In some cases, general educators were not up to the task, ill-prepared and inexperienced in working with students with disabilities (Cook et al., 2007; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007). However, Feng and Sass (2013) found that general education teachers with special education preparation were better prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Abery et al. (2017) found that although inclusion in the general education classroom continued to increase, the professional development and preparation of teachers failed to keep pace, resulting in general educators unprepared for the task. Ill-prepared general educators exacerbated the perception that special education teachers should be solely responsible for the academic and social well-being of students with disabilities. Abery et al. further stated that while much had been done to increase participation in the general education setting, progress needed to be made to ensure

meaningful academic and social access to typical developing peers and grade level curriculum.

DeSimone and Parmar (2006) found that many general educators lacked a complete understanding of effective instruction, necessary to educating struggling learners and students with disabilities. Instructional strategies and tools for accommodating diverse learners were not part of the pedagogical repertoire for many general educators. Furthermore many general educators stated that while they were ultimately responsible for the learning of all students, they failed to grasp the differences among learners. Many general educators could not distinguish the differences in instructional strategies and accommodations, nor how to implement in daily instruction.

DeSimone and Parmar (2006) also found that general educators held negative perceptions of teacher preparation programs that failed to prepare them for the inclusive classroom. Instead, respondents stated that they benefitted most from authentic experiences in the inclusive classroom. Researchers also learned that although teachers had a desire to attend meaningful professional development sessions, districts and schools did not provide regular training opportunities. Conversely, teachers who were able to receive high quality training exhibited higher perceived levels of preparedness in the inclusive setting.

Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) conducted a study to determine whether teachers possessed updated skills necessary for instructing the increasingly diverse population of learners, specifically those with disabilities. After reviewing coursework from 109 universities, researchers found that the majority of teacher preparation programs had not adequately prepared teachers for the inclusive

classroom. Allday et al. found that roughly three-quarters of all universities had not provided direct guidance related to inclusive classrooms. In addition, the majority of teachers had not received instruction in how to provide an effective learning environment for diverse learners or been given coursework related to classroom management. Allday et al. also indicated that only 6% of universities prepared teachers for the collaborative culture necessary for effective inclusion.

Preparation of Principals

To cultivate student learning, it was first necessary for inclusion to become part of the culture and expectations of the school (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2017; Obiakor, 2011). As the demands for high quality special education programs continued to grow in public schools, the need for supportive and knowledgeable administrators also increased (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Leader-Janssen et al., 2012). In a study conducted by the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, Garrison-Wade et al. conducted a mixed methods study to determine the level of preparedness of administrative students and alumni. In general, participants expressed a lack of knowledge related to special education, including:

- Specific roles and responsibilities of special education teachers;
- Methods for supporting the special education program and providing constructive feedback;
- Lack of understanding of special education legal issues; and
- Inability to manage special education resources and solutions.

Lacking the necessary understanding and skills, principals in the study reported a dependency upon central office supervisors and special education teachers for information related to special education (Garrison-Wade et al.). Due to lack of preparation in special education, principals were simply not equipped to lead in the inclusive setting (Patterson, Bowling, & Marshall, 2000).

Pazey and Cole (2012) also described building level administrators as lacking the skills necessary for growing teachers capable of meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Researchers observed that few administrators possessed the knowledge necessary to make sound decisions related to special education students, nor the knowledge of pedagogy required to improve student outcomes. Pazey and Cole documented that administrators' absence of special education knowledge resulted in exclusion of students with disabilities and decreased learning outcomes.

In a survey of principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of teacher evaluations for special educators, Glowacki and Hackmann (2016) revealed that principals with special education certification self-reported notably higher effectiveness scores in their ability to provide effective feedback to special educators. The same principals were also better at evaluating general educators as well, indicating that principals with special education certification possessed a different set of skills and knowledge of instructional practices applicable to all learning environments. Conversely, principals without the special certification scored themselves much lower in their ability to provide effective feedback to special educators. Additionally, many of the job specific responsibilities of special educators went unnoticed to the lesser trained principals, including legal procedures and instructional processes. Glowacki and Hackmann maintained that

principals not in possession of special education certification had a moral obligation to improve their understanding of special education law and instructional practice, otherwise, the results would be detrimental to students receiving special education services.

Preparation of District Administrators

Special education teachers' jobs continued to become increasingly more challenging as additional students with disabilities participated in the inclusive general education setting. Bettini et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine whether Special Education Supervisors had an impact on cultivating effective special educators and improving student outcomes. Previously, principals held primary responsibility for special educator effectiveness, many of whom were underprepared for the task and possessed minimal knowledge of special education related issues. The researchers found that students with disabilities performed at higher rates when provided instruction from highly effective special education teachers. The study also revealed that special education teachers were considered more effective when Special Education Supervisors had high levels of involvement with special education staff on a regular basis. Special Education Supervisors were also able to positively impact special education programs and student progress by providing a clear mission, vision, expectations, and conducted ongoing professional development (Bettini et al.).

Voltz and Collins (2010) advocated that Special Education Supervisors greatly influenced the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Charged with establishing the vision and leading administrators and educators, the

preparation of Special Education Supervisors was vital to achieving an inclusive environment. The skills necessary for achieving the mission differed from those historically necessary to this vital role. Research revealed that supervisors reported they did not possess the skills for the task. Supervisors also indicated that many special educators were not able to meet the needs of students with disabilities satisfactorily. This was later confirmed by special educators who reported perceptions of inadequacy in instructing students in the inclusive environment.

New accountability and expectations added to the challenge of moving all students towards a common standard while also differentiating to meet students' very diverse needs (Voltz & Collins, 2010). A crucial skill, successful Special Education Supervisors required knowledge of recruitment and retention of special educators. Whether cultivating staff or improving the work environment, retaining staff was necessary to growing a group of individuals prepared to work with students with disabilities. Equally important, Special Education Supervisors were necessary to improving the understanding of other district level supervisors, specifically general education administrators. Advocating and educating to promote inclusion and collaboration at the school and district level were vital responsibilities of successful Special Education Supervisors.

Chapter Summary

The history of special education has been marked by both challenges and successes (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010). In recent decades, significant steps were taken to

improve the treatment and participation of students with disabilities. No longer was equitable access acceptable; educators were required to ensure equitable results (Brownell et al., 2010). New accountability and federal mandates necessitated improved student outcomes, through meaningful participation for all students (Equity Alliance, 2012b).

Inclusion became a popular form of service delivery, however, it was met with contention. Some individuals desired to reverse the progress due to unwanted challenges as “teachers ultimately bear the responsibility to implement interventions and accommodations for students with disabilities, often without adequate training, planning time, or assistance” (National Council on Disability, 2000, p. 11). As teachers sought to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population, many expressed feelings of unpreparedness (Zion, 2014). Lack of preparation negatively affected self-efficacy and teacher attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Buell et al., 1999).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the perceived level of preparedness of general education teachers and special education teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. An analysis of data included determining whether there was a difference in perceived levels of preparation by grade category and teaching position held. Data collected were also used to determine whether there was a relationship between perceived levels of preparedness, attitudes towards inclusion, perceived levels of self-efficacy and administrator support. This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study, Guiding Research Questions and Null Hypotheses, Population and Sample, Instrumentation, Data Collection, Data Analysis and Chapter Summary.

Guiding Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

The following research questions and corresponding null hypotheses guided this study to determine educator perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom:

1. Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general education elementary educators (K-4) and general education middle school educators (5-8)?

H₀1: There is no significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general education elementary educators (K-4) and general education middle school educators (5-8).

2. Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between special education elementary educators (K-4) and special education middle school educators (5-8)?

H₀2: There is no significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between special education elementary educators (K-4) and special education middle school educators (5-8).

3. Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between all general education educators (K-8) and all special education educators (K-8)?

H₀3: There is no significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between all general education educators (K-8) and all special education educators (K-8).

4. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion?

H₀4: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion.

5. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support?

H₀5: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support.

6. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

H₀6: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

7. Is there a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support?

H₀7: There is not a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support.

8. Is there a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

H₀8: There is not a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

9. Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

H₀9: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

Population and Sample

Research for this study was conducted in the Northeast Tennessee region. Recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education as the First Tennessee region, this area is comprised of both city and county school systems. A request to conduct this study were sent to each of the 17 school districts in the First Tennessee region. Permission was granted by six districts which included four county school systems and two city school systems.

A total of 194 responses were obtained during the survey period; however, 14 survey responses could not be included due to holding positions or working with grade levels outside of the study. The study included 180 usable responses comprised of 120 general education teachers and 60 special education teachers in grades kindergarten through eighth. Sixty-two teachers indicated that they taught in grades kindergarten through fourth. Fifty indicated that they held positions in grades fifth through eighth.

Instrumentation

To determine general and special educator perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom, a survey was developed and distributed to six participating school districts. The survey was developed using information provided in the literature review and feedback provided by the dissertation committee. Prior to administering the survey to the sample, a small group of peers piloted the instrument and provided constructive feedback. Revisions were made to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument prior to administering to the sample participants.

The survey consisted of two demographic items, 29 statements, and one open-response question, (see Appendix). Demographic items asked participants to identify specific grade levels taught and current teaching position held. Respondents were then presented with 29 statements focused on four dimensions: teacher perceptions of preparedness, attitudes towards inclusion, perceptions of self-efficacy and perceptions of administrative support. Respondents were asked to rate each item using a Likert-type scale with options of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Items 1-6 measured teacher perceptions of administrator support. Perceptions of teacher self-efficacy in meeting the needs of students with disabilities were measured in items 7-14. Items 15-22 included statements related to teacher attitudes towards inclusion and perceptions of preparedness was addressed in items 23-29.

Data Collection

Permission was obtained from six district level leaders for each of the participating districts in the Northeast Tennessee region. Following approval from the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University, data were collected according the Institutional Review Board guidelines. Supervisors and/or directors distributed the GoogleForm survey link through an email sent to all kindergarten through eighth grade general and special education teachers. To follow up with non-respondents, an email was sent one week later as a reminder to encourage increased participation.

Data Analysis

Once all responses were collected, results were divided into specific subgroup areas. Participating teachers were divided by area taught, either special education or general education. Participating general educators were divided by elementary and middle school grades kindergarten through fourth and fifth through eighth. Similarly, participating special educators were also divided by elementary and middle school grades. Research Question 3 necessitated a comparison of all K-8 special education teachers and all K-8 general education teachers. For Research Questions 4-9, all special education teacher and general education teacher results were combined to determine relationships between dimensions.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To measure differences between groups, independent *t*-test were conducted to address Research Questions 1-3. For Research Questions 4-9, relationships between variables were determined by Pearson Correlations. All data were tested at the .05 level of significance.

Chapter Summary

This study was conducted using a quantitative method to determine whether educators were prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. The study was also designed to determine if there was a significant difference in the perceptions of preparedness between elementary and middle school; and differences between general and special educators' perceptions. Pearson Correlations were used to determine whether there were significant relationships

between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion; teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support; teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support; attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; and teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether kindergarten through eighth grade general and special educators were prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. An online survey was developed and distributed to six participating school districts. The survey consisted of two demographic items, 29 statements and one open-ended response. Participants were asked to identify grade level taught and current position held, (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographics of Respondents

Demographics	<i>N</i>	%
Position		
General Education Teacher	120	66.7
Special Education Teacher	60	33.3
Grade Levels		
K-4	62	55.4
5-8	50	44.6

Note: Information in Table 1 includes demographic information for 180 usable survey responses only. Fourteen survey responses could not be included due to respondents holding positions or working with grade levels outside of the focus of this study.

Conducted in six districts in Northeast Tennessee, respondents included 180 general and special educators in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Using a Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, participants rated statements encompassing four dimensions including perceptions of preparedness, attitudes towards inclusion, perceptions of self-efficacy and perceptions of administrative support, (see Table 2). Respondents were also presented with one open-ended question in which individuals were asked if there were additional supports that would help them in the inclusive classroom.

All data collected were organized and analyzed to address nine research questions and nine corresponding null hypotheses. The first three research questions required an independent-samples *t*-test to determine significant differences between groups. To measure relationships between variables, a series of Pearson Correlations was conducted for Research Questions 4 through 9.

Table 2

Summary of Usable Responses

Dimension	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Preparedness	180	3.36	.750
Attitudes Towards Inclusion	180	3.69	.627
Self-Efficacy	180	3.95	.766
Administrative Support	178	3.80	.671

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general education elementary educators (K-4) and general education middle school educators (5-8)?

H₀1: There is no significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general education elementary educators (K-4) and general education middle school educators (5-8).

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for perceptions of preparedness differed between general education elementary educators (K-4) and general education middle school educators (5-8). Perceptions of preparedness was the test variable and the grouping variable was the grade category of the general education teachers. The test was not significant, $t(110) = .153, p = .439$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The η^2 index was less than .001, which indicated a small effect size. General educators in grades kindergarten through fourth grade ($M = 3.13, SD = .810$) had similar perceptions of preparedness as general educators in grades five through eight ($M = 3.15, SD = .681$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.310$ to $.263$. Figure 1 displays the distributions for the two groups.

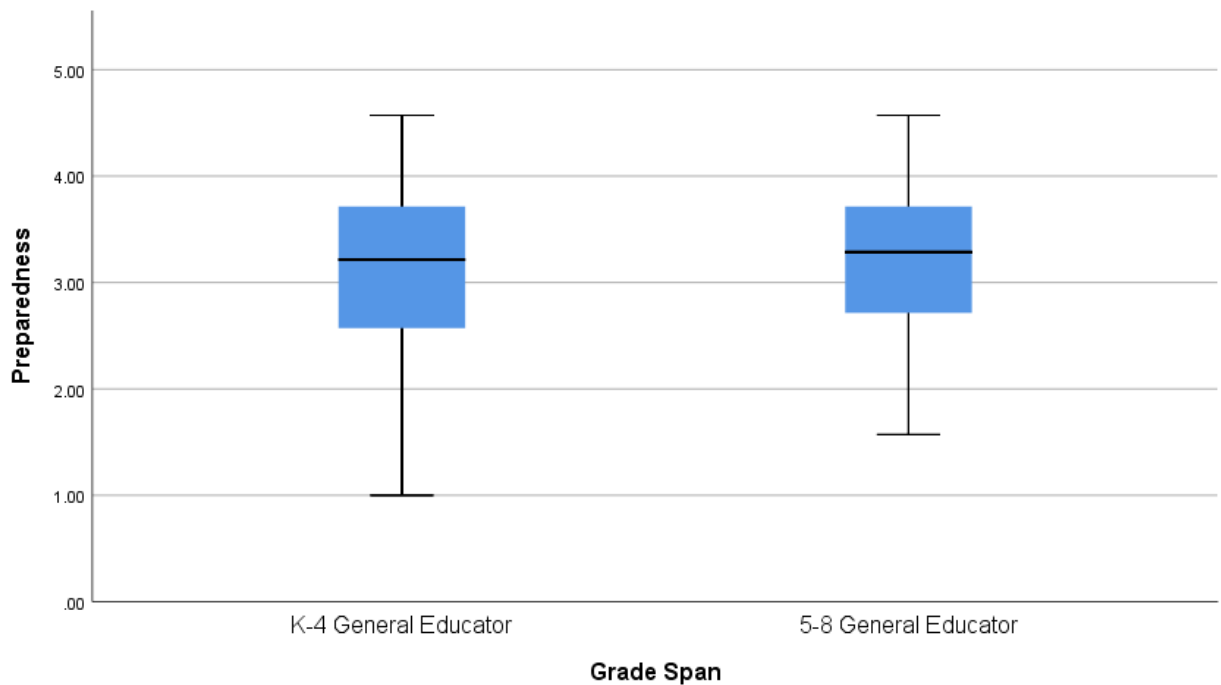


Figure 1. Distribution of Scores for General Elementary Educators and General Middle School Educators

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between special education elementary educators (K-4) and special education middle school educators (5-8)?

H₀2: There is no significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between special education elementary educators (K-4) and special education middle school educators (5-8).

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for perceptions of preparedness differed between special education elementary educators (K-4) and special education middle school educators (5-8). Perceptions of preparedness was the test variable and the grouping variable was the grade category of the special education teachers. The test was not significant, $t(52) = 1.191, p = .120$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The η^2 index was .027, which indicated a small effect size. Special educators in grades kindergarten through fourth grade ($M = 3.69, SD = .478$) had similar perceptions of preparedness as special educators in grades five through eight ($M = 3.87, SD = .654$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was -.492 to .126. Figure 2 displays the distributions for the two groups.

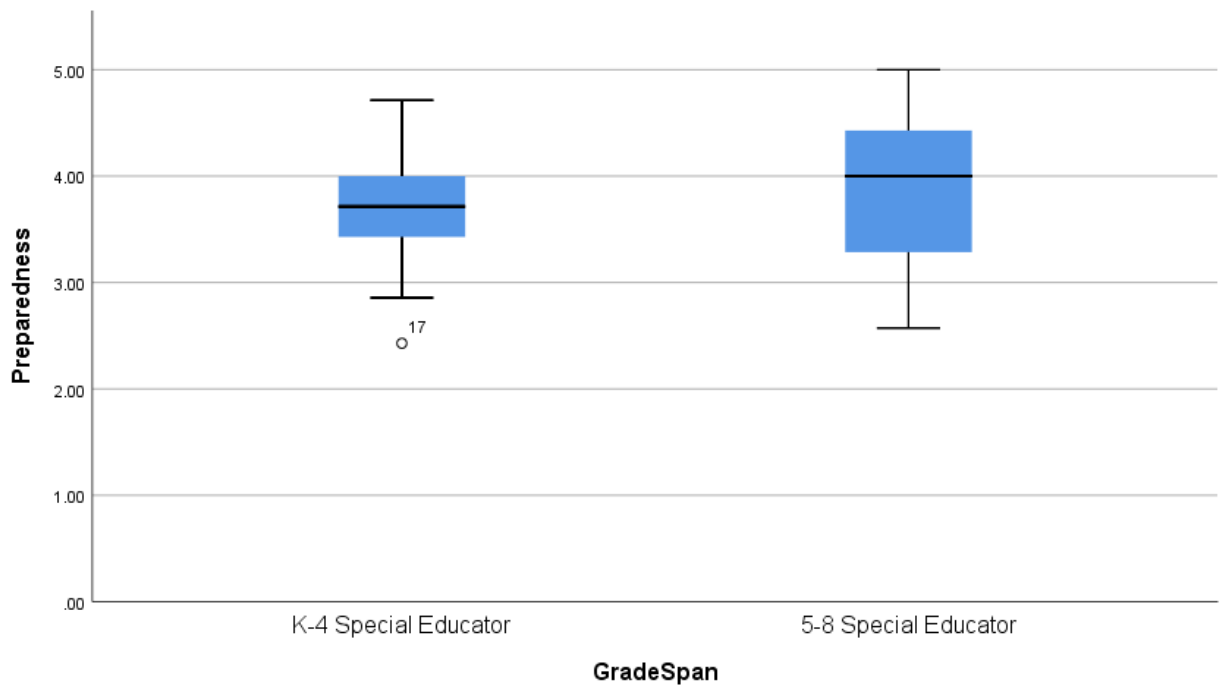


Figure 2. Distribution of Scores for Special Education Elementary Educators and Special Education Middle School Educators

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between all general education educators (K-8) and all special education educators (K-8)?

H₀3: There is no significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between all general education educators (K-8) and all special education educators (K-8).

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores for perceptions of preparedness differed between all general education educators (K-8) and all special education educators (K-8). Perceptions of preparedness

was the test variable and the grouping variable was educator category. The test was significant, $t(178) = 5.89, p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. General educators in grades kindergarten through eighth grade ($M = 3.15, SD = .747$) expressed lower perceptions of preparedness than special education teachers ($M = 3.79, SD = .548$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was $-.856$ to $-.426$. The η^2 index was $.16$, which indicated a large effect size. Results indicated that special education teachers reported significantly higher levels of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom than general education teachers. Figure 3 displays the distributions for the two groups.

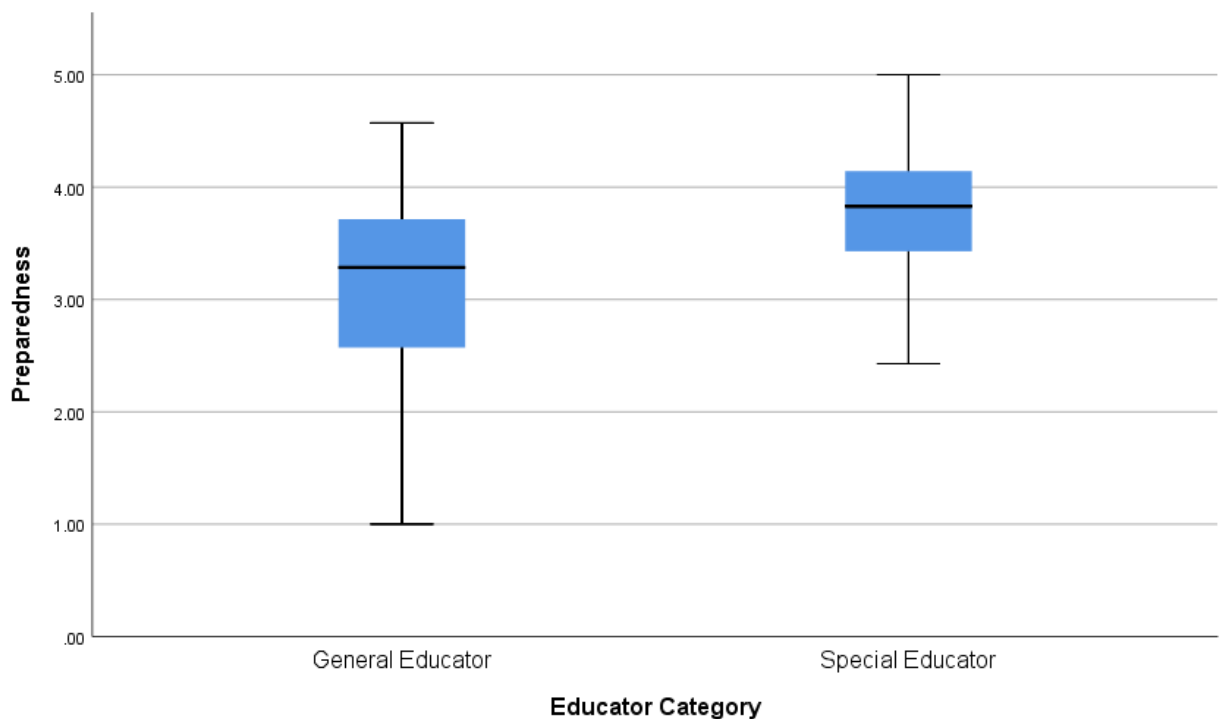


Figure 3. Distribution of Scores for K-8 General Education Teachers and K-8 Special Education Teachers

Research Question 4

Research Question 4: Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion?

H₀4: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion.

A Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion for general and special education teachers. The results of the analysis revealed a significant, positive relationship between preparedness ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .750$) and attitudes toward inclusion ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .627$). There was a statistically significant correlation [$r(179) = .517$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Results suggested that positive attitudes towards inclusion were associated with higher perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Figure 4 displays the correlation between both dimensions.

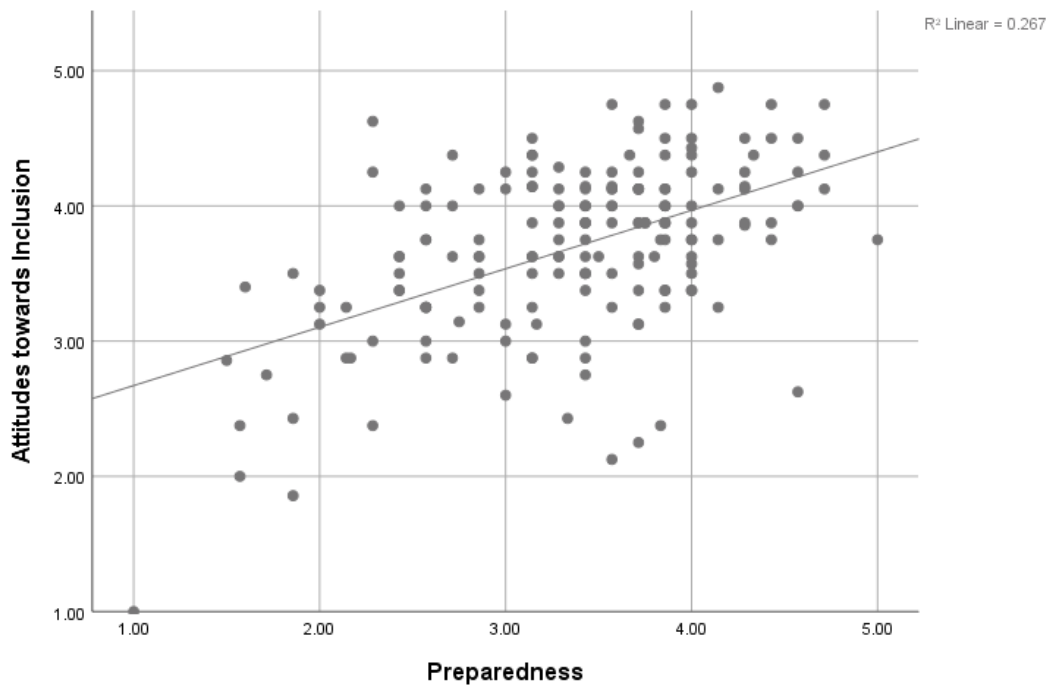


Figure 4. Pearson Correlation between Attitudes towards Inclusion Perceptions of Preparedness

Research Question 5

Research Question 5: Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support?

H₀₅: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support.

A Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between perceptions of preparedness and perceptions of administrative support for general and special education teachers. The results of the analysis revealed a significant, positive relationship between preparedness ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .750$) and perceptions of

administrative support ($M = 3.80, SD = .671$). There was a statistically significant correlation [$r(177) = .368, p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Results suggested that higher levels of administrator support were associated with higher perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Figure 5 displays the correlation between both dimensions.

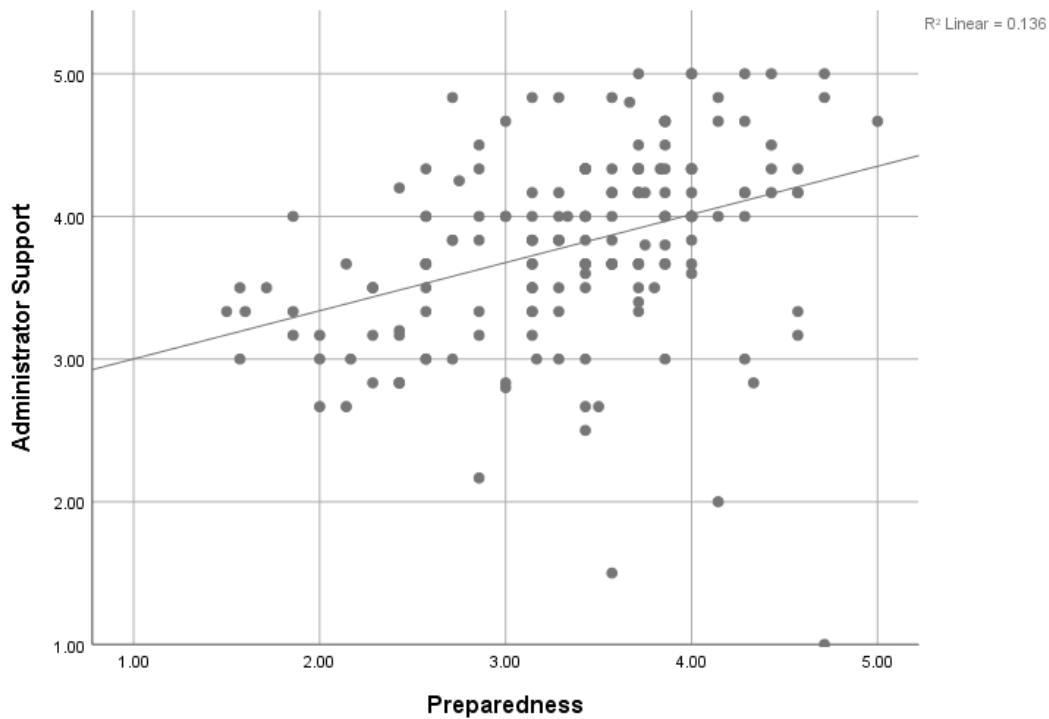


Figure 5. Pearson Correlation between Administrator Support and Perceptions of Preparedness

Research Question 6

Research Question 6: Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

H₀6: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

A Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between perceptions of preparedness and perceptions of self-efficacy for general and special education teachers. The results of the analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between preparedness ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .750$) and perceptions of self-efficacy ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .766$). There was a statistically significant correlation [$r(177) = .742$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Results suggested higher perceptions of preparedness were associated with higher perceptions of teacher self-efficacy in their ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Figure 6 displays the correlation between both dimensions.

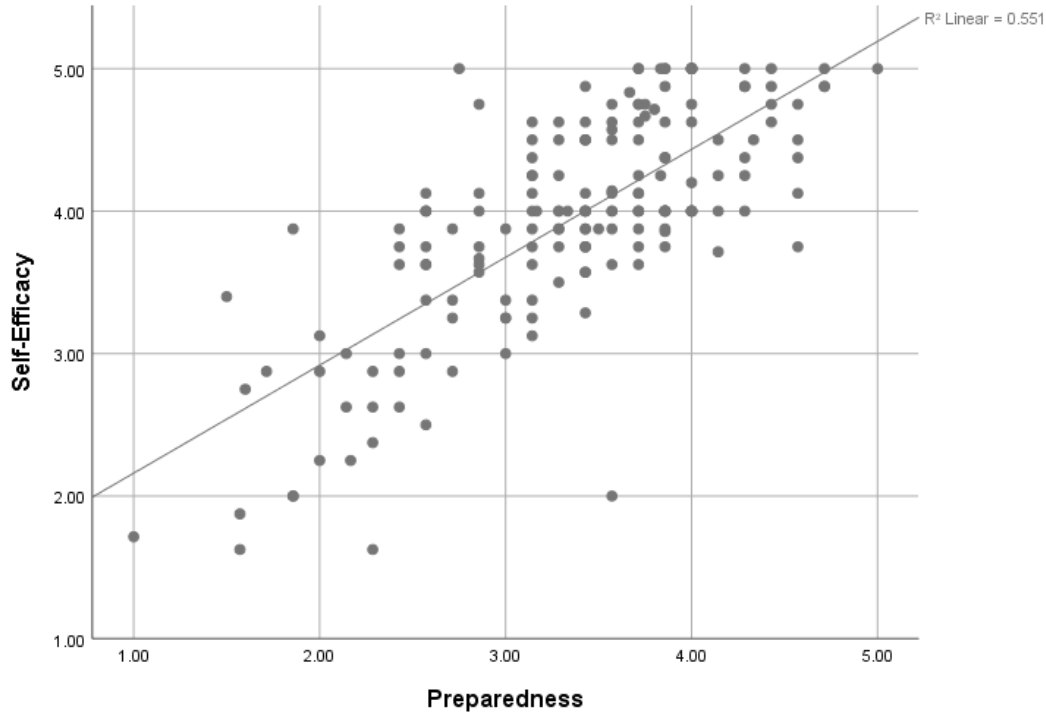


Figure 6. Pearson Correlation between Perceptions of Preparedness and Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

Research Question 7

Research Question 7: Is there a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support?

H₀₇: There is not a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support.

A Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between attitudes towards inclusion and perceptions of administrator support for general and special education teachers. The results of the analysis revealed a significant, positive relationship between attitudes towards inclusion ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .627$) and perceptions

of administrator support ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .671$). There was a statistically significant correlation [$r(177) = .293$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Results suggested that higher perceptions of administrator support were associated with positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Figure 7 displays the correlation between both dimensions.

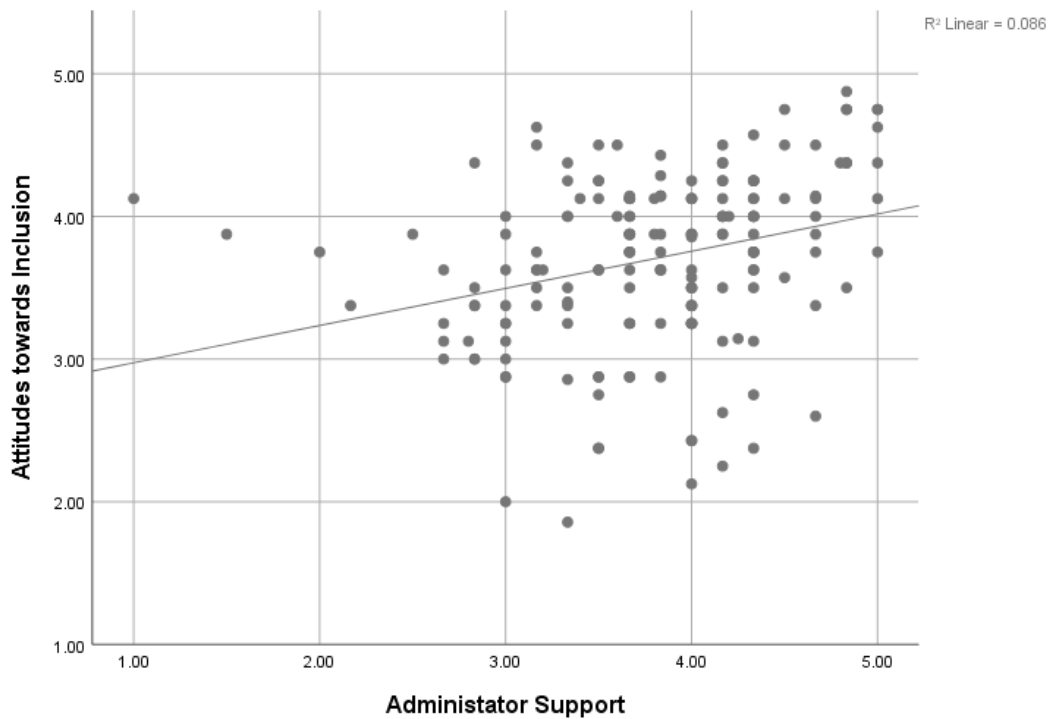


Figure 7. Pearson Correlation between Teacher Attitudes towards Inclusion and Perceptions of Administrator Support

Research Question 8

Research Question 8: Is there a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

H₀₈: There is not a significant correlation between attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

A Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between attitudes towards inclusion and perceptions of self-efficacy for general and special education teachers. The results of the analysis revealed a significant, positive relationship between attitudes towards inclusion ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .627$) and perceptions of self-efficacy ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .766$). There was a statistically significant correlation [$r(179) = .608$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Results suggested that more positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion were associated with higher perceptions of self-efficacy in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Figure 8 displays the correlation between both dimensions.

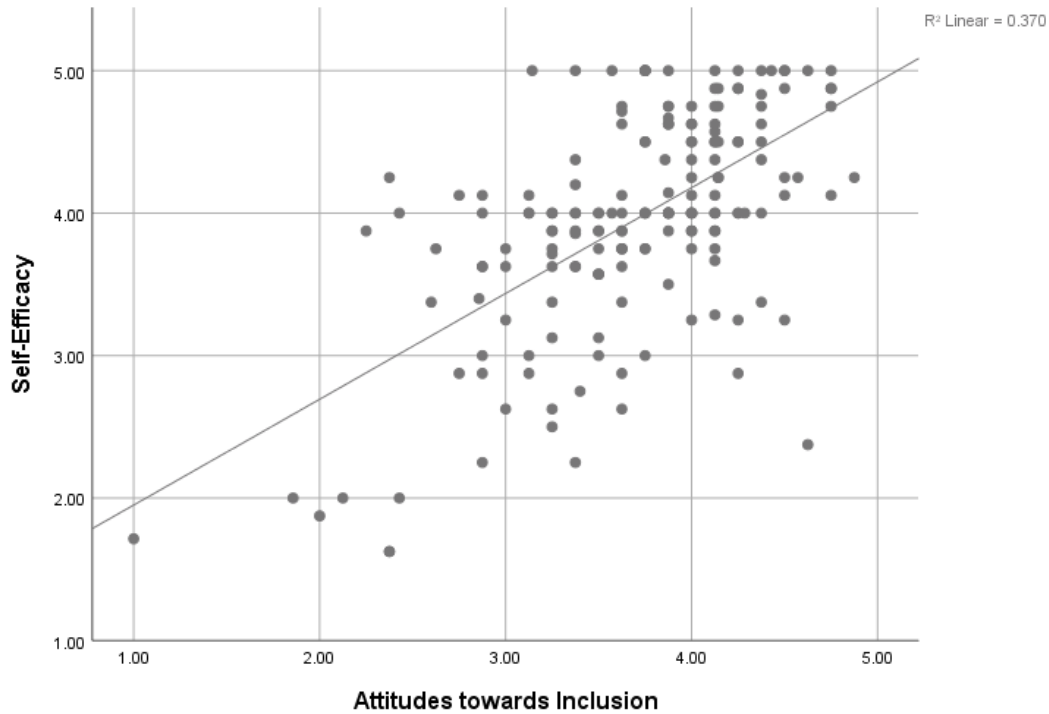


Figure 8. Pearson Correlation between Perceptions of Self-Efficacy and Attitudes Towards Inclusion

Research Question 9

Research Question 9: Is there a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy?

H₀9: There is not a significant correlation between teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

A Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to test the relationship between perceptions of administrator support and self-efficacy for general and special education teachers. The results of the analysis revealed a significant, positive relationship between perceptions of administrator support ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .671$) and perceptions of

self-efficacy ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .766$). There was a statistically significant correlation [$r(177) = .389$, $p < .001$]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Results suggested that higher levels of administrator support were associated with higher perceptions of self-efficacy in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Figure 9 displays the correlation between both dimensions.

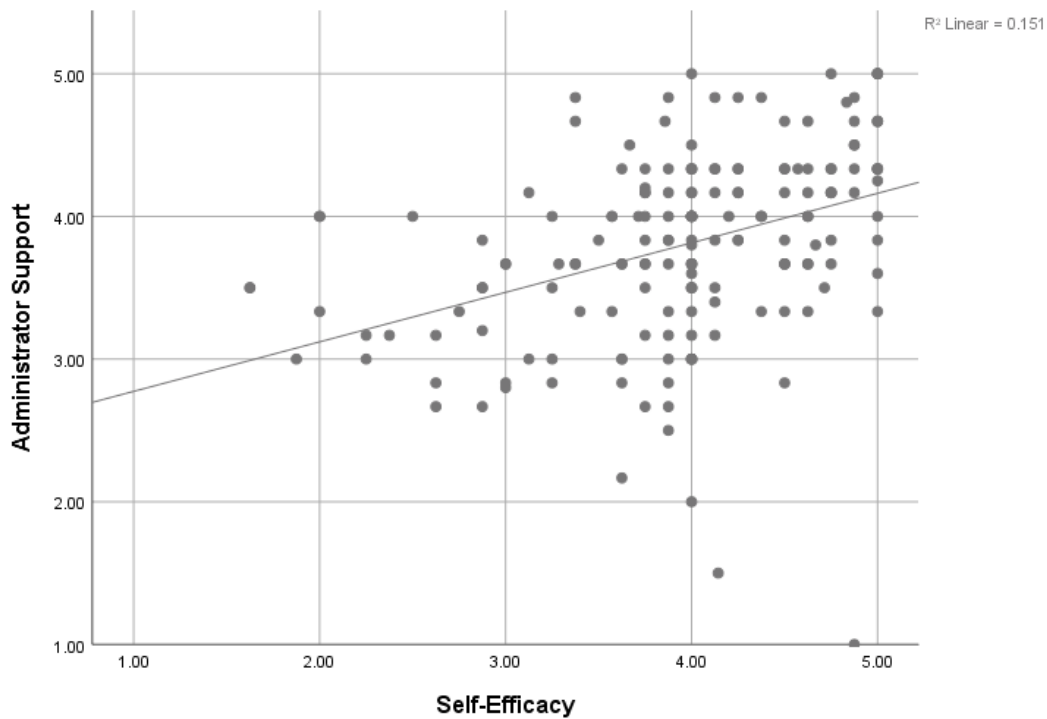


Figure 9. Pearson Correlation between Perceptions of Self-Efficacy and Administrator Support

Open Response Results

Following the completion of the Likert-type statements, respondents were asked to respond to an open-ended question. Of the 180 usable surveys submitted, 101 respondents provided a response to the following question:

What additional support(s) would help you in the inclusive classroom?

While there were variations in responses, numerous respondents indicated that inclusion would be more successful if teachers were provided more time to collaboratively plan. For example, one respondent stated that, "Collaboration time between the [general education] teacher and [special education] teacher to develop a plan to differentiate the learning of all children," was a necessary support. Another respondent described the challenges associated with inclusion: "[The] primary issue I observe is lack of time for [general education teacher] and [special education teacher] to plan together. Without a strategic plan, don't see how it's going to work."

Several respondents also referenced time in the classroom as the biggest challenged to successful inclusion. More specifically, participants were concerned about the amount of time available provide service delivery to students with disabilities. For instance, one participant said, "Schedules need to change to allow time for all students to grow in learning and possibilities such as full shared and co-teaching should be implemented to serve all students." Another individual said, "I feel the [special education] teacher is spread too thin in our school, and most likely throughout the system."

While many participants referenced a lack of time for collaborative planning and time for cotaught instruction, the majority of survey participants stressed the importance of training specifically designed to develop teacher skills in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. One respondent stated they needed "More training on how to best serve our students when the inclusion teacher leaves." Another individual said, "I would like more strategies to help students in an inclusive classroom." A similar

response included, “General education teachers ALSO receiving [professional development] on inclusion and co-teaching strategies. This will help inclusion happen more smoothly.” Other respondents stated:

“Regular classroom teachers should be including in special [education] training if they are expected to bring special [education] students up to grade level.”

“Both general education teachers and special education teachers need training on inclusion and co-teaching for either strategy to be effective. If implemented correctly all students can benefit from inclusion not just those with disabilities.”

Another respondent referenced the challenges of scheduling:

Most of what I hear general education teachers say is that they didn't have adequate classes in college to teach [special education] students. What I have found as a [special education] teacher is that the majority of students in an inclusive classroom consist of students with an IEP because their schedules are set up to have the same classes at the same time. Part of this reasoning is that there are not enough general education teachers qualified/comfortable with teaching this population. Asking general education teachers to teach students with disabilities without proper training (which is not sufficient when they are obtaining their degrees) isn't fair nor effective for the teachers or students. Students with disabilities do better in a [special education] setting with a [special education] teacher who is highly qualified in content areas.

One respondent described the need for a collaborative effort and expert teachers:

I think inclusion works best when there is team work. General educators need to work with their special education teachers in order to best benefit the

students. General educators need more training on how to modify work for students with disabilities. I find that my biggest struggle as a special educator is that general educators say they don't know what to do with the students in their classrooms that have disabilities. Even when the special educators offers to help modify lessons and work they do not accept. General educators often have no or very little expectations for my students. I think a training or [professional development] for general educators and special educators together on how to collaborate would be great.

The majority of responses to the open-ended question cited the need for collaboration, time for inclusion and professional development for educators. Additional challenges referenced included large caseloads, teachers understanding of their role in the inclusive classroom, individualizing inclusive support, and working as a team. A few respondents also expressed negative attitudes towards the practice of inclusion. In most cases, these statements referenced poor feelings towards the special education instructional support provided to the general education teacher. However, some individuals expressed attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, for instance:

“Inclusion is a disservice to the regular [education] student as well as the disabled student.”

“Students that are unable to be successful become frustrated and effort is reduced.”

“[Inclusion] is not effective when students are 3 or more grades behind. If student[s] do not see progress the inclusion is not effective.

“I believe the mindset is still to separate students with disabilities, as a community, it is time to move forward and see all children as children first, they address their disability.”

Chapter Summary

This study was conducted in Northeast Tennessee using an online survey developed to measure teacher perceptions of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Data were analyzed using a series of independent-samples *t*-test for the first three research questions. According to the 180 usable responses, there was no significant difference for Research Questions 1 and 2. Conversely, Research Question 3 indicated that based on the responses provided there was a significant difference in perceived levels of preparedness between general education teachers and special education teachers in grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlations for Research Questions 4 through 9. Research Questions 4 through 9 all showed significant, positive correlations between teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion; teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of administrative support; teacher perceptions of preparedness and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of administrative support; attitudes towards inclusion and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy; and teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether educators were prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Conducted in Northeast Tennessee, an online survey was used to collect responses from six school districts comprised of four county districts and two city districts. Respondents were then asked to rate a series of items focused on four dimensions regarding perceptions of preparedness, attitudes towards inclusion, perceptions of self-efficacy and perceptions of administrative support. Of the responses provided, 180 were considered usable responses which informed the results of this study.

A series of independent-samples *t*-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general education teachers and special education teachers and to determine whether there was a significant difference between grade bands including kindergarten through fourth grade and fifth through eighth grade. Pearson Correlations were used to determine whether there were significant relationships between dimensions including teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion; teacher preparedness and perceptions of self-efficacy; preparedness and perceptions of administrative support; attitudes towards inclusion and perceived administrative support; attitudes and perceptions of self-efficacy; and teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

Conclusions and Discussions

Research Questions 1-3

Based on the responses provided, there was a significant difference in perceived levels of preparedness between general education teachers and special education teachers. These results suggested that general education teachers perceived they were less prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom than special education teachers. The disparity in levels of preparedness between general and special educators supported previous research which established that the knowledge gap of general educators has been one of the most significant barriers to inclusion (Hines, 2001; Jobling & Moni, 2004; Shady et al., 2013). Results of this study also supported previous research which suggested that training and preparation have not adequately equipped general education teachers for providing instruction to students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom (Abery et al., 2017; Allday et al., 2013; Cochran, 1998; Cook et al., 2007; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Shepard et al., 2016; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009).

Previous studies (e.g. Bender et al., 2008; Hines, 2001; Mackey, 2014) documented that perceptions of unpreparedness were particularly strong at the middle school level. However, according to the results of this study, there was not a significant difference in the perceptions of preparedness between elementary general educators and general educators at the middle school level. Similar results were also revealed for special education teacher participants. There was not a significant difference in levels

of preparedness between elementary special educators and middle school special educators.

Research Questions 4-9

Similar to previous studies (e.g. Praisner, 2003; Ryan & Gottfried, 2012), responses from survey participants revealed a significant, positive correlation between educator preparedness and perceived levels of support from administrators. Results also revealed that administrator support had a significant, positive relationship to teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Study results also determined that higher levels of administrator support were associated with higher levels of self-efficacy. These results are comparable to previous research which established that educators who reported a lack of administrative support also had poorer perceptions of self-efficacy (Berry, 2012; Buell et al., 1999) and attitudes towards inclusion (Ryan & Gottfried, 2012).

In addition, perceived levels of preparedness had a positive, significant relationship with levels of self-efficacy. These findings are similar to previous research. For example, Mackey (2014) determined that teacher preparation programs had not adequately trained teachers for the inclusive setting, negatively affecting feelings of self-efficacy. Buell et al. (1999) also confirmed that teacher efficacy as related to inclusion was created through teacher training and positive experiences with students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Furthermore, results from this study demonstrated a significant, positive relationship between educator attitudes towards inclusion and self-efficacy in educating students with disabilities. Researchers also observed that negative attitudes towards

inclusion adversely impacted instructional practices (Cook et al., 2007; Ryan & Gottfried, 2012; Shady et al., 2013). Previous research also linked negative attitudes with lower levels of teacher reported self-efficacy (Buell et al., 1999).

Survey results exhibited a significant, positive correlation between educator perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion. These results were similar to previous research which stated that increased levels of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities were associated with positive attitudes towards the practice of inclusion (Bender et al., 2008; De Boer et al., 2011; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2017). In particular, Burstein et al. (2004) found that general education teachers reported their attitudes towards inclusion were heavily influenced by their preparation, including previous experiences and training.

Open Response

In the open response portion of the survey, numerous respondents reported that inclusion would be more successful if teachers were provided more time. General and special education teachers stated that they need more time to collaboratively plan together. One individual said that inclusion was not feasible without time for collaboration. Time was also an area of concern for service delivery with multiple respondents describing special education inclusion services as being too brief to have meaningful benefit.

The most common area of concern was a lack of training specifically designed to develop teacher skills in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Individuals described a lack of clear understanding regarding the roles and responsibilities of both

general and special education teachers. General education teachers express concern that their coursework had not prepared them for working with struggling learners. Special education teachers stated that they were unsure of how to make the best use of their time in the inclusive setting.

A few respondents expressed attitudes towards the practice of inclusion. In most cases, these statements referenced poor feelings towards the special education instructional support provided to the general education teacher. More specifically, these general education teachers described challenges they had experienced with the special education teacher or instructional assistant. However, some individuals expressed negative attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, stating that students with disabilities should be educated in a separate location.

Implications for Practice

The following are implications for ensuring effective inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom:

1. The strategic plan of the schools and districts must be intentional and include specific goals to lessen the implementation gap of inclusive practices (Stone et al., 2012). Progress towards improving inclusive practices must be measurable and include a team of educators and leaders. Teams should meet throughout the school year to reflect upon positive practices, the use of resources, and identify barriers that impede effective inclusion of students with disabilities.

2. Accepting responsibility for inclusive practices and students with disabilities is key to implementation; only through a shared responsibility and collective ownership can inclusion succeed. Districts must share the in the responsibility, intentionally moving away from silos and towards a collaborative culture that works together to grow staff and students. Struggling students and students with disabilities are the responsibility of us all; not just the special education department (Bettini et al., 2017; Sullivan & Castro-Villerreal, 2013).
3. Universities and colleges have an obligation update coursework in educator preparation programs. Programs must reflect the needs of today's classrooms and implement innovative practices (Allday et al., 2013; Bennett & Fisch, 2013; Brownell et al., 2010; Gehrke et al., 2014; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; McHatton & Parker, 2013; Smith et al., 2010). Teacher preparation programs require improved practices to ensure that both general education and special education teachers participate in learning experiences that will prepare them to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.
 - a. To improve teacher preparation, universities must be in constant dialogue with local school districts to ensure that student teachers are accessing meaningful knowledge and experiences (Childre, 2014).
 - b. Special education teachers must have extensive knowledge in content areas as well as an acute understanding of how to address specific problems that students may experience. Special educators must be

masters at providing the most intense intervention to address specific deficit areas. In essence, special education teachers must possess knowledge that surpasses general educators including an implicit understanding of how each child's disability affects him/her in the classroom (Brownell et al., 2010). To acquire such knowledge, special educators must be trained in both general and special education (Brownell et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Being an expert in both areas will foster an active role in the inclusive setting (Hines, 2001).

- c. General education teachers must be provided with training in special education in order to increase levels of preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Feng & Sass, 2013). Student teachers must be provided robust learning experiences and be committed to instructing students of varying backgrounds and abilities. An integrated program of study which includes both general and special education coursework would help to provide general educators the knowledge required for today's classrooms (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010; Zion & Sobel, 2014).
- d. Administrators must also be prepared to lead in inclusive schools. The principal's role is monumental in ensuring the success or failure of the inclusive learning environment (Pazey & Cole, 2013; Praisner, 2003). Principals must have an understanding of special education law and pedagogy in order to ensure effective use of inclusive practices.

4. To improve pedagogy of current teachers and staff, it is imperative that districts and schools alter the typical approach to professional development.
 - a. Districts and schools must support teachers as they make necessary modifications and accommodations. Consistent training must be provided for all teachers in special education related topics, disability awareness, methodology and training in collaborative teaching practices (Burstein et al., 2004; Pivik et al., 2002).
 - b. In addition, districts must provide teachers with opportunities to observe model inclusive classrooms. Teachers cannot simply be placed in the same space and expected to collaboratively teach; they must be coached (Shady et al., 2013). Both special and general educators require clarity about the intricacies of the inclusive environment including collaborative teaching roles and responsibilities.
 - c. Ongoing training in positive behavior intervention support is necessary to ensuring that all staff are equipped for any challenges that may arise (Buell et al., 1999). Specifically general education teachers and administrators need to expand their knowledge in how to work with students exhibiting challenging behaviors. To help provide additional support, a Positive Behavior Intervention Support Team must be established. Skilled in conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and creating Behavior Intervention Plans, members of the team are available to provide necessary support to both students and staff.

- d. Districts must also provide principals with opportunities to learn about special education related topics. Targeted training must regularly be provided to principals, specifically in effective pedagogy, inclusive practices and special education law. Ongoing inservice will also help to ensure positive administrator attitudes towards inclusion (Praisner, 2003).
5. Schedules must be closely reviewed to ensure that students and staff are able to capitalize all available time.
- a. Time must be allotted for collaborative planning between general and special education teachers. For effective coteaching to occur, educators must be provided time to collaboratively discuss plans for instruction, differentiation as well as student specific needs including necessary accommodations and modifications (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Rimpola, 2014; Solis et al., 2012).
 - b. Administrators must also be cognizant of the amount of time necessary for an effective special education service delivery model. Many times administrators have placed too many tasks upon their special education teachers resulting in diminished services and student learning (Nichols et al., 2008).
6. Administrative support at all levels is necessary for the development of an inclusive, culture of collaboration.
- a. Principals have a significant influence on the attitudes and practices of teachers and staff. As leaders of their buildings, they have obligation

to model positive attitudes towards inclusion and stress the value of effective inclusive practices (Monsen et al., 2014; Pivik et al., 2002).

The principal must foster positive attitudes through addressing the learning needs of each teacher (Ryan & Gottfried, 2012) and ensure that teachers have access to meaningful professional development targeted towards providing instruction for students with disabilities.

- b. Supervisors of special education programs must be able to establish the vision and mission of special education programs (Bettini et al., 2017; Voltz & Collins, 2010). Supervisors must possess the knowledge to cultivate special education teachers and staff as well as other district and school level administrators. In addition, supervisors of special education must have an active involvement with special education teachers, continue to support a clear mission and provide ongoing professional development.

- 7. Each district and school must have a mission and vision that is focused on educating *all* students (Pivik et al., 2002).

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results from the current study and the literature reviewed, considerable research is still needed to provide more additional implications for improving inclusive practices. The following recommendations for future research include:

1. A qualitative study should be conducted in order to determine perceptions of general and special education teacher preparedness to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Using interviews would provide additional information and specific explanations about the benefits and challenges of inclusion.
2. While results were obtained from six districts in Northeast Tennessee, only 180 responses were considered usable for the purpose of this study. In order to add reliability, this study should be duplicated with a larger sample.
3. Further analysis should be conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in attitudes between general education teachers and special education teachers. Researchers (e.g. Burstein et al., 2004; Damore & Murray, 2009) and the results of this study have indicated that special education teachers possess more positive attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the general education curriculum.
4. In order to help eliminate barriers to inclusion, future research needs to be conducted to study the barriers to inclusion, including behaviors, specific disability types, fiscal challenges, attrition.
5. This study included general and special educators in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Future studies should be conducted at both the high school level and preschool level to determine levels of preparedness and detect disparities in attitudes, administrator support and self-efficacy.
6. Future studies need to be conducted with principals to determine principals' perception of preparedness to lead inclusive schools.

7. Teacher attrition has been linked to some of the dimensions encompassed in this study, including a lack of teacher preparation, low levels of self-efficacy and administrative support (Conley & You, 2017). Future studies should include further analysis of characteristics attributed to teacher attrition.
8. Future studies need to include additional demographic information, such as degrees earned and years of experience. Additional demographic information could be used to test for significant differences or correlations among variables and effective inclusion practices.
9. Researchers need to determine whether characteristics of effective inclusion have a significant, positive relationship to achievement for students with disabilities and students without disabilities.
10. This study needs to be conducted in another geographic location to determine whether results retrieved were isolated to the six districts surveyed in Northeast Tennessee.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived levels of preparedness of general education teachers and special education teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Conducted in Northeast Tennessee, responses were collected from six school districts using an online survey. Responses included 120 general education teachers and 60 special education teachers in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. The findings from this study indicated that there was a significant difference in perceptions of preparedness between general

education teachers and special education teachers. An analysis of data also revealed a significant, positive correlation between dimensions including teacher perceptions of preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion; teacher preparedness and perceptions of self-efficacy; preparedness and perceptions of administrative support; attitudes towards inclusion and perceived administrative support; attitudes and perceptions of self-efficacy; and teacher perceptions of administrative support and teacher perceptions of self-efficacy.

Results of this study and previous research provided several implications including: the need to radically alter teacher preparation programs; improve district and school level professional development; establish shared ownership of *all* student learning; capitalize on available instructional time; and ensure administrators at all levels provide adequate support. Future research was recommended in order to gain further insight to the challenges associated with providing inclusive supports for students with disabilities.

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APPENDIX

Inclusion: Educator Preparedness Survey

Dear Participant:

My name is Allecia Frizzell and I am a student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. In order to finish my studies, I need to complete a research project. The name of my research study is The Inclusive Classroom: Perceptions of General and Special Educators' Preparedness to Meet the Needs of Students with Disabilities.

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of preparedness of K-8 special and general education teachers in meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. I would like to give a brief survey to general education teachers and special education teachers using Googleforms. It should only take 5-10 minutes to finish. You will be asked questions about inclusion. There are no foreseen risks for participating in this study. A benefit of this study is having the opportunity to express yourself about inclusion. This study may benefit the field of education by contributing to the body of knowledge related to teacher preparation.

Your confidentiality will be protected as best we can. Since we are using technology no guarantees can be made about the interception of data sent over the Internet by any third parties, just like with emails. We will make every effort to make sure that your name is not linked with your answers. Googleforms has SSL encryption software and no email addresses will be collected by the researcher. Although your rights and privacy will be protected, the East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) (for non-medical research) and people working on this research can view the study records.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to take part in this study. You can quit at any time. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer or you can exit the online survey form if you want to stop completely. If you quit or decide not to take part, the benefits that you would otherwise get will not be changed.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me, Allecia Frizzell, at (423) 483-4129. I am working on this project with my dissertation chair, Dr. Virginia Foley. You may reach her at (423) 439-1000. Also, you may call the chairperson of the IRB at ETSU at (423) 439-6054 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone who is not with the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may call an IRB Coordinator at (423) 439-6055 or (423) 439-6002.

Sincerely,
Allecia A. Frizzell

Clicking the AGREE button below indicates

- I have read the above information
- I agree to volunteer
- I am at least 18 years old

* Required

1. Do you agree? * Mark only one oval.

Yes

Introduction

Please respond to each of the following statements. For the purposes of this survey, inclusion is defined as a collaborative environment in which students with disabilities are educated alongside typical peers in the general education classroom.

2. What is your current position?

Mark only one oval.

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Administrator
- Other: _____

3. What grade level(s) do you teach?

Mark only one oval.

- K-4
- 5-8
- Other: _____

Administrator Support

Section 1 of 5

4. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The principal(s) support collaborative planning and teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal(s) support my role in the inclusive classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My principal(s) provide sufficient time to prepare for instructing students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My principal(s) helps me improve my skills in educating students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel as though I need additional support from principal(s) in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My principal(s) feel that students with disabilities should be included in the general education setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Self-Efficacy

Section 2 of 5

6. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I effectively instruct students with disabilities in the general education classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am comfortable setting learning expectations for students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am comfortable teaching students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have experienced success in educating students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I hold high expectations for students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My skills allow me to positively affect students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am confident in my ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident in my implementation of inclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Attitudes towards Inclusion

Section 3 of 5

8. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
All students should be included in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible, regardless of disability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students with disabilities should receive core instruction in the special education classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educating students with disabilities is a shared responsibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General education teachers should not be responsible for educating students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion benefits typical developing students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion positively impacts students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers in my building do not like having students with disabilities in their classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If students with disabilities cannot be successful with grade level content then they should not participate in the general education classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Preparedness

Section 4 of 5

10. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel frustrated when working with students with disabilities because I don't know what to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know my role in the inclusive learning environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion is difficult to implement because I have not been adequately trained.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My coursework prepared me for working with students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Check all that apply.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree/Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have sufficient knowledge of learning strategies that benefit students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I require more training in coteaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development has prepared me for the inclusive classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Conclusion

Section 5 of 5

12. What additional support(s) would help you in the inclusive environment?

VITA

ALLECIA A. FRIZZELL

Education

Doctor of Education – Educational Leadership
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
May 2018

Master of Arts in Education – Literacy, ESOL Endorsed
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida
December 2003

Bachelor of Arts in Education – Elementary Education
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida
December 2002

Professional Experience

Supervisor of Special Education
Washington County Schools, Jonesborough, Tennessee
December 2016 – Present

Special Education Data and Curriculum Coordinator
Washington County Schools, Jonesborough, Tennessee
June 2013 – December 2016

Special Education Teacher
Washington County Schools, Jonesborough, Tennessee
January 2013 – June 2013

Special Education Teacher
Kingsport City Schools, Kingsport, Tennessee
July 2008 – January 2013

General Education Teacher
Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, Florida
January 2004 – July 2005 / July 2006 – July 2008