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**PREPARING FOR INCLUSION: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE REGULAR EDUCATOR'S READINESS
TO TEACH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

by
Tinamarie Nicolo

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
(May 16, 1997)

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved

5/14/97

ABSTRACT

Tinamarie Nicolo

PREPARING FOR INCLUSION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE REGULAR EDUCATOR'S READINESS TO TEACH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

May 1997

Dr. J. Kuder, adviser
Master of Arts Degree, Special Education

This study sought to examine the readiness of regular educators to accommodate students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Determining the quality and effectiveness of school district professional development/in-service programs intended to train regular educators for the challenges of an inclusive classroom was of particular interest. Prior research asserts that the success of inclusion is dependent upon the advanced planning of district personnel and administrators. Researchers assert that in order for the regular education environment to effectively support students with disabilities, teachers must receive effective in-service training and ongoing technical assistance. This study hypothesized that regular classroom teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach students with special needs because they often lack comprehensive and organized professional development/in-service training.

Through a survey disseminated randomly to elementary school teachers in Southern New Jersey, five topics of specific interest were explored. These included: the attitudes of regular educators toward inclusion, instructional and behavioral accommodations currently employed by regular educators, teacher preferences

regarding professional development, assessment of current inservice programs for inclusion, and specific personal data. Upon careful analysis, the data demonstrated that despite the use of a variety of teaching strategies, regular educators do not feel sufficiently trained to teach students with disabilities. The professional development programs offered by districts generally lack the structure, content, and characteristics to effectively meet the needs of teachers preparing for inclusion.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Tinamarie Nicolo

**PREPARING FOR INCLUSION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE REGULAR EDUCATOR'S
READINESS TO TEACH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

May, 1997

Dr. J. Kuder, Adviser

Master of Arts, Special Education

This research study focuses on examining the readiness of regular educators for inclusion and the quality of professional development preparation provided by their employing school district. Through a survey assessment of needs, preferences, and professional development opportunities, regular educators participating in the study were found to be inadequately prepared for the complex challenges of an inclusive classroom. In general, professional development offerings did not possess the attributes, as outlined by prior research, inherent in comprehensively planned training for inclusion.

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Chapter 1

Abounding with enthusiasm and four years of “teacher training”, I felt prepared for the first day of my student teaching assignment. I greeted my first class, eleventh grade English, with a firm, yet positive “hello” only to find the troubled faces of nine boys and one girl unchanged, uninterested and unwilling. Attempting to implement the “flawless” lesson plan I had devised proved futile as this class had no intention of “working” today. I learned from their conversations with each other that they had more serious problems to confront, such as drug addiction, parental divorce, and learning disabilities. I knew that I must have the wrong class. Where were the “normal” students that I was trained to teach in my regular English Education program? I approached my cooperating teacher with the confusion and despair of an overwhelmed undergraduate, only to find that my class of ten troubled youths was not uncommon. She went on to describe the nature of the classifications my students had which ranged from emotionally disturbed to attention deficit disorder. These were terms which were unfamiliar to me. Suddenly I felt stripped of my professional training. I was unaware of where to begin with these students who were unresponsive to the traditional teaching methods that I had been trained to employ. The sense of authority I worked so hard to muster

was threatened because of my ignorance of a very real aspect of the regular education environment -- inclusion. I discovered through this experience that my frustration was shared by even the veteran classroom teachers who had years of experience but were unequipped for the exceptional students who increasingly filtered into their classrooms. The overall advice I received from my future colleagues was to "just get through it". For lack of an alternative, I heeded their counsel and relied on my instincts for strategies that might help the many "included" students in the classes I was assigned to teach. I was uncomfortable with the quality of my teaching, however. My lessons lacked cohesiveness because the variety of skill levels prevented me from developing a unified set of objectives. I felt that I was haphazardly implementing "quickie" activities which occupied them, but did nothing to meet their very complicated learning needs. It seemed that my lack of confidence in teaching students with disabilities engendered negative feelings towards the administrative personnel who put them in the mainstream. As a result, the teachers I came into contact with were frustrated and unequipped to make classroom adaptations in order to provide for the individual and exceptional needs of students they did not understand.

Since the advent of the Regular Education Initiative in 1986, which calls for the free, appropriate, public education of students with learning disabilities in the regular education environment, districts have gradually adjusted the composition of the typical classroom. Any person who enters a classroom of their neighborhood school in 1997 is sure to see a wheelchair bound child sitting alongside a "typical" child or a twelve year old educable mentally retarded student playing baseball with the rest of his class. There is no doubt that this trend is a positive change for all students. The classroom is able to extend its mission of reflecting the reality of the world at large and students

are learning to accept and appreciate differences.

However, exceptional students who now hold an equal place in the regular class still have individual needs. In order for these children to have an appropriate education, they must be taught with alternative strategies and behavior management systems which correspond to their IEP goals and classification. A shift in the instructional needs as well as the social needs of the regular education class has occurred. School districts need to prepare their regular education teachers for this change as well. They must equip their teachers with positive approaches and the latest techniques for confronting the complicated challenges resulting from inclusion. Some of the important needs of regular education teachers include behavior management strategies for students with disabilities, alternative teaching techniques, time for collaboration with special education teachers, and awareness of the classification process. Through professional development and inservice programs, administrators can assist and prepare their teachers for the overwhelming changes occurring in the typical classroom.

My research project will investigate whether district professional development programs are consistent with the needs of regular educators in their teaching of students with disabilities. Regular education teachers need the support of an administration who recognizes the issues and is prepared to provide professional development and inservice opportunities that properly address them. Through professional development which is ongoing, comprehensive, and consistent with the needs of regular educator's, teachers will feel qualified to effectively teach disabled children in the mainstream. These programs must be carefully designed to address the specific inclusion plan of the school. Instituting the change to an inclusive system requires the

cooperation and support of the entire staff. All personnel must be made aware of the many sensitive issues involved as well as the school's policies for handling them. The entire system of special education including classifications, IEP's, legal rights and responsibilities, medical issues, and available resources must be clearly communicated. This would provide a base for the more practical needs of teachers such as instructional strategies, classroom modifications, and behavior management techniques. These tools enable the classroom teacher to provide for the unique needs of students with disabilities. When difficulties arise, teachers may confidently retain control by drawing from useful strategies grounded in the theoretical principles of special education professionals.

Collaborative decision making, sharing resources, and co-teaching are also aspects of special education that need to be effectively explained to regular educators. Professional development must work to change the "single authority figure" mind set and promote a teaching community. The skills necessary for managing a co-teaching environment and working with other professionals are important for a smooth transition to inclusion. Classroom teachers should learn to look to aids, therapists, psychologists, social workers, and learning consultants as resources.

My research will demonstrate that professional development and inservice programs fail to sufficiently prepare regular educators for the inclusive setting. Instead, teachers are often left to fend for themselves because of poor administrative planning, budget problems, or a host of other issues affecting school districts. For the purpose of this research project "professional development" will be defined as any program or activity provided free of charge to teachers which is designed to enhance their professional knowledge and

improve their teaching performance. These programs will include teacher inservice days, conferences, workshops, consulting services, and classes attended by the teachers and sponsored by the school district.

Since the advent of the Regular Education Initiative, there has been much complication with the varied definitions of inclusion within the educational community. In truly inclusive programs, the support services required by the student are brought into the regular classroom. The child does not leave the regular class for supplemental instruction. Mainstreaming generally refers to those students who are taken out of their regular classes for special instruction. These students are placed in the regular class for some subjects with no support services. For the purpose of this study, we will consider teachers who instruct both mainstreamed and included students since the teacher remains responsible for their instruction in the regular class.

The alternative instructional methods and behavior management techniques that teachers may gain through professional development refer to innovative and diverse methodology that have been proven by education specialists and researchers to be effective in teaching students with exceptional needs. These strategies are designed for non-traditional learners who require instruction that piques the individual modes through which they learn.

I have identified three areas that need to be examined in order to complete a comprehensive study. Of most importance are the regular education teachers who instruct students with exceptional needs. I will assess how these teachers define their needs and which issues they feel should be addressed and confronted through professional development programs. I will also determine how effective regular education teachers view their district's current professional development programs and if they have received adequate

preparation for the challenges of an inclusion classroom.

I will also concentrate on the components of professional development programs that are currently employed by school districts. Through the comparison of characteristics including design, style, and time offered, I will evaluate their consistency with the needs of teachers.

Maintaining consideration for the ultimate goal is important as well. Inservice programs do not represent an excuse for enjoying a day away from the classroom. Staff development should seek to improve teaching effectiveness by introducing alternatives and encouraging reflection. This serves an even greater purpose now as the temper of the classroom rapidly changes. Inclusion demands that teachers be willing to use all resources, energy, and imagination. This requires a feeling of confidence and professional competency stemming from a supportive administration.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the percentage of all students with disabilities who were receiving educational services in regular classrooms during the 1992-93 school year was 39.81% as compared to 28.88% in the 1987-88 school year. Many factors contribute to this continuing commitment toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. The social and philosophical benefits to including all children in the regular classroom are without question. Districts will also experience less complication and decreased spending in regards to out-of-district and private school placement .

It is important for students and teachers to accept diversity and differences in the classroom as it is a mirror to the world outside. It is equally important, however, to consider the adjustments that are necessary to provide exceptional students with an equal education that is appropriate. The teachers cannot be forgotten. They are the ones in the trenches who battle to do what is

right by their students and to work with their individual needs. They need to be properly armed with a positive mind set, the appropriate professional methodology and the support of the administrative staff and colleagues in order to tackle the challenges of the modern regular classroom.

Chapter 2

Increasingly, classroom teachers are expected to confront changes in educational policy, procedures, curriculum and student population while maintaining quality of instruction and the integrity of the profession. The success of these various changes is dependent upon the quality of teacher preparation made available by the district. This preparation is most commonly known as professional development or teacher inservice. Unfortunately, this crucial step in the change process is often limited to what Gary Sykes (1996) describes as a “one-shot workshop...shorthand for superficial, faddish, inservice education that supports a mini - industry of consultants without having much effect on what goes on in schools and classrooms.” As a result, classroom teachers are left inadequately prepared to effectively balance structural changes with a productive and working classroom.

When attempting to tackle the frequent problems and questions inherent in the ever-changing classroom, Sykes recommends looking to colleagues and peers for support and ideas. He asserts the importance of the teacher’s ability to balance experience with reflection to improve their instructional skills. However valuable these tips are, Sykes admits that teachers often demand concrete methods, strategies, and techniques that they may use and derive

positive results. "There appears to be a sound base of firm knowledge and skill with regard to teaching that may be conveyed in a straightforward training mode. The skills may be difficult to master and to implement without mishap, but little doubt exists about their worth, relevance, or practicality."

While scrutinizing the effectiveness of a professional development program in meeting the needs of teachers, it is important to evaluate specific criteria for success. Cuban (1995) identifies four criteria, derived from research and policy perspectives, that a quality program should have. The first characteristic he identifies is effectiveness or the degree to which the goals or outcomes are achieved. The second factor is involved with determining whether "changes mirror what the reformers intended" or the program's fidelity. Cuban also stresses the program's ability to maintain effectiveness over time and its adaptability to the "unique nature of the school."

The small, yet comprehensive, body of research that explores professional development for teachers in inclusive classrooms can be placed in two distinct categories: what is needed vs. what is really taking place. My research will focus on how the two are rarely in accordance with one another and how, ultimately, the integrity and goals of inclusion are at risk. Dozens of researchers agree that including students with disabilities into the regular class is beneficial for several reasons. The classified child is afforded the opportunity to interact with his or her peers in a social environment. The class becomes reflective of the "real" world in which differences should be accepted and appreciated. Academically, the child is surrounded by peers who may serve as models and tutors. The inclusive classroom is a nurturing environment, but proponents of it stress the explicit variables necessary for its success. They assert that inclusion is a highly specialized philosophy which requires the

restructuring of the learning environment. Included in this plan are all those involved in the child's education including administrators, teachers, other students in the class, and the parents. They are needed to make the inclusive system successful (Roach 1995).

Virginia Roach (1995), discusses the many factors that contribute to the effective implementation of inclusion. She calls for a unitary approach to inclusion and stresses the importance of supportive relationships between administrators, classroom teachers, and special education personnel. She proposes district-wide changes in curriculum, transportation, instruction, and all educational structures in order for inclusion to be successful.

Roach asserts that educating district personnel and parents through organized training programs is an important initial step in planning for inclusion. This process, however, is often overlooked as Roach discusses the unacknowledged needs of the regular classroom teacher. Students with disabilities require specialized learning and behavioral accommodations in order for them to occupy an equal place in the classroom. Roach explains the important job administrators have in providing professional training that meets teacher's specific needs.

In her discussion, Roach presents characteristics that make teacher training sessions most helpful and effective. She maintains that teachers have reported the effectiveness of opportunities to ask questions about specific students, strategies, and behavior modification techniques. She says that these sessions need to address the doubts teachers have in their professional capabilities when students with disabilities are placed in their classrooms. Hands-on strategies and specific techniques are most useful when introduced once exceptional students are in their classroom. The regular education

teachers are able to implement, evaluate, and discuss the various strategies they learn. Roach outlines four variables that are required for effective teacher training in preparation for inclusion. The first component involves site visits. Roach sees the importance of providing teachers with a "frame of reference" of what inclusion classes look like. This could be shown through videotapes or observations of special education students in self-contained classes prior to inclusion.

Roach identifies another important element in an effective training program which she entitles "situation-specific problem-solving sessions". She explains the importance of all teachers working together in these sessions to come up with solutions and identify strategies. The administrative staff needs to structure teacher schedules so that opportunities for teachers to meet are frequent.

A third element which Roach examines in her article involves training sessions which explore specific "curricular adaptations and modifications for diverse learners". Roach maintains that these sessions should center on specific techniques such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, etc.

The final element in Roach's training plan is the least emphasized. She offers suggestions for exploratory training sessions which confront the process of "change" while presenting strategies to cope with the accompanying stress and anxieties.

Virginia Roach's discussion on inclusion emphasizes how the its success is dependent on the advanced planning of district personnel and administrators. Her beliefs support a collaborative relationship between all involved in order for the process to be beneficial. Proper and well-organized professional development training is crucial.

It is understood that teacher training is an important element in the process of inclusion. The question arises, however, of what specific techniques, strategies, and alternatives teachers actually need to accommodate students with disabilities. What benefits could regular educators gain from inservice training?

Baker and Zigmund (1990) conducted a study to find out if regular education classes were equipped to accommodate students with disabilities. This study was conducted in a school where no formal professional teacher training programs on inclusion had taken place. Baker and Zigmund examined the common educational practices in a typical elementary school and attempted to determine what changes were required for exceptional students to be effectively mainstreamed.

Their findings discovered many class routines, styles, and management strategies which supported an environment of "conformity and not accommodation". Baker and Zigmund noted common teacher practices that included an emphasis on whole class instruction, a lack of deviation from the teacher's manual, and little interactive teaching. Their findings illustrated that in general, the teachers were unwilling to supplement or alter lessons and provided no differentiated pacing or assignments. When asked how they were accommodating for differences in their classes, some teachers responded that they gave higher functioning students more advanced worksheets to complete, and asked particular students to complete directed practice activities at the board. These were the only accommodations revealed.

The researchers concluded that the mind set of the teachers stressed an environment of conformity. They stated, "Any student who could not conform would probably be unsuccessful." They acknowledged a need for change in

teacher activities, style, and practice in order for inclusion to be implemented successfully. The researchers called for a complete reorganization of classroom procedures and an increase in interactive activities that include students in the “learning process.” They specifically stated that in order for classrooms to effectively support students with disabilities, teachers must be empowered with alternative strategies that meet their special needs. The researchers stated, “Inservice training and ongoing technical assistance in effective instruction will be invaluable to facilitate the change process (of inclusion).”

This study illustrates the need for professional training in specific alternative teaching strategies in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Baker and Zigmund studied the practices and techniques inherent in the current regular classroom. Their findings show an “invaluable” need for professional development training. The environment of the regular classroom in the model school that they studied would cause “any student who could not conform to be unsuccessful.” This study proves that regular education teachers need to be properly prepared for inclusion.

Sachs (1990) also explored teacher readiness in the instruction of students with disabilities and hypothesized that regular educators’ lack of self-efficacy has some detrimental effects. They referred to a study completed by Bryan (1974) which proved regular educators had fewer interactions with LD students and provided them with double the amount of negative feedback than with non-LD students. Exceptional students’ individual needs were not being met and Sachs indicated that the regular educators’ lack of professional training was the cause. This feeling of professional inadequacy, Sach’s states, makes regular educators aware that they are not qualified to teach exceptional

students. It is in this way that the concept of inclusion may provide teachers and students with more opportunities for failure. Sachs asserts that if teachers and students continuously experience failure and negativity because of the lack of proper inservice training, then their self-efficacy can only decrease. He states, "If prospective regular educators did receive training.....then they might be able to cope with the demands of mainstreaming exceptional students." His findings illustrate the potential detrimental effects that the lack of proper preparation may cause the inclusion process. The frustration felt by teachers who feel unequipped coupled with the negative feedback received by exceptional students erodes the potential positive effects of inclusion.

In the examination of teacher training for inclusion it is also important to determine what kinds of modifications regular teachers find most feasible in their classrooms. The merger between general educators and special education students is dependent upon the willingness of the teacher to make specific adaptations for exceptional students. In 1984, Schulz and Turnbull identified specific ways regular educators may adapt to the needs of exceptional students. They proposed supplements, simplifications and changes to the curriculum as the best ways to accommodate unique needs. There is concern about whether regular educators possess the skills or desire to effectively implement these changes.

Schumm and Vaughn (1991) examined teacher's attitudes about the desirability and feasibility of making adaptations for mainstreamed students. In their study, only 41% of teachers rated their planning for mainstreamed students as "good". This proves that teachers feel less empowered and unprepared for instructing classified students. Teachers also rated specific environmental and curricular adaptations as either desirable or less feasible. The results show that

regular education teachers are more willing to provide social and motivational support such as reinforcement and encouragement. However, when presented with adaptations which require curricular change and evaluation adjustment, teachers are less apt to implement them in their classrooms. Teachers selected such modifications as the adaptation of regular materials and individualized instruction as the least feasible in their classes. It was concluded that teachers do not have an innate dislike for special learners and are willing to provide emotional support, but do not see the possibility of making specific changes in their teaching style or activities. Schumm and Vaughn concluded that many teachers may lack the "skills and knowledge to make such adaptations". It is possible that teachers would be more willing to accommodate exceptional learners if they were properly prepared and trained on specific techniques.

Research has shown the need for teacher training and professional development in order to implement a successful inclusion program. Many districts do acknowledge the demand for training regular educators, but the question arises of whether current inservice and professional development programs are adequate in addressing specific teacher needs. The evaluation of professional development programs is necessary to determine their effectiveness in increasing the self-efficacy of teachers.

Bos (1995) offers "critical keys for successful professional development". She maintains that the best way to "foster change" is to incorporate three characteristics into the professional development program. First, Bos states, it is important for the program to balance both practical and theoretical principles. The second important aspect involves creating teacher ownership. Through this, teachers may increase self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to teach exceptional learners. The third aspect Bos describes has to do with developing

a common language between regular and special educators so that they may work in “collaborative and supportive contexts”.

In Schumm and Vaughn (1991), the purpose was to describe “lessons learned” from different types of professional development for regular educators in inclusive classrooms. The examiners’ findings indicated the various training methods and variety of sessions which proved most and least helpful in assisting teachers. The inservice training sessions ranged from discussions of personal classroom experiences to dissemination of factual information.

Through research and scrutiny of existing professional development programs, Schumm and Vaughn tried to plan for a balance between personal and external knowledge (Schumm and Vaughn, 1995). They determined that two specific stages were necessary for a comprehensive and effective program. The purpose of the initial stage, which they called “exploration”, was to incite professional dialogue and conduct a needs assessment. Teachers gave their own input and identified topics of interest. they chose instructional adaptations to implement in their classrooms. Each teacher was also paired with a coach, typically a doctoral student, who they would meet with to plan, videotape and discuss the effectiveness of strategies.

In the second stage employed by Schumm and Vaughn, “collaboration”, professional dialogue was also encouraged, but instructors sought to “zero in” on specific topics quickly and intensively (Schumm and Vaughn, 1995). The researchers developed ten modules which covered specific topics identified by teachers during the first stage. The sessions focused on such issues as assessment, models of inclusion, appropriate educational interventions and procedures for working with parents. During the sessions, researchers attempted to present methodology, techniques, and useful materials for use in

the classroom. The dissemination of organized and up-to-date research knowledge was the focus.

Schumm and Vaughn found that the process of identifying needs seemed especially important to teachers because it allowed them to "codesign their inservice curriculum" and reveal the topics they felt were important to cover. The researchers also found that discussions frequently involved personal knowledge and experiences. Teachers were glad to have the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues and know that they were not alone in their concerns. Schumm and Vaughn also determined that the instructional adaptations which were most helpful to teachers were the ones that were covered in depth through presentation, implementation and subsequent discussion. Instead of being offered a plethora of techniques in which to "pick and choose", teachers preferred to have clear examples of how strategies work and then have the opportunity to discuss their own experiences with them.

One of the most important conclusions Schumm and Vaughn gathered from their study was that the preparation needed for teachers to instruct students with disabilities needs to be intense and comprehensive. Teacher commitment is mandatory in order for the program to be beneficial.

A summary of the research performed on the professional development of inclusive teachers concludes with certain key points which will guide my study. First, regular education teachers do not feel properly equipped with the "knowledge, skills, and confidence" they need to teach students with disabilities. The research has also found that when regular educators, in general, attempted to make adaptations without proper training, the accommodations are largely "incidental, inconsistent, idiosyncratic, and not part of an overall plan." The

necessity of proper professional development when implementing inclusion was made apparent through Virginia Roach's discussion. She asserted that proper teacher preparation and planning is part of the whole process. The effectiveness of various types of professional development in meeting the specific needs of teachers is explored by Schumm and Vaughn (1995) and Bos (1995). Both studies revealed the need for "structured opportunities" for teachers to express their "beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and practices" in teaching exceptional children. They define a need for sharing and collaboration among peers as well as specific, well presented tools and strategies for change.

My study will focus on whether the specific professional development needs as outlined by the researchers on this topic are currently being met by regular educators in inclusive settings. I will use the criteria outlined by the researchers mentioned to evaluate the current training opportunities made available to teachers by their employing school districts. One way to provide a smoother transition for inclusion is to have a well-prepared plan of action. Educating, training, and communicating with teachers will allow them to participate in administrative planning as well as perform more effectively in the classroom. Increasingly, exceptional students are holding permanent places in the regular class. Proper and effective inservice training is a necessary initial step in order to protect the integrity of the initiative, and the potential, positive outcomes.

Chapter 3

For this study, I have chosen to examine professional development offerings in southern New Jersey. In order to gain a more comprehensive reference base, fifteen school districts from the seven southern counties will be randomly selected. Elementary schools from within each district will be sent a packet containing ten carefully designed surveys, ten cover letters explaining the purpose of the study, and ten self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

The Education Institute, which serves as the professional development arm of the School of Education at Rowan University, has agreed to co-sponsor this study. I have worked as a graduate assistant for the Education Institute and have been an active participant in the planning, coordination, and organization of various continuing education programs for school districts over the past year. This department shares great interest in the results of this study as it functions as a provider of professional development workshops, seminars, symposiums, conferences, and specially designed graduate classes for school districts. They may use the results of this study to guide future projects and design programs which are practical for educators. The department has provided a list of school districts from which fifteen schools will be chosen, postage materials, envelopes, and Rowan University letterhead.

Each school will be sent a packet of surveys. The building principal will be asked to disseminate the survey to ten regular elementary classroom teachers in the

school. The survey will ask the teachers to rate their present ability to teach students with disabilities and the training they were provided to do so effectively. Several areas concerning this issue will be highlighted in the twenty-one question survey, including teacher's desired style and type of inservice, past professional development activities offered by the district and teacher's present modifications in the regular class.

Only elementary school teachers have been selected for this study for several reasons. First, teachers in the primary grades spend most of their day with the same students and generally have more contact with parents and other specialists interested in the education of the child. Secondly, elementary school teachers are most involved with aspects of a child's education beyond subject matter. The elementary teacher is generally concerned with the social, psychological, and behavioral development of the child as well as the acquisition of skills. For this reason, the elementary teacher is generally most effected by the inclusion of students with disabilities in his or her classroom. Therefore, educators in the primary grades would have more comprehensive perspectives on the professional development needs of inclusion teachers.

Three areas will be examined to comprehensively measure the effectiveness of school districts in meeting the professional development needs of regular educators for inclusion classrooms. I will first examine the modifications employed by regular educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. As exceptional children populate the classroom, teaching strategies, attitudes, and classroom management techniques must adjust to accommodate different learning styles and levels of achievement. Items to be considered include behavior modification techniques for students with disabilities, alternative instructional techniques, in-class support, audio/visual aids, and other support systems. The survey will focus on teacher's perceptions regarding the specific tools that will improve their

effectiveness in the classroom, from alternative instructional strategies to behavior modification techniques.

The “style” of professional development that teachers consider most effective will also be explored. The survey will focus on areas such as program length (one day workshops vs. long-term inservice), instructional presentation (lecture vs. collaborative discussion), appropriate time (after school vs. during school) and facilitator (district personnel vs. outside experts). The objective is to gather data to determine what kind of preparation would be most helpful to teachers for the inclusive classroom.

Teachers will also be asked to provide some information about themselves and their classroom in order to determine years of experience, instructional certifications, and teacher to student ratio. This portion of the survey is strictly factual and will be used to note any significant variations regarding level of experience and background.

The survey will consist of approximately twenty-one multiple-choice questions relating to issues which include: the concept of inclusion, administrative support, professional development needs, current professional development programs, current classroom modifications for inclusion, and special education topics of noted interest. Copies of the survey and included cover letters are located in Appendix A.

Teachers will be asked to express their opinions, relate current practices, and indicate their needs. They will also be asked to indicate their perspectives on the future of inclusion and the changing atmosphere of the classroom. They will be asked to define how their responsibilities have shifted since the institution of mainstreaming. Of specific interest will be their feeling of empowerment in the classroom and if it has lessened as a result of poor support through inadequate professional development preparation. Previous research has demonstrated that in order for inclusion to be an effective method for educating all students, regardless of their disability, careful planning and staff cooperation is required. This research study will investigate the

degree to which school districts heed the advice of educational theorists and assure a smooth transition to a changing classroom.

Chapter 4

After careful examination of the survey results from one hundred and fourteen teachers who responded to this study, one can immediately conclude that inclusion has incited great controversy and strong debate among education professionals. It was not uncommon to find surveys marked with exclamation points, written asides, and additional comments by the respondents. This study focuses on examining the effectiveness of district training programs in meeting the needs of teachers in inclusive classrooms. Five specific areas were investigated for the purposes of this study. The concentrations include teacher attitudes toward the inclusion concept, modification strategies currently used by teachers, teacher preferences regarding adequate professional development, characteristics of current inservice programs offered by districts and relevant demographic and personal information. Packets containing a cover letter, carefully designed surveys, and self-addressed, stamped envelopes were disseminated randomly to thirty public elementary schools throughout southern New Jersey. One hundred and fourteen surveys were returned and data was subsequently analyzed.

Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Survey questions one through four focused on current teacher attitudes toward

inclusion and an evaluation of their preparedness in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Overall, the survey respondents reacted negatively toward the inclusion concept and feel that preparatory training is necessary for its effective implementation.

As illustrated in Table 1 below, more than half of teachers surveyed (66%), do not agree that inclusion is the most effective method of educating all students. Almost all respondents (94%), feel that regular elementary teachers are not sufficiently trained to teach students with disabilities. Despite this, responses showed that attempts are being made by 97% of teachers to modify instruction for the benefit of inclusive students. There was a strong reaction toward increased preparation for inclusion in the form of professional development. Out of total respondents, 94% agreed that formal training programs providing instructional strategies, techniques, and education for teachers are necessary for the successful implementation of inclusion.

Table 1 -- Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion

	strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree
Inclusion is the most effective method of educating all students.	6%	28%	0%	66%
Reg. ed. teachers are sufficiently trained to teach students with disabilities.	1%	3%	2%	94%
Professional dev. is necessary for successful inclusion.	69%	25%	4%	2%
I regularly modify my teaching for classified students.	44%	53%	3%	0%

Current Teacher Accommodations in the Regular Class

Survey questions five through ten concentrated on evaluating current attempts made by teachers to accommodate the diversity of the inclusive classroom. Alternative modifications include instructional and discipline strategies employed to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The ways in which teachers draw from past experience, training, creativity, and available resources is of particular interest to this study. Teachers' general willingness to attempt innovative strategies and remain open to technology as a learning tool is also a point of consideration.

Table 2a illustrates the percentage of teachers who employ specific strategies in their classrooms as alternative instructional aids. The techniques most widely used by teachers were cooperative learning and extra time for assignment completion. These two methods were selected by 94% of teachers surveyed. Individual tutoring was the next most widely used instructional strategy and was selected by 89% of teachers surveyed. In-class support and classroom aids provide assistance to more than half (67%) of teachers surveyed. A significant and surprising finding involved the current use of computers. Only one teacher out of the one hundred and fourteen surveyed reported the use of computer technology as an instructional aid in the classroom. It is not determined whether computers are unavailable in the schools of those surveyed or whether the teachers surveyed are resistant to its use. Out of the total respondents, 10% selected "other" under the listing of instructional aids used in the class. Examples given included checklists, proximity of students, and rewards or point systems.

Despite the use of a variety of alternative instructional strategies by the majority of teachers surveyed, 88% still agree that professional development training would improve their teaching effectiveness.

Discipline and behavior management issues are addressed in questions 8

through 10. Overall, most teachers surveyed presently employ specific alternative techniques to manage student behavior, however, they generally feel that professional development in this area would increase their success in the classroom. Of the teachers surveyed, 89% reported regular use of alternative techniques to control student behavior, yet 82% of teachers admitted that further inservice training would be beneficial. As illustrated in Table 2b, more than half of teachers surveyed reportedly use a variety of behavior management techniques including assertive discipline, time-out, token/point systems, and detentions. Behavior contracts are used by 42% of respondents. Other systems employed to control and manage student behavior was reported by 3% of teachers surveyed. These techniques included sticker charts, lottery games, and positive reinforcement.

Table 2a -- *Current Teacher Modifications for Inclusion in the Regular Class*

<u>Instructional Technique</u>	<u>% Teachers</u>
none	3%
extra time for assignment completion	94%
audio/visual aids	70%
individual tutoring	89%
peer tutoring, cooperative learning	94%
aids or in-class support teachers	67%
computers	.8%
other	10%

Table 2b -- *Current Teacher Modifications for Inclusion in the Regular Class*

<u>Behavior Management Technique</u>	<u>% Teachers</u>
none	4%
behavior contracts	42%
token/point system	51%
assertive discipline (Canter method)	61%
time-out	57%
detention	53%
other	3%

Professional Development Programs - Teacher Desirability

In questions 11 through 14, teachers were asked to rate the various aspects of professional development/in-service programs in terms of desirability. Teachers gave ratings on four key issues involved in designing effective programs including type, instructional style, time, and choice of instructors/organizers.

In responding to type of professional development, teachers generally preferred multiple-session in-service programs. As shown in Figure 3a, 78% of teachers surveyed indicated that training of this type was more or most desirable. More than half of teachers surveyed (68%), rated one-day workshops as the least desired program of choice. Negative ratings were also reported for college courses aimed at training teachers for inclusion. More than half (64%) rated college courses in the undesirable range. Respondents were split in their ratings of direct, one-on-one

consultation as a type of professional development. Just over half of respondents (53%), gave ratings in the undesirable range.

The two instructional styles most preferred by teachers surveyed were demonstration and practice, and interactive, cooperative learning with colleagues. Out of total respondents, 85% rated the demonstration of teaching strategies followed by guided implementation as a desirable training method. Cooperative colleague interaction was rated positively by 76% of those surveyed. Lecture and class discussion received the majority of negative desirability ratings. Over half of survey respondents, rated both of these instructional styles in the undesirable range. Lecture style presentations received negative ratings from 68% of respondents and class discussions received negative ratings from 61% of teachers surveyed.

As depicted in Table 3d, teachers generally preferred designated days when students have off as the most desirable time for professional development activities to take place. Out of the total respondents, 87% gave desirable ratings. Other choices in this category including after school and summer were generally not strongly represented by either positive or negative desirability ratings. Teachers generally held mixed preferences in this area. More than half of respondents, however, consider after school (59%) and summer (55%) as undesirable times for professional development training to take place. A rather large number of respondents (59%) selected the category "other". All respondents who selected this category wrote that inservice days are the most desirable time for inclusion training to take place. It appears that there may have been a misunderstanding with the selection choices in this category. When the survey was originally constructed, the item "designated days when students have off" was meant to be the equivalent of what is known as an inservice day. In most school districts, inservice days are specific weekdays designated in advance for staff development programs and activities. Students generally do not report to school or

are released early. It can be assumed that respondents who wrote "inservice days" as their most desirable time for professional training would have selected "designated days when students have off" if explained with greater clarity.

When asked to choose the professionals most desired to organize and lead an inclusion training program, more than half of respondents (58%) selected private consultants. The next most selected professionals were district administrators who were chosen by 30% of teachers surveyed. It is also important to note that out of the 12% of teachers who selected "other", all wrote that actual classroom teachers would be most capable of organizing and leading a professional development program in this area.

Professional Development Programs -- Teacher Desirability

Table 3a -- Desirable Organizers/Instructors for Inclusion Inservice

<u>Professional</u>	<u>% Teachers</u>
district administrators	30%
private consultants	58%
college professors	.8%
GST members	.8%
other (reg. classroom teachers)	12%

Table 3b -- Type of Professional Development

<u>Program Type</u>	<u>% Teachers who rated desirable</u>
one day workshop	32%
multiple session program	78%
one-on-one consultation	47%
course	36%

Table 3c -- Instructional Style

<u>Instructional Style</u>	<u>% Teachers who rated desirable</u>
lecture	32%
class discussion	39%
demonstration & practice	85%
cooperative learning	76%

Table 3d -- Time for Professional Development Activities

<u>Time</u>	<u>% Teachers who rated desirable</u>
after school	41%
weekdays when students have off	87%
summer	45%
other (weekends, inservice days)	59%

Professional Development Programs - Current District Practices

Determining the nature of current professional development programs was the

focus of question 15. Teacher respondents were requested to indicate the various types, instructional styles, and times of training activities provided by their district this year. Respondents were encouraged to select as many choices in each category that applied. Tables 4a through 4d illustrate the data gathered from this inquiry.

The large majority of teachers surveyed (78%), received professional development in the form of one-day workshops. Of total respondents, 37% indicated that their district provided multiple session inservice training. Direct, one-on-one consultation programs were reported by 14% of teachers surveyed and 9% received training in the form of a course.

Lecture presentations of strategies and techniques was the most widely used instructional style. Of total respondents, 61% reported its use in their district. The percentage of teachers who reportedly received training through the remaining three modes of instruction was generally the same. About 40% of respondents reported that their inservice training included discussions with colleagues, demonstration and practice, and interactive, cooperative learning with colleagues.

According to survey responses, the times most allocated for inservice activities this year were weekdays when students have off (57%) and after school (46%). Summer inservice programs were reported by 23% and "other" was selected by 24% of teacher respondents. Teachers who selected "other" included Saturdays and school days with a substitute provided as inservice times offered by their school district.

**Professional Development programs --
Current District Offerings**

Table 4a -- Type of Professional Development

<u>Program Type</u>	<u>% Teachers who received this year</u>
one day workshop	78%
multiple session program	37%
one-on-one consultation	14%
course	9%

Table 4b -- Type of Instructional Style

<u>Instructional Style</u>	<u>% Teachers who received this year</u>
lecture	61%
discussion	40%
demonstration/practice	41%
cooperative learning	41%

Table 4c -- Time for Professional Development Activities

<u>Time</u>	<u>% Teachers who received this year</u>
after school	46%
weekdays when students are off from school	57%
summer	23%
other	24%

Demographic and Personal Information

Tables 5a through 5c describe the demographic and professional information gathered from survey respondents in questions 16 through 21 of the survey. The majority of teachers surveyed (59%), are currently employed in suburban school districts. Almost all teachers surveyed (93%), hold a regular instructional certificate in elementary education. Dual certification in both regular and special education is held by 16% of respondents. Other professional certificates earned by teachers surveyed include school nurse, substance abuse coordinator, administration, and learning consultant. The majority of respondents (68%), have not earned a graduate degree, while 38% currently hold a master's degree in education. Over half of the total respondents surveyed (55%) have teaching experience exceeding 16 years.

The teachers surveyed currently have an average of 22 students in their classrooms. Responses for this item ranged from 7 to 36 students. There is an average of 4 classified students currently included in the classrooms of the teachers surveyed. Responses ranged from 0 to 18.

Demographic and Personal Information

Table 5a -- Vicinity of School District

	<u>% Teachers employed in these districts</u>
rural	17%
urban	20%
suburban	59%
mixed	45%

Table 5b -- Educational Background and Experience

<u>Professional Certificates</u>	<u>%Teachers</u>
regular elementary certificate	93%
special education certificate	16%
reading specialist	7%
other	22%
<u>College Degrees</u>	
BA/BS	68%
Masters	31%
Ph.D.	0%
other	0%
<u>Teaching Experience</u>	
1-5 years	14%
6-10 years	16%
11-15 years	16%
16 years and up	55%

Table 5c -- Current Classroom Population

<u>Average total number of students =</u>	22 (range 7 - 36)
<u>Average total number of classified students = in regular class</u>	4 (range 0 - 18)

Data Review

A brief review of the most pertinent data gathered highlights the five areas of particular consideration to this study. These include teacher attitudes toward inclusion, current instructional and management modifications being made to accommodate diverse learners, aspects of professional development programs most preferred by teachers, aspects of professional/in-service training programs currently offered by districts, as well as specific demographic and personal data.

The results of this study showed that the majority of the 114 teachers surveyed do not agree that inclusion is the most effective method of educating all students. Almost all of these teachers (94%), presently attempt to meet the needs of students with disabilities through instructional modifications and progressive behavior management techniques are applied in most classrooms (89%). Despite these attempts, however, most feel that professional development/in-service training is necessary in order for inclusion to be successful.

Teachers were then asked to share their views on preferred types, styles, and times for in-service training programs. The majority of teachers selected multiple session programs as desirable. Eighty-five percent of teachers surveyed preferred a demonstration and practice instructional style over other methods including lecture and class discussion. The majority of teachers surveyed (87%), prefer professional

training that takes place on designated days when students have off from school.

Question 15, which sought to determine the current trends in professional development, asked teachers to describe the inservice programs made available to them this year. Over three-quarters of those surveyed (78%) received professional development in the form of a one day workshop. Lecture presentation of material was the instructional style used most by inservice instructors according to survey respondents. Over 60% of teachers attended programs where this type of instruction was used. The times designated for professional development activities were weekdays when most students have off and after school as reported by 57% and 46% of teachers respectively.

Questions regarding personal information yielded data pertaining to level of college education and certificates earned. The majority of teachers surveyed hold a regular instructional certificate in elementary education and a bachelor's degree. The majority (55%) have over 16 years of experience in the classroom.

Chapter 5

Over this century, reformers have attempted to improve the quality of education by proposing a variety of changes, from block scheduling to more advanced college requirements for teachers. School reform and the effects of change have been the focus of many political debates, newspaper editorials, and School Board meetings. Proposed changes in the structure and philosophy of education become charged issues inspiring passionate responses. That is why “educational fads” have frequently been dropped into the laps of teachers only to be snatched away when another “buzz word” takes its place. There is a positive side to this trend. It shows that we are always open to new ideas for improving the quality of education and assuring rich experiences for children.

School represents one of the most powerful social institutions of this nation and for good reason. It serves as the framework through which children gain social values, political points of view, and ways to communicate with a truly diverse culture. The classroom should represent the wider world outside as students and teachers encourage an appreciation for and differences. Change is good. It shows that we are moving ahead and attempting to improve our system to accommodate new advances, innovative ideas, and a commitment to an appropriate education for everyone. Adapting to change is a sometimes difficult, yet fundamental part of living.

No other educational movement, however, has caused as dramatic a change for students, teachers, parents, and administrators than inclusion. When the concept of full inclusion is practiced, all students, regardless of their handicap, classification, or disability are educated in the regular class. Support services are made available to students in the form of equipment, classroom aids, supplementary instructional materials and the imagination of the teacher. The regular educator must make the curriculum adaptable for all learners. In an inclusive setting, teachers are expected to perform effectively and efficiently for a classroom population made up of a variety of skill levels.

The number of classified students receiving an education with their non disabled peers has risen significantly in recent years. The look and feel of the typical classroom has changed for noble and understandable reasons. Students with disabilities have a legal right to a public education which appropriately meets their needs. It is fair to represent the world in the classroom, where the interaction between the disabled and non-disabled populations is a reality of life. Inclusion supporters assert that the long term benefits will outweigh the challenging issues that arise.

Inclusion is most successful when the school district carefully prepares for its implementation. Support from the administration in the form of planned professional development training is necessary for the teacher to maintain a nurturing environment in the class. It is the teacher's right to feel professionally competent and prepared with strategies and skills to meet the needs of his or her changing work environment. The teacher must also be made aware of the social and emotional issues that arise as a result of inclusion. Remaining sensitive and aware of individual needs, medical issues, and student

interactions while conducting lessons for the class as a whole requires careful, strategic planning. The quality and level of instruction for regular education students in the class as well as parental uncertainty are more issues that may be addressed through professional development provided by the district. The very nature of inclusion, complicated and undefined, yields a comprehensive array of professional development needs for teachers.

In this study, I chose to examine the readiness of regular educators for the challenges of an inclusive setting. Since most teachers who hold a regular instructional certificate are not required to take special education courses in their college programs, teacher training for inclusion is only possible through professional development and inservice activities. These activities must be meaningful, well planned, and specifically designed to prepare teachers for instruction in an inclusive setting. Professional development should provide strategies, techniques, resources, practice, feedback, and ongoing evaluation in order for it to be most beneficial to teachers. Practical methods for instructing students with disabilities as well as familiarity with special education issues should be emphasized so that teachers feel empowered and capable in an inclusive classroom.

Sadly, this research demonstrated that teachers are not adequately prepared for the complexities of inclusion. Through a survey disseminated randomly to elementary school teachers in Southern New Jersey, I examined five topics of specific interest to this study. One hundred and fourteen teachers responded on the following issues: attitudes toward inclusion, modification strategies currently used by teachers, teacher preferences regarding professional development, characteristics of current inservice programs offered by districts and relevant and personal information. Upon careful analysis, the

data demonstrated that despite the use of a variety of teaching strategies, regular educators do not feel sufficiently trained to teach students with disabilities. The professional development programs offered by districts generally fail to meet the needs of regular educators in inclusive classrooms.

The teacher is the leader and possesses the unique ability to influence the mood of the entire class simply through his or her presence. Teachers have a tremendous responsibility for the students in his or her class and must maintain an authoritative role in order to maintain a productive educational environment. In the classroom, the teacher may be compared to the manager of a business. In order to maintain productivity as well as motivation, he or she must be firm, yet encouraging. Showing genuine concern while at the same time enforcing rules and policies provides a secure environment for students. Elementary school students, particularly those with special needs, need to trust that the teacher may be depended upon to maintain a structured, orderly environment. This dynamic is destroyed, however, when teachers are unable to trust their own professional competency in the classroom as 94% responded in this study. Instead of practicing leadership in the classroom, teachers who lack proper preparation in special education issues are left powerless and vulnerable.

Teachers are called on to be creative, energetic, and receptive to a wide variety of techniques to reach all learners. They are encouraged to draw upon available resources and work harder to meet the needs of his or her unpredictable student population by modifying instructional techniques. Despite these modifications and alternative techniques, however, regular educators maintain that professional development is a necessary component of successful inclusion. The majority of teachers surveyed reported the use of a

wide variety of instructional and discipline strategies including cooperative learning, audio/visual aids, assertive discipline, contracts, token systems, and classroom aids. This response demonstrates a willingness to use up-to-date strategies, yet they are futile without predetermined objectives and a clear understanding of the student's disability. As noted in Chapter 2, Gary Sykes(1996) emphasizes the need for a balance between structure and instructional strategies. School-wide understanding of inclusion policies and a commitment to consistency in the classroom is important for successful inclusion. This can only be communicated through carefully planned professional development that is ongoing and active.

The disparity between the professional development needs of teachers and actual district offerings shows great inefficiency and poor planning. In this study, teachers responded that professional development is most effective when comprised of multiple session programs employing a demonstration and practice style of instruction. Cooperative learning was also found to be highly favorable by the majority of teachers. Data regarding current school district offerings shows that over 78% of teachers received professional development in the form of a one day workshop and lecture was the most popular instructional style used. Clearly, district professional development offerings lack the organization and careful planning necessary for effectiveness. As Schumm and Vaughn(1995) demonstrated, teacher training for inclusion should consist of a sequence of sessions which explore instructional adaptations in depth. Through presentation, implementation, and subsequent discussion, teachers may learn practical strategies and the theoretical principles supporting them. Schumm and Vaughn(1995) emphasize careful planning, consistency, and practical application. In contrast, current district offerings practice what Gary

Sykes(1996) calls a "one-shot workshop" which has little effect on what goes on in schools.

The findings of this study may prove beneficial to administrators seeking to ease the transition toward full inclusion. The haphazard placement of special needs students into regular classrooms often causes frustration and resentment within the staff. Administrators may use these results to determine which issues need to be addressed before inclusion may be implemented. By listening to their staff and heeding their professional point of view, needs may be determined with greater efficiency and usefulness. Teachers will feel that they are led by an administration that supports and values their role as educational decision makers as well as instructors. The entire process of implementing inclusion in a regular education environment is dependent upon the cooperation and help of the staff. Students with disabilities, the true focus of this debate, will enjoy a more fulfilling school experience when led by confident professionals prepared with an understanding as well as strategies to help them learn.

A recent development focusing on professional development for New Jersey regular educators may yield some interesting debates in the future. A new proposal presented to the New Jersey State Board of Education on March 5, 1997 calls for mandatory continuing education requirements for certified teachers. The proposal, a first for this state, requires teachers to complete prescribed professional development experiences at least every five years as a condition for maintaining valid state licenses. Teachers will also be expected to demonstrate skills and knowledge learned through performance assessments and evaluations by state evaluators. Another feature plan involves the quality of professional development available to teachers.

The following is stated in the proposal:

"To assure a sufficient number of continuing education options and to encourage quality through competition, the process should invite proposals from a range of providers including colleges, professional associations, individual school districts, groups of districts, training institutes and other potential providers."

Teachers may attend workshops, seminars, graduate courses, and other professional development experiences which emphasize the skills and knowledge essential to providing students a proper education as defined by the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

The presentation of this proposal by Dr. Leo Klagholz, New Jersey Commissioner of Education, represents a significant change for many issues relevant to this research study and the teaching profession. Requiring a predetermined amount of continuing education credits in order to maintain state teaching licensure communicates that teachers are professionals who practice lifelong learning in order to refine their skills. Professional development experiences are presented as a fundamental component of quality assurance in education. This initial proposal is limiting in that the focus remains on "knowledge and skills outlined in the Core Curriculum". Many other educational trends and topics which are not mentioned in the proposal require professional development experiences for teachers. It has been demonstrated that inclusion, which is the focus for this study, presents many challenges and complexities which may also be addressed through professional development. It is expected that the March 5, 1997 proposal will undergo several revisions before formal enactment so that discourse on matters such as this may take place.

Another positive outcome of this proposal pertains to the considerable emphasis on the quality of professional development made available to teachers. To assure that continuing education offerings are varied, beneficial and thoughtfully designed, a range of providers including colleges, professional associations, and individual school districts are encouraged to submit programs to the Department of Education for review. Each offering must be designed as a coherent program. Careful planning, organization, and practical application in the design of professional development programs is highly regarded and emphasized in the proposal. The seriousness with which policy makers regard ongoing teacher education, evaluation, and life long learning is clearly communicated.

According to the data collected from survey respondents, the recent continuing education proposal will encourage the development of professional development programs which better meet the needs of regular educators. By mandating a "coherent program", the proposal will require providers to offer multiple sessions instead of "one-shot workshops". Teachers also favored a demonstration and practice instructional style where strategies were presented with subsequent teacher implementation. The new proposal also has a performance requirement. Teachers will be expected to demonstrate their knowledge of presented skills and knowledge through actual classroom implementation and evaluation by a designated state evaluator. Clearly, professional development will be considered a major part of the educational process.

An analysis of this study provides a brief and general examination of teacher readiness for the continuing trend toward inclusive classrooms. Of particular interest to this study was the quality of district professional

development programs designed to prepare regular educators to teach special needs students. Data analysis gathered from 114 surveys demonstrated that teachers generally feel unprepared for an inclusive setting. The vast majority indicated that further professional development was needed for the process to be effective. However, the professional development preferences of teachers differed greatly from actual district inservice offerings. Classroom teachers found multiple session programs utilizing demonstration, practice, and interactive instructional styles while the majority of districts offered one day workshops featuring a lecture style format.

The sample size utilized for this study was relatively small due to the presence of only one researcher to compile results. I would have preferred a larger sample size from which to gather data so that a more valid representation of the seven southern New Jersey counties could have been generated. Further questioning into the specific professional development needs of teachers is required for greater utilization of results by school districts and other professionals. In-depth questions should probe specific topics in which professional development is needed. The precision with which teachers communicate their needs guides the administration's development of professional development activities to meet them.

Positive changes are imminent for regular educators as demonstrated by the new proposal presented by Dr. Leo Klagholz, New Jersey Commissioner of Education. There appears to be a powerful movement aimed at promoting teachers to a higher level of professionalism where quality and preparation is the focus. Respecting the authority of regular educators includes adequately preparing them for the many changes ahead as a result of inclusion. I am fortunate to have witnessed positive changes with direct relevance to this study

unfold. Change is good in education. As long as it is based on noble pursuits and carried out responsively, it allows us to grow as professionals, improve the quality of our mission, and reach for greater challenges.

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APPENDIX A



ROWAN

Education Institute
(609) 256-4715
Fax: (609) 256-4918

February 20, 1997

Dear Principal,

As a leader in the development and implementation of quality professional development programs for school personnel, the Education Institute is committed to addressing the changing needs of teachers. In keeping with this tradition, we are conducting a study to examine the impact of inclusion on the regular classroom teacher. The enclosed surveys are designed to determine the components of effective professional development for teachers in inclusive classrooms. This project will provide us with valuable information to guide future workshops, conferences, classes, and inservice programs.

Please disseminate the enclosed survey packets to ten regular classroom teachers in your school. The packets consist of a twenty-one question survey and a pre-addressed, stamped envelope for convenience. Completed surveys should be returned by **March 5, 1997**.

We greatly appreciate your assistance in our efforts to collaboratively maintain excellence in education.

Sincerely,

J. Harold Sahm

J. Harold Sahm, Ed.D.
Assistant Director



ROWAN

Education Institute
(609) 256-4715
Fax: (609) 256-4918

February 20, 1997

Dear Classroom Teacher,

There is no question that your job has become increasingly more challenging in recent years due to one of the most powerful concepts in educational reform - **inclusion**. The potential positive effects of inclusion on societal attitudes toward citizens with disabilities are well intentioned and clearly understood. The classroom teacher, however, is often left to deal with the complexities accompanied with the marriage of special and regular education. One possible way to ease the transition is through careful planning and preparation for teachers who are expected to deliver a quality education amidst the unique demands of an inclusive classroom.

The Education Institute, a leader in the design and implementation of quality, professional development programs for all school personnel, has a particular interest in the changing demands on teachers. In order to address these trends, we are conducting a study to investigate the professional development needs of regular educators in inclusive classrooms. This project focuses on defining the components of effective inservice preparation for regular educators as students with moderate to severe disabilities increasingly populate the classroom.

Please share your professional point of view on this matter by completing the attached survey. The questions are brief and all replies anonymous. Please mail the completed survey in the envelope provided by **March 5, 1997** so that thorough data analysis may begin.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and contributing to this study.

Sincerely,

Tinamarie Nicolo
Education Institute

APPENDIX B

• SURVEY •

TEACHER INSERVICE AND THE MODERN CLASSROOM:

An examination of the effectiveness of professional development programs in meeting the needs of regular educators in inclusive classrooms

*Please use the guide below and circle the number which best represents your opinion.

1. In an "inclusive" school, all students, regardless of their handicap, classification, or disability are educated in the regular classroom. Support services are brought into the regular class and the teacher must work to make the curriculum adaptable to all learners. This is the most effective method of educating all students.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

2. Classroom teachers who hold certification in regular elementary education are sufficiently trained to teach students with learning and behavioral disabilities.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

3. Professional development/in-service programs in which regular educators are trained and prepared to teach students with disabilities, are necessary for inclusion to be successful.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree.

4. I regularly modify the teaching strategies in my classroom to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

5. Please check the alternative instructional strategies you employ in your classroom to meet the needs of students with disabilities: (Check all that apply)

- none
- provide extra time for tests and seatwork to certain students
- provide audio/visual aids to certain students
- provide individual tutoring instruction to certain students
- use of small groups, peer tutoring, and cooperative learning
- use of other adults, aids, or in-class support teachers
- use of computer programs and similar technology
- Other (Briefly describe)_____

6. I do not find it necessary to change or modify my instructional methods to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

7. I would be a more effective teacher if I was trained to implement instructional modifications for special needs students through professional development programs.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

8. I regularly employ specific behavior management techniques to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

9. Please check the behavior management strategies you employ in your classroom to meet the needs of students with disabilities:

- none
- behavior contracts
- token/point system
- assertive discipline (Canter method)
- time-out
- detention
- other (please specify)_____

10. I would be a more successful teacher if I received professional development/in-service training on how to implement behavior management techniques for students with disabilities.

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 no opinion 4 disagree

11. Please check the professionals who you feel should organize and lead a professional development/in-service program on inclusion for your district:
(check all that apply)

- district administrative staff
- private consultants
- college or university professors
- district child study team members
- other (please specify) _____

*Please rate questions 12 - 14 according to the guide below.

1 2 3 4
most desirable least desirable

12. Types of Professional Development (Please rate from 1 - 4)

- one-day workshop
- multiple session program
- direct, one-on-one consultation
- course

13. Instructional Style (Please rate from 1 - 4)

- lecture-style presentation of strategies and techniques
- discussion with colleagues
- demonstration and practice
- interactive, cooperative learning with colleagues

14. Time for Professional Development Activities (Please rate from 1 - 4)

- after school
- designated weekdays when students are off
- summer
- other (please specify) _____

15. What kind of professional development/in-service activities has your

district offered to you this year? (Please check all that apply in each category)

Type

- one-day workshops
- multiple session programs
- direct, one-on-one consultations
- course

Instructional Style

- lecture-style
- discussion
- demonstration & practice
- interactive, cooperative

Time

- after school
- designated days when students have off
- summer
- other (please specify) _____

Thank you for the time spent in completing this assessment. Please take a few seconds more to provide us with some information about yourself and your classroom.

16. Your district is: (Please check one)

- rural urban suburban mixed

17. Which instructional certificates do you presently hold? (Check all that apply)

- Elementary School Teacher (K - 8)
- Special Education Teacher (K - 12)
- Reading Specialist
- Other (Please specify) _____

18. What degree(s) do you currently hold?

- BA/BS Masters(Field-_____) Ph.d/Ed.D other

19. Years of teaching experience:

- 1 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - up

20. What is the average number of students in your classroom? _____

21. How many classified students do you have in your classroom? _____

**Your participation in this study
is greatly appreciated!**