

COMPARING THE PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION BETWEEN GENERAL EDUCATION
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

by

Debra Dungan Bruster

Liberty University

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Debra Dungan Bruster. COMPARING THE PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION
BETWEEN GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

(Under the direction of Dr. Sandra Battige, Ed.D.) School of Education, March 2014

This causal-comparative, quantitative study compared the perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom that are held by high school general education teachers and high school special education teachers that teach in inclusive settings. The study determined there is a difference between the perceptions of inclusive education between teachers with different teaching assignments. Special education teachers were clearly more positive than general education teachers about the inclusion of students with disabilities, the influence of students with disabilities on the general education classroom and its students, and the management of behavior in the inclusive classroom. There was no difference in teacher self-efficacy between the two groups. The study involved teachers at six rural high schools located in Northeast Georgia. The Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities developed by Antonak and Larrivee (1995) was used to measure the perceptions of the participants. The results were analyzed with *t*-tests to identify differences in perceptions of the two groups.

Descriptors: inclusion, special education, students with disabilities, perceptions

DEDICATION

To Eddie Bruster, my wonderful husband and love of my life, thank you for holding my hand, encouraging and supporting me through this long process. I could not and would not have done this without you. I love you dearly. Thank you for all the meals, dishes, and laundry you did so our home could run while I wrote and worked. Thank you for keeping up with the family when I was buried in writing and researching. You have been the glue that has kept this family together these past three years. You have earned this with me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS)

Georgia Department of Education (GADOE)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Opinions Related to Inclusion (ORI)

Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming (ORM)

Race to the Top (RTT)

Regional Education Service Areas (RESA)

Scales of Attitudes toward Disabled Persons (SADP)

Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

Student with Disability (SWD)

Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Inclusion of students with disabilities into public schools became the law in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that argued for equal access to public schools for students with disabilities (Obiakor, Harris, Muta, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s increased the public acceptance of inclusion as a means of safeguarding the rights of all students, especially those restricted from the mainstream of society by membership in a marginalized group (Obiakor et.al, 2012; Winzer, 2000). This was followed by Public Law 94-142 in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. These pieces of legislation have contributed to changes in the education of students with disabilities, such as the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

The prevention of discrimination by programs that receive federal funds was made law for the first time with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited discrimination by programs that receive federal funds, including students with disabilities. Public Law 94-142 that followed in 1975 mandated a free appropriate public education for all children especially those with disabilities, in the least restrictive environment (Skiba et al., 2008). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) further changed the education of students with disabilities. The act required local educational agencies to not only provide students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum with their age equivalent, nondisabled peers but to also improve the academic achievement and social integration of all children in the educational system (U. S. Department of Education, 1997). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) followed IDEA 1997 in 2001. NCLB required that states (a) develop the same

challenging academic requirements for all students, (b) develop annual academic assessments in reading and math for all students, (c) ensure that every teacher is highly qualified in the subject that they teach, (d) set target proficiency scores in reading and math by 2014 (e) test a minimum of 95% of all students, and (f) determine the minimum size for a group to be considered a subgroup in the yearly progress calculations (Cortiella, 2006). NCLB's new focus on access to the general curriculum, academic achievement, and highly qualified teachers in the subject areas strengthened the movement toward inclusion in the modern school system.

A new federal initiative is once again changing the way children are educated and teachers are evaluated. Race to the Top (RTT) requires a new system of evaluating teachers that ties their monetary compensation to the test scores of their students (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). The initiative evaluates teacher use of the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES), which measures teachers on three key components: teacher assessment on performance standards, measures of student growth and academic achievement, and surveys of instructional practice. In 2011, 26 of Georgia's 180 school districts were involved in the initiative. However, with the adoption of the Common Core, which encompasses a set of standards in English and math for grades kindergarten through 12th grade and grades sixth through 12th in science and social studies, in June 2012, the new teacher evaluation and compensation procedure became available for 60 districts in Georgia, with availability for all Georgia school districts the following school year. The Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) initiative adopted by Georgia in July, 2010 will continue to change the high school classroom as Georgia and other states move to common standards for mathematics and English/language arts.

These fundamental changes in how Georgia educates its students necessitate current research on teacher perception of inclusive education for many reasons. Teachers' perceptions

of their ability to educate students with disabilities are a strong predictor of their classroom actions (Jerald, 2007; Lusk, Thompson, & Daane, 2008). According to Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008) teachers' beliefs and attitudes are a significant part of the success or failure of the practice of inclusive education. The recent changes in academic standards for students, compensation for teachers, and student performance requirements could change teacher perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom for both general education and special education teachers.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study sought to address is that the perceptions of inclusion held by general education teachers and special education teachers who teach in inclusive settings have not been measured in North Georgia. Examining the perceptions of rural general education and special education high school teachers that teach in inclusive classes will add to the body of knowledge surrounding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. The results will indicate if there is a statistically significance difference between the perceptions of special education and general education teachers in regards to inclusive education. Knowledge of teacher perceptions can lead to professional development opportunities and changes that create a more successful learning environment for students with disabilities.

Several recent studies have indicated the need for more research in the perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities held by classroom teachers (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & McCulley, 2012; Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Hardre and Sullivan (2008) encourage future research in comparing perceptions held by teachers in rural settings in teacher efficacy and inclusion. Continued studies of teacher efficacy and attitudes using different methods and samples have been suggested by Ahmad

(2011) to give insight into improving teacher efficacy in the classroom. There is a need to examine teacher perceptions as a means of possibly improving student achievement in the classroom (Johnson & Stevens, 2006). This study will help to fill the need for additional research of perceptions of classroom teachers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this causal-comparative research study was to determine the differences in the perceptions of general education teachers and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in the areas of general perceptions of inclusion, the benefits of inclusion for students, classroom management and teacher efficacy. The independent variable of interest is generally defined as the teaching assignment of the participant – either a special education teacher in an inclusive setting or a general education teacher in an inclusive setting. The dependent variable of interest is generally defined as the perception of the participant regarding inclusive classrooms. The participants included high school special education and general education teachers in six school systems served by the Pioneer Regional Educational Service Agency area of Northeast Georgia who have taught for a minimum of one year in inclusive classrooms.

Significance of the Study

Measuring teacher perceptions is essential in the modern classroom because teacher expectations and perceptions can be barriers to the achievement of particular groups of students (Allen, 1999; Alquraini, 2012; Contreras, 2012). Measuring the attitudes of the practitioners in the field gives researchers the means of gauging the changes of perception that are taking place in the classroom (Al-Zahrani, 2012; Antonak & Larrivee, 1995; Symons, Fish, McGuigan, Fox, & Akl, 2012). Research on teachers' attitudes and perceptions is also essential for measuring

teacher acceptance of changes and trends in education (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1997; Florian, 2008; Hill, 2009; Jull & Minnes, 2007). Since IDEA 1997 and the focus on access to the general curriculum, the attitudes of stakeholders have been repeatedly analyzed. Studies have been done on special education teachers, general education teachers, principals, parents, paraprofessionals, and preservice teachers (Abbott, 2006; Alquraini, 2012; Becham & Rouse, 2011; Hill, 2009; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), yet very little substantial research has compared the perceptions of special education teachers and general education teachers on the effectiveness of inclusive education. By examining the perceptions of rural high school teachers who teach in inclusive classrooms, the research will not only add to the existing body of knowledge on including students with disabilities in general education classes but also give administrators and teachers information that will inform their decisions on how much work/professional development needs to be done on improving the perception of inclusion.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQ) that will be answered and their associated null hypotheses are as follows:

RQ1: What is the difference in perceptions of inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in inclusive settings?

H₀1: There will be no statistically significant difference in perceptions of inclusive education, (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting.

RQ2: What is the difference in the perception of the benefits of inclusive education for students (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting?

H₀2: There will be no statistically significant difference in the perception of the benefits of inclusive education for students (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting.

RQ3: What is the difference in the perception of classroom management in inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting?

H₀3: There will be no statistically significant difference in the perception of classroom management in inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting.

RQ4: What is the difference in the perception of teachers' personal teaching efficacy (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting?

H₀4: There will be no statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers' personal teaching efficacy (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high

school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting.

Identification of Variables

The independent variable for this study was defined as the teaching assignment of the educator. Teaching assignment was defined as the “reciprocal process between school management and teachers to guide decisions about who will teach, where they will teach, and what they will teach” (Cohen & Osborne, 2007,p.456). For this study teaching assignment was either special education teacher or general education teacher in an inclusive classroom.

The inclusive setting defined by the Georgia Department of Education (2010) means that students with disabilities participate in the same activities as their peers without disabilities, including general education classes, and are provided special education services and supports in the general education setting. This study researched teachers in inclusive classrooms who have had a minimum of one year of experience in the inclusive environment. In the inclusive classroom with two educators, no teacher may be both the special educator and the general educator; therefore, the variable is categorical in nature.

The dependent variable was the teachers’ perceptions of inclusion as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion (ORI). The ORI is a revision of the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming (ORM) scale developed in 1979 by Larrivee and Cook. Oxford Dictionary (2000) defines perceptions as the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted. The research studied the perceptions or how the teachers regard, understand or interpret the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

The first group of participants consisted of rural, high school, core curricular general education teachers who have taught in inclusive classrooms for a minimum of one year. These

general education teachers are responsible for the academic proficiency of their students in math, science, literature, English, and social studies. These are the teachers of record, who as defined by the state of Georgia is a highly qualified educator in the subject area that they teach, for all students in the core classroom (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

The second group of participants consisted of rural, high school, special education teachers, who have taught in inclusive classroom for a minimum of one school year. These teachers are responsible for delivering special instruction to students with disabilities that are in the general education classroom. These educators are not the teacher of record for the students but rather a skilled educational professional in organizing, modifying, accommodating, and instructing students with disabilities.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to maintain uniformity and ensure understanding throughout this study.

Core Curriculum: The core curriculum is identified as the core academic classes all students must take to receive a general education diploma in the state of Georgia. The core curriculum consists of classes in the areas of science, literature and English, math and the social sciences (Georgia Department of Education, 2012).

Coteaching: Coteaching is a special education service delivery option with instruction being provided by two educational professionals, one specializing in special education, and one specializing in the general education content (Friend & Chamberlain, 2011).

General Education: General education is the educational environment for typically developing students; it is often referred to as regular education (Gately, S. & Gately, F., 2001).

General Education Teacher: A general education teacher is an educator that holds a bachelor degree or higher from a Georgia Professional Standards Commission accepted and accredited institution of higher education, holds a valid teaching certificate, and has achieved a passing score on the state approved and required content assessment for the content areas and subjects that they teach (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

Inclusion: Inclusion is a term used to describe services that place students with disabilities in the general education classrooms with supports such as co-teachers, paraprofessionals or consultative services (Gately, S. & Gately, F., 2001).

Individual with Disabilities Education Act: This was legislation first enacted in 1975 as the *Education for all Handicapped Children Act*: It is the law that governs the education of students with disabilities. It was amended in 2004 and is referred to as IDEA 2004.

Integration: Integration is the term used synonymously with inclusion. In this study inclusion will be the term used throughout.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The environment that allows the student most access to the general education curriculum and peer interaction and socialization is considered the LRE.

Mainstreaming: Mainstreaming is a special education placement where special education students receive instruction in the mainstream or general education classroom.

Resource Services: Resource services are special education services that remove a student with disabilities from the general education environment for part or all of the school day (Gately, S., & Gately, F., 2001).

Special Education: Special Education is defined by IDEA 2004 as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability” (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, n.d.).

Special Education Teacher: A special education teacher is an educator that holds a bachelor's degree or higher from a Georgia Professional Standards Commission accepted and accredited institution of higher education and holds a valid teaching certificate as well as a passing scores on the state approved and required content assessment for special education. The special education teacher provides specialized instruction for students with disabilities as defined by IDEA 2004 (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). *Student With Disabilities (SWD):* Students with disabilities are students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) that contains specialized instruction requirements for the student.

Supported Instruction: Supported instruction is a special education service method that provides a paraprofessional or other related service personnel, in the general education classroom, for a student with disabilities.

Research Summary

The design chosen for this research study was causal-comparative research. In this design the researcher compared groups by examining pre-existing differences in the variable to determine the effect on another variable (Gall, J., Gall, M., & Borg, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). The research begins with two groups that differ on a cause or independent variable, which in this study was the teachers' teaching assignment, either general or special education. Then the researcher attempts to determine the effects or consequences of the variable, in this study the dependent variable was the teachers' perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities (Gall, J., Gall, M., & Borg, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

Data was gathered from the two groups using the ORI, which is a revision of the Opinions related to Mainstreaming developed by Larrivee and Cook in 1979. The ORI was sent electronically through email to the participants. Prior to receiving the survey, the participants

were sent an informational email that gave information such as an outline of the study, the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and data security. The participants were also informed that completing the survey was considered as consent to be included in the study. The subjects were given a link to an online survey. Responses were recorded on the online survey data collection system and released to the researcher after the two-week collection period.

The literature review in chapter two will begin with the theoretical framework for the study followed by a brief history of special education law and inclusion law in classroom practice. The review of literature will continue with perception research for all stakeholders: school administrators, preservice teachers, parents, students, general education teachers, special education teachers, followed by perception research on teacher efficacy and classroom management.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine the available literature relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, with a focus on the perceptions of the general education and special education teachers that teach in those inclusive classrooms. Public Law 94-142 (1975), IDEA (2004) and NCLB (2001) have all contributed to changes in the education of students with disabilities and the inclusion of students in general education classrooms. Those changes have caused a divide in teacher perceptions regarding the mainstreaming of special education students. Those bipartite perceptions are the impetus for this study. The chapter begins by examining the theories that undergird this research, then reviews the literature relevant to the issue of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and concludes with a summary that makes a compelling case that the study needs to be conducted.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of special education inclusion began long before the introduction of NCLB (2001) or the reauthorization of IDEA (2004). Yet these two acts have proven to be the most beneficial to the education of students with disabilities, and have given much needed additional muscle to already existing special education laws regarding inclusive education. The acts required public schools to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible, as well as provide them with a highly qualified teacher. While the concept of inclusion has been around for many years, NCLB and IDEA required the actual practice of inclusion that is prevalent in high schools today. General education teachers are now expected to teach academic content in the general education classroom to a wider variety of students than ever before (Brownell et al., 2010; Friend, 2007). Consequently, special education

teachers are expected to deliver special instruction and services to students with disabilities in general education classrooms instead of a resource room.

While educational law provides the most important theoretical framework for this study, another theory that supports the research is the foundational work of Vygotsky (1978). His research purported that children with disabilities are not missing development or delayed in developing, but rather that they have developed differently (Daniel, 2012 ; Gindis, 1999). Vygotsky's Social Development Theory emphasizes three main themes: social interaction is essential to the process of cognitive development, the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) is essential to learning; this other maybe a teacher, other adult or peer that has more knowledge of the concept, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) or the distance between the ability to complete a task with assistance and the ability to complete a task independently (Daniels, 2007; Schmitz, 2012).

Vygotsky's zone consists of two levels of development. The first level of development is identified as the real level, or the level a child can solve problems independently. The other level of development is the potential development level, which requires the assistance either interactions or support from adults or higher functioning peers (Wang, 2009). The second level is the basis for inclusion. Vygotsky's theory in relation to special education is that students learn through the introduction of concepts that are a little above their ZPD and are provided scaffolding and modeling by teachers and more knowledgeable peers within the social interaction and cultural context they share with others in the classroom (Daniels, 2012; Daniels, 2007). Vygotsky found that when children see an assignment is possible and have assistance or scaffolding to accomplish the assignment they are capable of higher-level skills than those they can complete independently (Daniels, 2007; Schmitz, 2012). For students with disabilities this

access to more knowledgeable peers and models as well as scaffolding for higher-level tasks is found in the mainstream classroom.

Social Learning Theory provides an additional framework for this study. Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that people learn from one another by imitation, observation, and modeling (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 2012). Recent research has found that peer interaction and peer instruction increases the performance and learning of all students (Allison, 2012).

According to Bandura (1986) effective modeling has four necessary conditions: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Attention requires the student to attend to the actions of the model. This process is influenced by the characteristics of both the model and the observer (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2012). Retention recognizes that the observer not only watches the behavior but also remembers it for a later time; this requires rehearsal or practice for retention. Reproduction requires not only physical but intellectual ability to reproduce the action. Finally motivation or reason to perform the task is essential. For students with disabilities in the general education classroom, this motivation is often the sense of belonging and inclusion that comes with the general education classroom. This theory developed into the basis for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Children with disabilities will learn from non-disabled peers as they are exposed to the models in the inclusive classroom. They will not only attend to the models in the classroom but also through practice and motivation they will retain the content. This learning requires the students with disabilities to be present in the general education classroom and learning the same content and using the same models as typically developing peers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012).

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy also forms the basis for this study. Bandura describes self-efficacy as a person's perceived belief about their ability to produce the desired outcomes

through their actions or in the case of educator through their instruction (Consiglio, Borgogni, Alessandri, & Schaufeli, 2013; Krapp, 2005). Bandura (2012) explains the importance of self-efficacy as the core belief that one's actions have the power to change and produce a desired outcome. Ashton & Webb (1986) found that a teacher's self-efficacy has a direct relation to their instructional practices and student outcomes. Bandura (1994) also found that teacher's beliefs in their collective self-efficacy, as a faculty, can affect the entire schools academic achievement and climate. Therefore the teacher's belief that he can produce a desired outcome in an inclusive classroom is an essential foundational theory of this study.

Vygotsky is also known for his Dynamic Assessment Theory (Gindis, 1999), which is the final theory that undergirds this research. Dynamic Assessment theory is a process of pretesting, intervention, and post testing that assesses the student's response to intervention and remediation. The dynamic assessment does not just test a student's knowledge, but it assesses the student's ability to acquire knowledge and skills as well. This theory supports the inclusion of students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom so that they have access to grade level concepts, content and can subsequently meet grade level standards. Special education students cannot learn grade level content if they are not taught the standards and intervention is not geared to teaching the concepts identified in the standard (Department of Education, 2012).

Review of the Literature

History of Special Education

The legislative history of special education began before 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education* and continued with landmark court cases like *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth* (1971) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972) which found that states and localities have responsibilities to educate children with

disabilities (Office of Special Programs, 2007). Next came the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, in 1973, which prevented any program that received federal financial assistance from discriminating against students with disabilities because the law recognized them as members of a protected class. Therefore, students with disabilities could not be denied access to federally funded public education based on their disability. The law was followed quickly in 1975 by Public Law (PL) 94-142, which gave all students the right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. However, most students were served in classes that were separate from children without disabilities. It wasn't until the 1990s that integration and inclusion became the focus of special education for students with disabilities (Browder & Spooner, 2006). At this time special education services in Georgia became a continuum of placements that ranged from consultative services (the least restrictive environment) to separate schools (the most restrictive environment; Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

As a result of these new laws, students with disabilities gained two new foundational rights: protection from discrimination based on their special education status and the right to an education that takes place in the least restrictive environment possible. The education that students with disabilities generally received before these two new rights were granted was separate from their nondisabled, typically developing peers, with the major focus on functional skills rather than the academic content that defined the general education curriculum. Few students with disabilities were mainstreamed into the general education environment with consultative services at this time, which was considered the very least restrictive (Hausstatter & Connolley, 2012; Kavale & Forness, 2000).

The enactment of IDEA (1997) brought new requirements and a new focus on the education of students with disabilities. The act required that students with disabilities be

educated alongside their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom, to the greatest extent possible (Hausstatter & Connolley, 2012; Kavale & Forness, 2000). Prior to NCLB students with disabilities were not educated with their same age, nondisabled peers and were not included in statewide or national assessments (MacQuarrie, 2009). Students with disabilities were primarily educated in resource classrooms or self-contained special education classrooms. Before IDEA (1997) the education of students with disabilities was derived from curriculums that focused on the performance of life functions with little or no access to the general education curriculum or the general education classroom (MacQuarrie, 2009). Instruction for students with disabilities in the general education classroom has been found to increase access to the standards and grade level content. Wehmeyer, Lattin, Lapp-Rincker, and Agran (2003) found that students with disabilities in general education classrooms were observed to be working on assignments linked to a content standard 90% of the intervals, while students with disabilities in resource classrooms were only working on assignments linked to a content standard 50% of intervals.

IDEA (1997) was followed by NCLB (2001). The new federal law required that all teachers be highly qualified in the content areas that they teach. The highly qualified teacher requirement was enacted to ensure that all teachers both general education and special education are highly qualified in not only content but also pedagogy (Kossar, Mitchem, and Ludlow, 2005). This mandate was an onerous requirement for special education teachers who were previously certified in disability areas, such as learning disabilities, emotional behavioral disorders, and other disabilities, rather than content areas such as reading, math, science, or social studies (Albritten, Mainzer, & Zeigler, 2004).

NCLB (2001) also required that schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is the measure by which schools are held accountable for student performance under Title I of the

NCLB act. AYP is used to determine if schools are successfully educating their students (Reckase, Orr, Ganhdal, & Keegan, 2002). The necessity of meeting the highly qualified teacher mandate and AYP guidelines actuated a change in special education; districts began to include students with disabilities in general education classes in order grant them access to quality teachers in specific content areas and to improve test scores (Nichols, J. , Dowdy, & Nichols, A., 2010).

The reauthorization of IDEA (2004) brought more changes for the area of special education. IDEA 2004 required that students with disabilities be assessed on the same grade level standards as their nondisabled peers. Now students with disabilities would not only be required to be educated in the same classrooms as their peers, but also assessed with the same instruments as their peers, and their progress would have to be included in the determination of whether or not the school made AYP. These laws have led to many studies on inclusion over the last three decades (Abbott, 2006; Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Ritter & Irby, 1999; Yatsutake & Lerner, 1997).

In 2010, Georgia was awarded \$400 million dollars in federal funds to implement the Race to the Top (RTT) Initiative (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). The federal plan addressed four areas for reform: strengthening teacher preparation programs both traditional and alternative, evaluating teachers and administrators with consistent and objective criteria, rewarding teachers with performance-based salary increases, and using data to inform decision making practices in schools (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

History of Inclusion

The history of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a progression from persecution and exclusion to acceptance and inclusion. In the

1500's special education began in Spain with the education of the deaf. The education of the deaf was a change from the prevailing ideas of the time that persons with disabilities were evil, possessed or demonic (Kanner, 1964). By the 1600's the London Hospital of St. Mary's of Bethlehem, Bedlam as it was called, provided a placement for people with mental illness, physical disabilities and poverty (Winzer, 1993). In colonial America persons with disabilities such as deafness, blindness, mental illness, poverty, unusual behaviors, intellectual deficiencies and poverty were often ostracized and isolated from the mainstream society. Families generally kept their disabled members hidden to be protected from society or expelled them from the community as demonic or victims of witchcraft (Osgood, 2005). Persecution and exclusion continued as the disabled began to be placed in institutions and asylums. In 1752 Pennsylvania Hospital opened a mad ward for people with disabilities and a year later in 1773 Virginia opened an institution in Williamsburg for the mentally ill and disabled, Kentucky followed suit in 1824 (Katz, 1976). By the mid 1800's most states had state supported institutions for the disabled.

The education of the disabled in America started in Connecticut in 1817. The Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons was founded by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc in Hartford Connecticut. The institution was established to teach the deaf to read, write, read lips and communicate through sign language (Mintz, 2007). The Connecticut Asylum was one of the first institutions with the goal not to simply house but to educate the deaf (Mintz, 2007). Samuel Howe opened the Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind 1832 to educate the blind and in 1848 he established the Massachusetts Asylum for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth in South Boston to train and educate young persons with intellectual disabilities (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2005). Within 50 years most states had one residential facility for the education of the deaf, blind or mentally disabled with most having all

three institutions (Osgood, 2005). The first public school for the education of a clearly defined special needs population was open in Boston in 1869 to educate students described as deaf-mutes (Osgood, 2005). Still these schools served to exclude students with disabilities from the general education environment.

Early in the 1900's states began to pass compulsory attendance laws and public school systems began to spring up all over the country to meet the needs of these towns. These schools began to organize into a system of grade levels and a progression from elementary to secondary classes (Winzer, 1993). The passage of compulsory attendance also brought some children with disabilities to the schools. In urban school systems teachers and administrators began to segregate students who were unsuccessful, uncooperative or different into separate schools with ungraded classrooms (Osgood, 2005). By 1932 there were 75,000 intellectually disabled children being served in special ungraded classrooms in 483 cities in 39 states (Osgood, 2005). The reasons given for excluding students with disabilities were mostly for the benefit of the typical students. Separate classes insured that the general education pupils would have more teacher time, a quicker pace of instruction and better behavior while the benefits for pupils with disabilities was freedom from teasing by peers, slower pace of instruction and more encouragement for skills they are capable of demonstrating (Osgood, 2005). Not everyone thought exclusion was a good idea. Newton, Massachusetts and Winnetoka, Illinois had classrooms where typical students and their peers with disabilities were taught together while assistant or unassigned teachers helped the slow learners as early as 1898 (Winzer, 1993).

The Great Depression of the 1930s slowed and in some cities stalled the progression of special education. From the 1940s until the 1950s separate and segregated education for students with disabilities was the prevailing idea (Osgood, 2005). Yet, not all educators agreed that

exclusion was the best system for educating students with disabilities. In 1949, Dr. Challman of the Minneapolis Public Schools identified the separation of students with disabilities from the public school system as stigmatizing and hurtful to the child's self-esteem (Osgood, 2005). Challman went on to say that the ungraded classes are seen as a place where learning and progress are absent.

The 1950s brought the efficacy studies or the comparison of the performance of students with intellectual disabilities in segregated and integrated classes (Winzer, 1993). Like today results were mixed, segregated classes were found to have better social experiences for the students with disabilities while the integrated classroom provided better academic achievement (Osgood, 2005). Beginning in 1953, the idea of including students with disabilities began to see positive momentum as educational leaders began to speak in favor of including students with disabilities (Katz, 1976). Samuel Kirk, in 1953, argued that special education should be a compliment to regular education not an alternative. F.E. Lord, in 1956, spoke positively of integrating programs for normal and exceptional children (Osgood, 2005). Still most education professionals at that time believed that integration should occur if the student was capable and only in areas such as clubs, arts, music, shop, home making and physical education (Osgood, 2005). Then beginning in 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower and the congress passed a series of laws that began to include the disabled. The first was PL 85-905, which provided loan services for the captioning of films for the deaf (Osgood, 2005). Next PL 85-926 followed which gave federal support for the training of teachers to educate children with mental retardation (Osgood, 2005). Then the National Defense of Education Act gave support for the education of the handicapped (Winzer, 1993). John Kennedy, in 1961, appointed a panel to study the prevention and management of mental retardation. This was followed by PL 88-156,

which gave states support for initiatives for educating the handicapped (Katz, 1976). President Johnson continued the work with PL 88-164 that established the Division of Handicapped Children and Youth within the federal Office of Education. Still segregation and exclusion continued in the 1960s and 1970s (Osgood, 2005).

In 1968, Maynard Reynolds constructed a visual of services and placements for exceptional children. His chart, shaped like a pyramid, began with a wide base representing the regular classroom where most of the children should be educated and progressed to the small tip signifying residential institutions for the very few that required constant care. Resource rooms, part time special classes, and separate schools were located in between the wide base and the tip (Osgood, 2005). In 1968 Lloyd Dunn wrote the seminal article on special education. Dunn pointed out that there was an over population of minority children identified as emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded and placed in separate schools and ungraded classrooms. Dunn described their placement in special education as unequal, discriminatory and unconstitutional (Osgood, 2005).

By early 1970 educational experts called for an end to the separate, segregated schools for exceptional children and more interaction but not necessarily the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms (Winzer, 1993). This change in philosophy resulted in a large portion of children identified as educable mentally retarded spending a greater portion of their day in the general education program. From 1971 to 1975 the courts heard 46 right to education cases in 28 states and determined that not only do students with disabilities have the right to attend public schools with their regular education peers but they also have the right to be taught in settings with these peers to the greatest extent possible (Osgood, 2005). As parents began to demand and litigate for more access to the general education curriculum and

classroom for their disabled children, special education began to close separate schools. In the 1980s public schools began to educate students with a variety of disabilities in the same schools as typical peers, not necessarily in the same classes (Smith, 2000). Beginning in the late 1990s to the present the contemporary public school students with disabilities are not only included in nonacademic activities with non-disabled peers but also they are included in the general education classroom for academic content too. Students identified with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disabilities, physical and intellectual disabilities are receiving special education services in the general education classroom instead of separate ungraded schools and classes. Children with disabilities have moved from exclusion, persecution and fear to a place of acceptance and inclusion. The history of inclusion continues as the legislative initiatives that have shaped special education are discussed.

Inclusion Laws in Classroom Practice

Inclusion law has changed the practice of teaching in the modern classroom (Nevin, Falkenberg, Nullman, Salazar, & Silió, 2013). Thousand, Villa, and Nevin (2005) described five options for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom: natural peer support, individualized support, consultation, supported instruction, and coteaching. The interactions between the special education teacher, general education teacher and student are very different with each option.

The natural peer support option has same-age peers providing natural supports for the student with disabilities. The peers provide assistance in note taking, navigating the school, organization, and assistance with assignments. They also serve to expand the student with disabilities social group by including the student in social activities such as clubs, free time and

other non-instructional activities (Thousand et al., 2005). This is peer-to-peer interaction with little input other than encouragement from the general education teacher.

Individualized support is much like peer support but involves an adult, usually a paraprofessional, to provide individualized support for the student with disabilities in the general education classroom. The individual providing support assists with differentiation of materials, assistance with tasks and facilitates learning for the student (Nevin et al., 2012; Thousand et al., 2005). This is interaction between the paraprofessional and the student under the direction of the general education teacher.

The consultation option is interaction between the general education teacher and the special education teacher, not the student with disabilities. The special education teacher consults with the general education teacher to provide support for the student with disabilities by tracking the student's progress, adapting or offering supplemental instructional materials, or helping with suggestions to improve behavior (Thousand et al., 2005).

Supported instruction is the use of a paraprofessional to assist in the general education classroom (Idol, 2006). The paraprofessional is not assigned to a particular student with disabilities, but is under the direction of the general education teacher to assist with the instruction of all students in the general education classroom.

The final option is coteaching, one general education and one special education teacher in the same classroom collaborating in the education of all students in that classroom (Tobin, 2005). In the coteaching classroom, special education and general education teachers work together to provide education to all students, both those with disabilities and those without, in the same general education classroom (Nevin et al., 2012). There is a variety of arrangements or models of coteaching presently being used in the modern inclusive classroom.

Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) have identified five theoretical models of this collaboration or coteaching. The coteaching models are: one teach- one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternate teaching, and team teaching.

The first model, One Teach, One Assist, has one teacher providing the instruction for the entire class while the second teacher assists students that need additional support. Zigmond and Matta (2004) found this to be the most used model in the high school inclusive classroom. The special education teacher at the high school level does not actively instruct students in the content but rather provides procedural support such as redirecting attention, reminding students of assignments or correcting behavior in the inclusive classroom (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009).

Station Teaching, the second model, breaks the class into three smaller groups. Two groups work with the teachers (one group with the general education teacher and one group with the special education teacher) and the third group practices the concepts independently. After a specified time the groups rotate until all have been through each station. This is a rarely used model at the high school level (Zigmond & Matta, 2004).

The third model Parallel Teaching once again splits the students into smaller groups. The class is divided into two groups and the general education and special education teachers deliver identical content to the two groups within the same classroom. This model is used more in the lower grades but very rarely observed in the high school inclusive classroom (Kloo & Zigmond, 2009).

The fourth model Alternative Teaching has one teacher teaching the main content while the second teacher works with students that need additional assistance by preteaching or

reteaching concepts. Alternative Teaching is used at the elementary and middle grades, but has not been observed at the secondary level (Kloo & Zigmond, 2009).

The final model is Team Teaching. The two teachers together provide instruction for all students in the classroom alternating the instructional roles within individual content lessons (Kloo & Zigmond, 2009). Zigmond and Matta (2004) did not observe any secondary coteaching team using this model.

Inclusion has caused a major shift in the roles of the general education and special education teachers. In the past the role of the special education teacher was to deliver specially designed instruction to meet the individual and unique needs of a student with disabilities outlined in the student's Individual Educational Program (IEP; Zigmond et al., 2009). Today, as an increasing number of students with disabilities spend more of their school day in the general education classroom the special education teacher's role has evolved from providing specially designed instruction, to adapting the general education content for the student with disabilities in the mainstreamed classroom (Zigmond et al., 2009). The general education teacher is now responsible for teaching content to a wider variety of students than ever before (Zigmond et al., 2009).

The predominately held philosophy of inclusion used by the Georgia Department of Education is team teaching or co teaching. In this model a special education and a general education teacher work as a team to deliver instruction, both special instruction and content instruction, to the entire class. The student with disabilities is not taken out of the class for special services but rather receives their special education services in the general education classroom. This has been found to be very successful in the early grades but not a true equitable distribution of teaching time and content instruction at the secondary or high school levels

(Strieker, Logan, & Kuhel, 2012). Bulgren et al. (2006) made a case for separate settings for students with disabilities at the high school level. Their study has found that placing high school students with disabilities in the general education classroom for longer periods of the school day does not positively change student outcomes.

The Importance of Perception

The changes that have occurred in the classroom as a result of new federal education laws have certainly bred a wide variety of reactions from general education and special education teachers alike. How those two groups perceive inclusive education ultimately determines its success or failure. The importance of perception begins with Bandura. He found that efficacy is skill and motivation influenced by the beliefs held by the individual (Bandura, 1986; Bandura 2012). Ahmad (2011) stated that people must believe they can produce desired results to their actions or they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulty. Ross and Gray (2006) found that principals indirectly effect teacher perceptions by modeling their commitment and beliefs to the teachers. Torff (2011) holds that teacher beliefs shape the learning of all students. Rubie-Davis, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, and Dixon (2010) established that teachers who perceived students as motivated and academically successful had students that mirrored these attributes. Conteras (2011) found that the perceptions held by teachers are a barrier to the achievement of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Pierson (2010) indicated that it is not the system of inclusion, but the attitudes of all the professionals involved that makes inclusion happen and successful for students with disabilities.

Perceptions of School Administrators

Research indicates that administration support for inclusive education has an effect on perceptions, both positive and negative, of inclusion (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Hill, 2009; Idol,

2006; Jull & Minnes, 2008; Reynolds, 2008; Valeo, 2008). The positive attitude of key school officials is a critical prerequisite for successful inclusion of students with disabilities (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008). Ferretti and Eisenman (2010) found that the school culture led by the administration influences the perceptions held by teachers of the inclusion of students with disabilities. Jull and Minnes (2008) found that there is a significant relationship between perceived administration support and positive teacher perceptions of inclusion. Lohrmann and Bambara (2006) identified administration support as a school wide articulated vision of inclusion, collegial atmosphere, in-class support personnel, and opportunities to collaborate with other professionals.

However, the perceptions of inclusion held by principals and school administrators have been mixed. Horrocks, White, and Roberts (2008) found that principals who believe children with disabilities should be included in regular education were more likely to recommend placement in inclusive general education classrooms. A study of elementary principals found that only one in five principals held positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities, with the majority having uncertain attitudes, depending on the disability category of the student (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Praisner, 2003).

Yet administrators can create those positive perceptions in the teaching staff if they choose to do so. Praisner (2003) found administrators who create an environment of support and training for their teachers build positive perceptions for their school and all stakeholders. These administrators create positive perceptions by making sure that there are enough fiscal, human, and physical resources. Those resources could include staff development, nurses, psychologists, paraprofessionals, co-teachers, and other supports required for the teachers and students in the inclusive classroom to be successful (Reynolds, 2008). Idol (2006) found a perceived lack of

administration support as the primary reason why teachers perceive inclusion negatively.

Perceptions of Preservice Teachers

Perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms have also been studied among the next generation of teachers entering the profession. These future educators should have the most recent information and course work to prepare them for the inclusive classroom. Research regarding perceptions of inclusion amongst preservice teachers in the United States has yielded mixed results.

Brandes and Crowson (2009) found a link between social dominance orientation, “the extent to which one desires that one’s in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups”, and negative perceptions of inclusion by preservice teachers (p. 274). Discomfort with disabilities was another reason why preservice teachers held negative perceptions. McCray and McHatton (2007) found that teacher education students held more positive perceptions of inclusion after taking a course on the inclusion of students with disabilities. The participants were more positive about including students with learning disabilities, hearing impairments, and health impairments, but very negative about including students with intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities (McCray & McHatton, 2007). Preservice teachers were found to actually have a more positive perception of inclusion before they had experience in the inclusive classroom than after experiencing inclusion (Beacham & Rouse, 2011).

Sharma, Forlin, Loreman, and Earle (2006) researched the attitudes and perceptions of 1,060 preservice teachers in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, and Singapore. They found that Canadian preservice teachers held more positive attitudes toward inclusion than the preservice teachers from Hong Kong and Singapore. Australian preservice teachers were split on their perceptions of inclusion. Jull and Minnes (2007) looked at preservice teacher attitudes toward

inclusion in Canada. The study found that teachers with positive interactions and adequate support from administration for inclusion of students with disabilities held more positive attitudes than those with negative interactions and a lower expectation of support from administrators.

Perceptions of Parents

Administration support is not the only factor that impacts teacher perceptions. There have been several studies to determine the perceptions of inclusion held by the parents of both students with and without disabilities. Pijl and Hamstra (2005) found that the parents of students with disabilities who were being educated in inclusive classrooms had overall positive perceptions of inclusive education in terms of how it influenced their child's development. Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff, and Swart (2007) compared parents' perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and found that parents perceived the inclusion of their student with disabilities in the general education class as a positive placement and the correct place for the child to learn. Gibb, Young, Allred, and Dyches (1997) found that parents of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms perceived the following positive results for their child: increased social relationships, more positive experiences, greater self-image, and increased academic achievement.

Peck, Staub, Gallucci, and Schwartz (2004) surveyed parents of nondisabled children in inclusive classrooms. The majority of parents perceived the impact of inclusion as positive for their child. The parents that expressed concerns indicated behavioral disruptions and lack of teacher time for their children as negative issues.

Perceptions of Students

Siperstein, Parker, Barron, and Widaman (2007) conducted a nationwide study of youth

attitudes toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in general education classes. The study found that typically developing high school students believe that intellectually disabled students should be included in nonacademic or elective classes, but not core academic classes. Most typically developing students surveyed are not socially involved outside of school with the students with disabilities who are in their general education classes. This does not indicate a positive perception of inclusion by the general education students.

James, Kellman, and Lieberman (2011) studied the perspectives on inclusion from the viewpoint of the students with disabilities that are in the inclusive physical education classroom. The students noted the following negative feelings: lack of opportunity to participate in activities and school teams, exclusion, being ignored, low expectations and lack of social interaction. Research has found some students with disabilities requesting separate special education classrooms and areas to meet with other students with similar disabilities away from general education peers (Siperstein et al., 2007).

Perceptions of General Education Teachers

Teacher perceptions of inclusion are influenced by several factors, such as the teachers' knowledge, amount of contact with a particular student or group of students, and previous experience with inclusion (Hill, 2009; Leatherman, 2007). Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that teacher perceptions were related to the support they received such as planning time, training, and personnel resources (special education co-teachers and paraprofessionals).

The perceptions of general education teachers about inclusion also vary by the grade level of their students. Leatherman (2007) found that early childhood teachers' perceptions of inclusion were influenced by factors such as training, administrative, peer and professional support, participation in the decision making process such as whether or not to include students

with disabilities in their classrooms and positive experiences with students with disabilities. Conversely at the high school level several studies have found teachers having negative, and sometimes hostile, perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in their general education classes (Hoover & Yeager, 2003; Lusk et al., 2008). Murwaski (2004) discovered that high school teachers are generally more territorial and accustomed to teaching in isolation and resistant to letting others interfere or assist with delivering instruction and content in their classroom.

Recently however, Hill (2009) found that perceptions of inclusion among high school teachers are becoming more positive, with teachers at the secondary level indicating the same frequency of positive attitudes and perceptions as teachers at the elementary and middle school levels. This is attributed to additional positive experiences and support for those teachers, such as special education teachers coteaching in general education classrooms.

Teacher perceptions of inclusion are not only influenced by training, experience, and administrative support, but also the ethnicity of the child with the disability (Pecek, Cuk, & Lesar, 2008). Teachers perceived the inclusion of Roma children with disabilities as negative and undesirable. The teachers indicated that they perceive the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education as lowering the student achievement, the learning, and the behavior standards of the classroom (Pecek et al., 2008).

Research from Saloviita and Takala (2010) indicates that when teachers have had experience with inclusion their perceptions are more positive than the perceptions of teachers who have had no experience with inclusion; thus they are more willing to have students with disabilities in their classrooms. Yet, some teacher's perceptions are less positive after they have experience in inclusion (Chhabra, Srivastva, R., & Srivastva,L., 2010). A study of head teachers

at 28 schools in the United Kingdom found that those head teachers had many concerns about the inclusion of students with disabilities in their school (Abbott, 2006). However, their perceptions of inclusion became more positive as the amount of training and experience increased. When coupled with resources such as special education co-teachers and paraprofessionals, even more positive perception of inclusion resulted (Abbott, 2006).

Inclusion research at the middle school level has been mixed. Battige (2008) found that middle school general education teachers report that the inclusion of students with disabilities have resulted in an increased workload, slower pace, decreased depth of instruction, increased responsibility for the students IEP goals and objectives, and an increased stress level. While Whitaker (2011) found that middle school general education teachers that had experience with students with disabilities held generally positive perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Wiggins (2012) and Jones-Wilson (2011) confirms that with experience positive perceptions of inclusion increase.

Yet not all perceptions are positive. In a study of high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion Van Reusen, Shoho and Barker (2001) found that over one-half of the subjects held negative perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities. The negative attitudes were spread over all content areas (math, literature, social studies, science, fine arts, physical education and ROTC) at the high school level. Hover and Yeager (2003) interviewed high school history teachers and found that the teachers reported that they attempted to meet the needs of the students with disabilities, and yet, they were unwilling to make any significant changes to their curriculum to accommodate the students with disabilities because of the focus on standards. They indicted that making changes would prevent them from teaching the standards that their students would be responsible for during state testing (Hover & Yeager, 2003). Nichols, J.,

Dowdy, and Nichols, C. (2010) found that the focus on high stakes testing has had a negative impact on teacher perceptions. The pressure to cover content for mandated assessments decreased the amount of differentiation and special instruction the student with disabilities received in the inclusive classroom (Nichols et al., 2010). Several studies have illuminated the gap between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality of teaching in inclusive classrooms (Hover & Yeager, 2003; Humphrey & Lewis 2008; Kavale & Foreness, 2000). The teachers indicate they hold positive perceptions of inclusion, but in reality are hostile to adaptation of materials, differentiation, or any changes in the classroom.

Teachers also indicated negative perceptions of inclusion due to limited resources. The general education teachers perceive the students with disabilities in their classrooms taking away time and resources from their general education students (Albritten, Mainzer, & Ziegler, 2004). However, Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) found that the academic achievement of both students with disabilities and students without disabilities in inclusive classrooms was the same as students in non-inclusive classrooms while Fore, Burke, Boon, and Smith (2008) found that students with intellectual disabilities academic achievement did not improve with placement in inclusion classes.

Perceptions of Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers are spending more time in the general education classroom, yet their role in the educational environment is not always clear (Voltz, Raymond, & Cobb, 1994). Researchers have found that special education teachers have very different perceptions of their role in the inclusive classroom (Voltz et al., 1994). General education teachers often find themselves doing most of the actual content and concept instruction, while the special education teacher is relegated to providing support that is more in keeping with the duties of a

paraprofessional (Austin, 2001). Nichols, J. and Nichols, C. (2010) found that special education teachers perceive the role of instruction to be the responsibility of the general education teacher while the special education teacher handles modifications, accommodations, and classroom management. The instructional responsibilities are observed to be more equitable when the special education and general education teacher collaborate on planning and instructional duties (Austin, 2001; Idol, 2006). Rice, Drame, and Owen (2007) found that special educators are more successful in the inclusive classroom if they demonstrate six essential skills: professionalism, articulation and modeling of instruction, assessment of student progress, analyze their teaching style, knowledge of course content including a readiness to learn the content, and willingness to work with a wide range of students. These changing dynamics have resulted in several studies involving special education teachers' perceptions of inclusion and their role in the inclusive environment.

The one class fits all is the very opposite of the philosophy and practice of special education (Albritten et al., 2004). Special education realizes that students with disabilities must have an education and instruction that is focused on each student's unique and individual needs (Albritten et al., 2004). Yet NCLB and IDEA are encouraging the one class for all philosophy, and special education teachers are caught in the middle. Special education teachers that teach in inclusive classrooms mention that their role of providing specialized instruction is often hampered by the general education teachers' insistence on whole class instruction (Magiera, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebauer, 2005). They also struggle to be seen as an equal in the general education classroom, especially at the high school level (Magiera et al., 2005). In the high school general education classroom the special education teacher is often perceived as an assistant or helper teacher (Kloo & Zigmond, 2009, Nichols, J. et al. 2010). The special

education teachers report that insufficient planning time, multiple teacher partnerships and scheduling conflicts result in negative perceptions of the inclusive and coteaching classroom (Mastropieri, et al., 2005). Fuchs (2009) identified the following barriers to inclusion: the unreasonable responsibilities and expectations of regular education teachers, little training and collaboration for mainstreaming practices, lack of support from administrators in the areas of in-service training, class size, planning time, and shared duty.

Perceptions of Teacher Efficacy in Inclusive Classrooms

Self-efficacy is defined as the perceived level of competence, ability, or behaviors that a person possesses (Bandura, 1994). Teachers' beliefs about their efficacy or their belief in their ability to teach students is a strong predictor of their actions in the classroom (Jerald, 2007). Goodwin (2011) states that "classroom teachers are not only affected by self-efficacy in their own teaching but also they are transmitters of self-efficacy to the students through modeling and verbal encouragement" (p. 16). This identifies the value of a teachers' perception of their efficacy as essential information. Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) found that teachers with little preparation in special education have significantly negative perceptions about their ability to teach students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.

Jerald (2007) established that teachers with the most self-efficacy were more apt to try new ideas and actively plan for students with disabilities in their classrooms. Heck (2009) found that teacher effectiveness has a positive influence on student achievement in the classroom. Roll-Peterson (2008) established that teachers with post-graduate special education course work had high self-efficacy perceptions while teachers with little post-graduate course work had much lower perceived efficacy.

Teacher perceptions of their efficacy in the inclusive classroom were also associated to

the disability of the students involved. Teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach students with fetal alcohol syndrome, on the autism spectrum, intellectual disabilities and significant developmental delays were considerably negative (Dybdahl & Ryan, 2009; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008). Teacher perceptions were considerably more positive for students with specific learning disabilities and mild emotional disabilities (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012).

Betoret (2009) found that a teacher's self-efficacy is a major factor in the ability to attain and maintain classroom discipline. Teachers with high self-efficacy perceptions spend their instructional time in productive classroom activities and on academic endeavors (Bandura, 1977). Conversely, teachers with low self-efficacy devote most of the instructional period solving discipline problems and correcting behavior (Bandura, 1977). Classroom management is important therefore the most recent literature in classroom management of inclusive classrooms will be discussed in the following section.

Perceptions of Classroom Management in Inclusive Classrooms

Rosas and West (2009) stated that teachers rank classroom management as their major concern in regards to inclusive education. They also found that ineffective classroom management interferes with teaching and learning and is often the reason teachers transfer to other schools or leave the profession. Milner and Tenore (2010) identified classroom management of the inclusive classroom as one of the factors influencing teacher perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities. Teachers' perceptions of their ability to manage the inclusive classroom have been found to be a factor in their perceptions of inclusion in general (Milner & Tenore, 2010; Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Stoutjesdijk, Scholte, & Swaab, 2011). Teachers in general education classrooms that include students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (EBD), moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, and students with autism

negatively perceive their ability to effectively manage the classroom environment for maximum learning (Wilson & Michaels, 2006). Yet, in another study general education teachers in classes that included students with learning disabilities replied more favorably about their ability to manage the classroom learning environment (Scott, Jellison, Chappell, & Standridge, 2007).

Summary

Teacher perceptions and attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms have become more positive. This is at least partially the result of stakeholders having more experiences with the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Fore, Burke, Boon, & Smith, 2008; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Hill, 2009; Idol, 2006; Jellison & Taylor, 2007). The combination of two decades of educator experience, increased administrative support and numerous research studies have given students with disabilities access and success in the general education environment, which is the least restrictive environment. This study examined whether that access and success has influenced how current general education and special education teachers perceive inclusive classrooms.

McLesky, Landers, Williamson, and Hoppey (2009) have described special education as a steady trend towards more inclusion of students with disabilities in general education. Yet, as Abbott (2006) reminds us inclusion is so much more than just where a student is physically educated but rather it is about the bigger educational values of equity, diversity and justice. Inclusion is the method for removing barriers to learning and belonging for all students in our schools.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this causal-comparative research study was to utilize survey data to examine the relationship between teacher assignment in inclusive classrooms and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in six rural high schools in Georgia. The variables of interest were teacher assignment and those teachers' responses to the Opinions Related to Inclusion (ORI) survey questions. Analysis was conducted by utilizing *t*-tests to determine the differences in perceptions between the two groups of teachers on specific survey items. Understanding the relationships between these variables could allow teachers and administrators to more fully understand the perceptions that influence the teacher-teacher and teacher-student dynamics that can impact the success of students in inclusive classrooms.

This chapter begins by presenting the research design that accomplished the study's goals. Next, it restates the research questions that were answered and describes the participants and setting of the study. The chapter continues by identifying the instrument used to capture the necessary data. Finally, it details the procedures that answered the research questions and explained how the data was collected and analyzed.

The rationale for the design of this study was to determine the differences in perceptions held by general education and special education teachers about the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The most efficient and accurate method for gathering perceptions of groups of people is the use of survey research (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Ary et al. (2006) notes that a survey instrument is a useful tool to gather information from a smaller group, which can then be used to make inferences about a greater

population (Ary et al., 2006). Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2009) identify Internet surveys as the most efficient method of gathering survey data in the modern research culture.

Design of the Study

Nature of the Design

The design chosen for this research study was causal-comparative research. In this design the researcher compared groups by examining preexisting differences in the variable to determine the effect on another variable (Gall, M. et al., 2007). The research study began with two groups that differ on a cause or independent variable, which in this investigation was the teachers' teaching assignment (either general education or special education) and determined the effect of that variable, which is perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in this study.

Variables

The independent variable for this study was teachers' teaching assignment either general education or special education. The dependent variable was the teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQ) and null hypotheses are as follows:

RQ1: What is the difference in perceptions of inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in inclusive settings?

H₀1: There will be no statistically significant difference in perceptions of inclusive education, (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting.

RQ2: What is the difference in the perception of the benefits of inclusive education for students (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting?

H₀2: There will be no statistically significant difference in the perception of the benefits of inclusive education for students (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting.

RQ3: What is the difference in the perception of classroom management in inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting?

H₀3: There will be no statistically significant difference in the perception of classroom management in inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting.

RQ4: What is the difference in the perception of teachers' personal teaching efficacy (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting?

H₀4: There will be no statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers' personal teaching efficacy (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high

school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting.

Data Gathering Methods

Data was gathered from the two groups using the Opinions Related to Inclusion of Special Education Students or ORI which is a revision of the Opinions related to Mainstreaming developed by Larrivee and Cook in 1979.

Collecting the Data

The ORI was sent electronically, through the email system of the participating school systems, from the researcher to all the teachers who had taught in an inclusive setting for a minimum of one year. The participants were sent an informational email that gave the participant details such as the study, the purpose, confidentiality and data security (Appendix A). The participants were also informed that completing the survey was considered as consent to be included in the study. The subjects were given a link to an online survey site where the responses were collected and recorded over a two-week period (Appendix B).

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board of Liberty University is responsible for reviewing research studies that involve human participants. There are three levels of review: exempt, expedited, and full review. The present research study constitutes a minimal risk to the participants qualified for an expedited review. The research involved research on group perceptions employing a survey instrument, which was identified as possibly exempt and qualified for an expedited review (Liberty University, n.d.). Care was taken to disguise any information that could identify a specific participant so that confidentiality could be assured. This included pseudonyms for the systems and schools participating in the research. The

participating schools were identified using the pseudonyms, HS 1 through HS 6, and all results were reported using only the pseudonyms. Teacher names were not collected as part of the demographic data only school, teaching assignment, special education or general education, and years of experience, years of inclusive experience, and highest degree held. The use of Survey Monkey, the online survey system, kept the responding emails anonymous to the researcher to ensure confidentiality of the respondents.

Instrumentation

Opinions Related to Inclusion

The instrument used to investigate the research questions was the Opinions Related to Inclusion (ORI). The ORI is a survey instrument used by researchers to evaluate the perceptions of teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education or mainstream classroom (Alquraini, 2012; Antonak and Larrivee, 1995; Bruce, 2010; Hull, 2005; Verba, 2010). The ORI is a revision of the survey instrument Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming (ORM) scale developed in 1979 by Larrivee and Cook. The ORI was revised in 1995 from 30 items to the present 25 and the language was updated. The instrument measures teachers' perceptions of inclusion by the use of statements, such as "The student with a disability will develop academic skills more rapidly in a general classroom than a special classroom" and "It is not more difficult to maintain order in a general education classroom that contains a student with a disability than in one that does not contain a student with a disability." The participants will rate the 25 statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The ORI measures general perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities, as well as subcategories of the teachers' perceived benefits of inclusion for students, the teachers' perceived ability to manage the inclusive classroom and the perceived teacher efficacy for

teaching students with disabilities. The ORI was chosen because it is designed to answer the research questions of this investigation.

The ORI is considered reliable and valid and has been used by many researchers in the measurement of perceptions of inclusion (Alquraini, 2012; Griffin, 2007; Hull, 2005; Schwarber, 2006; Whitaker, 2010). Anatonak and Larrivee (1995) indicated that the Spearman-Brown corrected split-half reliability estimate is .82. The Scales of Attitudes toward Disabled Persons (SADP) was given with the ORI and then measured using a hierarchal multiple regression analysis the alpha homogeneity coefficient was found to be .83 (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995).

In addition to completing the ORI the participants were asked to complete a demographic survey designed by the researcher (to include teaching assignment) so that each participant could be assigned to the appropriate group and teachers with less than one year of experience in an inclusive classroom could be excluded. Other demographic information (school where they work, degrees held, subject area taught and years of experience) was also collected via the survey.

Measuring the Variables

The instrument consisted of 25 statements with a 6 point Likert scale consisting of the following possible responses: I disagree very much, I disagree pretty much, I disagree a little, I agree a little, I agree pretty much or I agree very much. The 25 statements consisted of 13 positively worded statements and 12 that were worded negatively. Scores ranged from 0 to a possible high of 150. Responses were scored by reversing the sign of the negatively worded question and then finding the sum of the 25 items. The author of the test recommends adding a constant score of 75 to eliminate any negative total scores. The higher score represents a more

favorable perception of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom and a lower score represents a less favorable perception of inclusion.

The ORI not only measures teacher perceptions of inclusion in general but also measures the perceptions of three factors of inclusion: perceived benefits of inclusion for the students, perceived classroom management of the inclusive classroom, and perceived ability to teach students in the inclusive classroom or teacher self-efficacy.

Sampling Procedures

Nature of Population

Gall et al. (2007) identify two types of populations relevant to quantitative research; target population and accessible population. The target population of this study was all teachers, both special education and general education, who taught in inclusive classrooms in the state of Georgia. The accessible population consisted of all high school general education and special education teachers in the Pioneer RESA area that taught in inclusion classrooms. The accessible population was surveyed for this research. The accessible population for this particular study consisted of six rural high schools in six different school districts.

Table 1

School Personnel Demographics of Participating Schools

Demographic Category	HS 1	HS 2	HS 3	HS 4	HS 5	HS 6
Employment Status						
Full-Time	86	85	54	56	58	59
Part-Time	2	5	6	5	6	8
Gender						
Male	29	42	33	23	25	31
Female	59	48	27	38	39	36
Education Level						
Bachelor's Degree	17	19	18	12	19	18
Master's Degree	41	45	28	15	26	35
Ed. Spec. Degree	27	17	10	28	16	11
Doctoral Degree	2	4	2	1	0	1
Other	1	5	2	5	3	2
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	1	2	0	3	0	0
White	84	83	60	56	63	65
Hispanic	2	1	0	2	1	1
Native American	0	2	0	0	0	1
Multiracial	1	2	0	0	0	0
Teaching Experience						
< 1 Year Experience	3	3	1	0	3	0
1-10 Years Experience	31	26	32	15	16	27
11-20 Years Experience	29	28	16	29	23	26
21-30 Years Experience	20	25	11	16	16	12
> 30 Years Experience	5	8	0	1	6	2
Avg. Years Experience	14.99	16.76	11.38	15.85	16.02	13.81

Note: Data from Georgia Department of Education School Reports 2011-2012

Table 2

Student Demographics of Participating Schools

Category	HS 1	HS 2	HS 3	HS 4	HS 5	HS 6
Race						
Asian	3	0	0	2	1	0
Black	2	15	3	25	0	2
Hispanic	20	2	7	3	3	6
White	72	78	87	67	95	91
Multiracial	2	4	0	2	0	1
Free/Reduced Lunch	46	51	61	53	38	14
Students With	14	16	15	8	9	45
Disabilities						
Total Students	1,190	1,151	823	969	1,030	1,130

Note: Data from Georgia Department of Education School Reports 2011-2012

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame, a list of all special education and general education teachers in the Pioneer RESA who have taught a minimum of one year in an inclusion classroom during the school year, was available for the target areas. The list only included teachers from the six high schools that had given permission for the teachers to participate. The type of sample for this research study was a cluster sample, because the teachers, both general education and special education in the Pioneer RESA are “alike respective to characteristics relevant to the variables of the study” (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006, p.172). The commonly accepted value for a moderate sample size is 30 (Green & Salkind, 2008).

Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure included all high school special education teachers and general education teachers that had taught in inclusive settings for a minimum of one year in the six

selected high schools in the Pioneer RESA area. The principals received an email describing this study and requesting permission to survey the special education and general education teachers in their school. Once permission was received from the principals and the university IRB gave permission to conduct the research, the teachers identified in the sampling frame were sent an email with a description of the study and a link to the actual instrument see appendix B and C. Completing the survey was considered consent to participate.

Setting

There are 16 Regional Education Service Areas (RESA) in Georgia. Pioneer RESA is located in the Northeast corner of the state of Georgia. The RESA serves a total of 14 school systems and 102 schools and 68,000 students. For the purpose of this study six systems were selected to participate. These six systems have similar teacher and student demographics.

Procedures

Consent to conduct the study was sought from the target school systems first. Upon approval, each principal was asked to complete a permission letter for his or her schools participation in the study (see Appendix B for the consent forms for the participating system and teacher participants). Once those permissions were secured, all general education and special education teachers that teach in inclusive settings at each of the six schools were asked to complete the ORI. The researcher sent each participant a survey link via email. The email informed teachers about the study and the data-gathering instrument. The email asked the teachers to complete a voluntary, anonymous survey during a two-week data collection period (Appendix B). After one week the researcher sent a reminder email to the potential participants through the school email system before the survey window closed (Appendix B).

Each response of the twenty-five statements on the Likert-scale was given a point value along a six point scale that ranged from negative three for strongly disagree to three for strongly agree. There was no neutral midpoint in the instrument. The perceptions were either positive or negative. The responses were scored for the overall difference in perceptions, along with the three categories on the instrument: benefits of inclusion, classroom management in the inclusive classroom, and perceived ability to teach students in the inclusive classroom.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analyzing the Data

The data was analyzed using the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21), a statistical software program that facilitates data management, analyses, and visual representation of the data. ORI responses from the general education teachers and the special education teachers were compared on the general question and four identified factors assessed. The research involved two groups of participants so a *t*-test was used to determine the statistical differences between the two groups on the items. The *t*-test was performed to determine if the differences between the mean scores of the two groups on the survey items occurred by chance or represent a significant statistical difference in the two groups.

The *t*-test has three underlying assumptions. The first is that the test variable is normally distributed. The second assumption is equal variances. The third assumption is that the cases represent a random sample from the population and the scores on the test variable are independent of each other. This is achieved because no participants in the research study could belong to both groups.

Summary

This chapter began with a presentation of and rationale for the research design. The overall questions to be addressed in the research and the hypotheses were discussed. The instrument for gathering the information as well as the method for selecting participants, sending the survey instrument, and securing the data was also discussed. The data analysis procedures and statistical tests were identified and described. After IRB approval (Appendix C) and completion of data collecting, the next chapter describes the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of inclusion held by special education and general education teachers at the high school level. The teachers completed the Opinions Related to Inclusion or ORI survey instrument in a three-week period from October 14, 2013 to November 1, 2013. The ORI measures general perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities as well as three subcategories that include the teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion for students, the teachers' perceptions of their ability to manage the inclusive classroom, and the perceived teacher efficacy for teaching students with disabilities. The survey results were used to compare the teachers' perceptions on four research questions. The research question addressed the overall perceptions of inclusion held by the two groups of educators. The questions determined teacher perceptions of the benefit of inclusion for students, teacher perceptions of classroom management in the inclusive classroom, and teacher perceptions of their efficacy in the classroom. This chapter is organized into five sections. The first section is the demographic profile of the population studied. The second section is the descriptive data for the variables of interest. In the next section, the results of the assumption testing for each research hypothesis are given. The fourth section describes the data analysis for the four research questions. The fifth section is a summary of the results.

Demographics

The sample of teachers in this research study consisted of both special and general high school educators in six rural high schools in Northeast Georgia. Due to the small number of special education teachers in some of the schools surveyed, gender and ethnicity was not collected to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of the participants (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). The following sections present the demographic composition of the 131

respondents in terms of years of teaching experience, level of education, and teaching assignments.

Years of Teaching Experience

The teachers in the study had varying years of experience. The largest group (30%) of respondents (n = 39) were those educators with 20 or more years of teaching experience; 28 of those were general education teachers, and 11 were special education teachers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2011), nationally 20.7% of all high school teachers have more than 20 years of experience. The Georgia Department of Education (2007), where results are given for all teachers K-12, the percentage is 24%. Teachers with 6-10 years of experience (n = 32) were the next largest group (24%); 20 respondents were general education teachers, and 12 were special education teachers. Nationally 32.7% of high school teachers have 6-10 years of experience and for all teachers in Georgia it is 24%. Participants with 16 to 20 years of experience (n = 29) accounted for 22%; 19 were general education teachers, and 11 were special education teachers. In Georgia 41% of teachers have 16 to 20 years of experience while nationally 20.7% have the 16-20 years of experience. Educators with 11 to 15 years' experience (n = 25) were the next group (19%); 17 were general education teachers, and eight were special education teachers. Those with 1-5 years of experience (n = 6) were the smallest group (5%), with 5 respondents being general education teachers and one being a special education teacher. Nationally the percentage of teachers with 1-5 years of experience at the high school level is 9.9. Georgia has 5% of the teachers statewide have 1 to 5 years' teaching experience.

Level of Education

The majority of the educators responding to the survey held advanced degrees. Table 1 shows that 42% (36 general education and 19 special education) of the teachers who completed the survey hold a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree (n = 55). According to the NCES (2011) nationally 47.9% of public school teachers hold M.Ed. degrees. Thirty-six percent (33 general education and 14 special education) completed an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree (n = 47). Nationally 6.8% of public school teachers hold Ed.S degrees. Respondents attaining Education Doctorate (Ed.D.) degrees (n = 10) represented 7% (six general education and four special education) of the teacher participants. Nationally 2.1% of high school teachers hold doctorate degrees. Those whose highest level of education was a Bachelor degree (n = 19) represented 15% (14 general education and five special education) of the surveyed population. Nationally 38.2% of high school teachers hold Bachelor degrees.

Teaching Assignments

The number of general education teachers in a high school typically outnumbers the special education teachers (Barco, 2007), and that was the case with the populations from the high schools that participated in this survey. The educators from the two target groups consisted of 70% general educators (n = 89), 30% special education teachers (n = 42).

The differences in the participants by subject area were minimal. English/language arts teachers (n = 29) comprised 22% percent of participants (13 general education and 14 special education). Mathematics teachers (n = 21) made up 16% of respondents (18 general education and three special education). Eighteen percent (18 general education and six special education) were science teachers (n = 24). Social studies teachers (n = 28) accounted for 21% of the teachers surveyed, with 20 general education teachers and eight special education teachers.

Educators (n = 31) teaching in more than one content area comprised 23% of the participants (20 general education and 11 special education). Nationally, at the high school level, English/language arts teachers represent 17.1% of total teachers and mathematics teachers comprise 10%. Science teachers are 12% of high school teachers while social sciences make up 18.6% of the teachers. The largest percentage of high school teachers nationally is 25% representing multiple subject teachers.

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent variable statistics were performed for this study. The following labels were used during the data analysis of the variables for each question. The overall perception of inclusive education was labeled as PercIncEd. The perception of the benefit of inclusive education was labeled as PercBenIncEd. The label for the perceived benefit of inclusion for classroom management was PercBenClassMan. The final label for teacher perceptions of teacher efficacy in the inclusive classroom was labeled PerTeachEff. These labels were used for all statistical data in SPSS 21 (see Table 3). All participants answered all questions therefore no listwise or pairwise deletion was necessary.

Table 3 *Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	PercIncEd	PercBenIncEd	PercBenClassMan	PerTeachEff	Valid N (listwise)
N Statistic	131	131	131	131	131
Range Statistic	112	41	55	16	
Min. Statistic	21	57	47	66	
Max. Statistic	133	98	102	82	
Mean Statistic	82.86	81.69	77.88	74.56	
Std. Error	2.19	0.84	1.03	0.29	
Std. Deviation Statistic	25.11	9.66	11.78	3.38	
Variance Statistic	630.51	93.38	138.97	11.43	

Assumption Testing

The independent samples t-test has three underlying assumptions (Green & Salkind, 2011). The first is that the test variable is normally distributed in the population, and the second is that the variances are equal and finally the third, cases represent a random sample from the population and the scores on the test variable are independent from each other (Green & Salkind, 2011). In the inclusive classroom, a teacher cannot be both the special education teacher and general education teacher, so the cases meet the independent assumption. Preliminary assumption testing for normality was also conducted. The assumption that data was normally distributed was determined by visual examination of normality histograms for each of the study variables. The normality histograms are displayed in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 1: Normality Histogram for Overall Perception of Inclusive Education, With Normal Curve Displayed

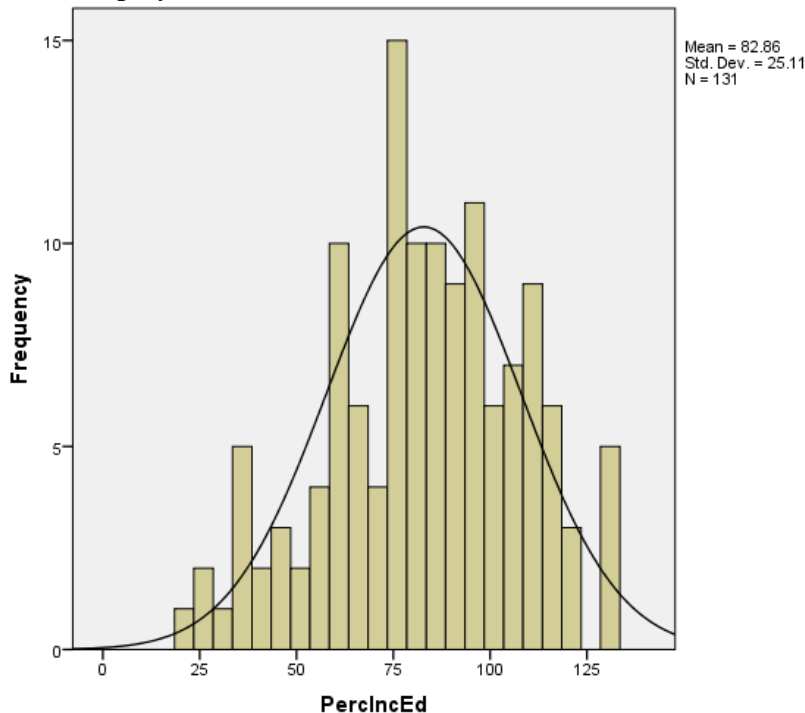


Figure2: Normality Histogram for Perceived Benefit of Inclusive Education, With Normal Curve Displayed

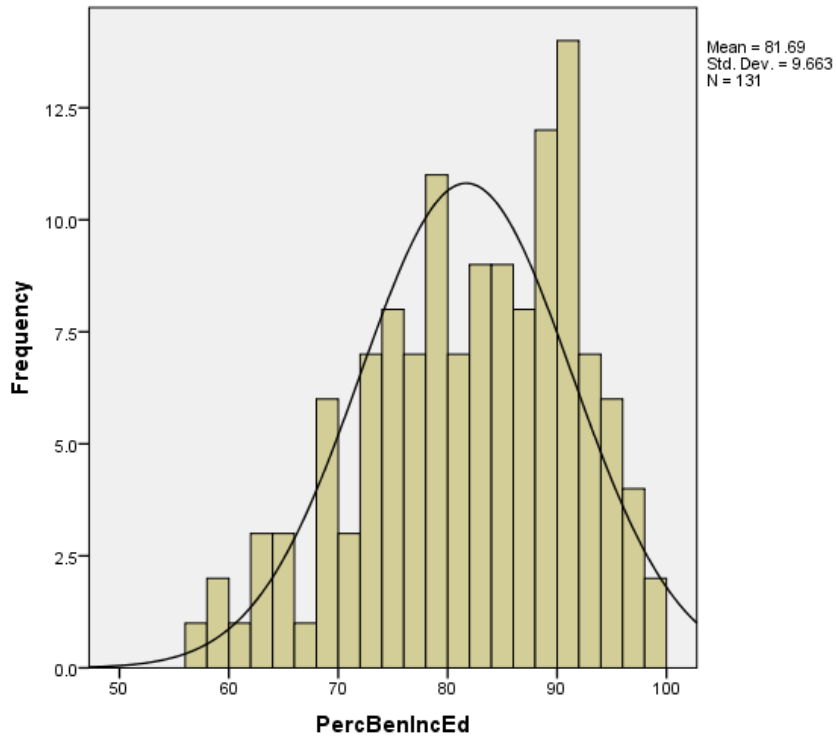


Figure 3: Normality Histogram for Perceived Classroom Management of Inclusive Classrooms, With Normal Curve Displayed

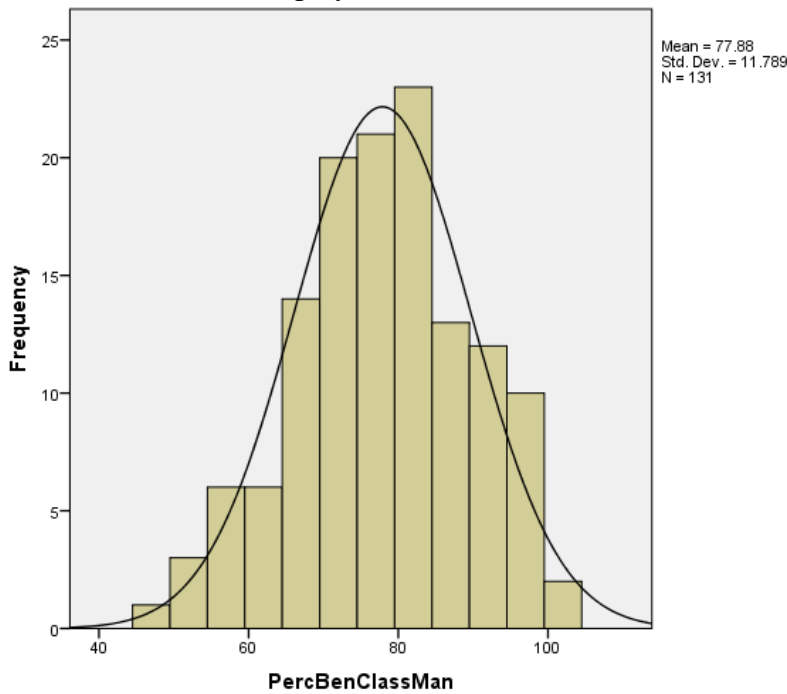
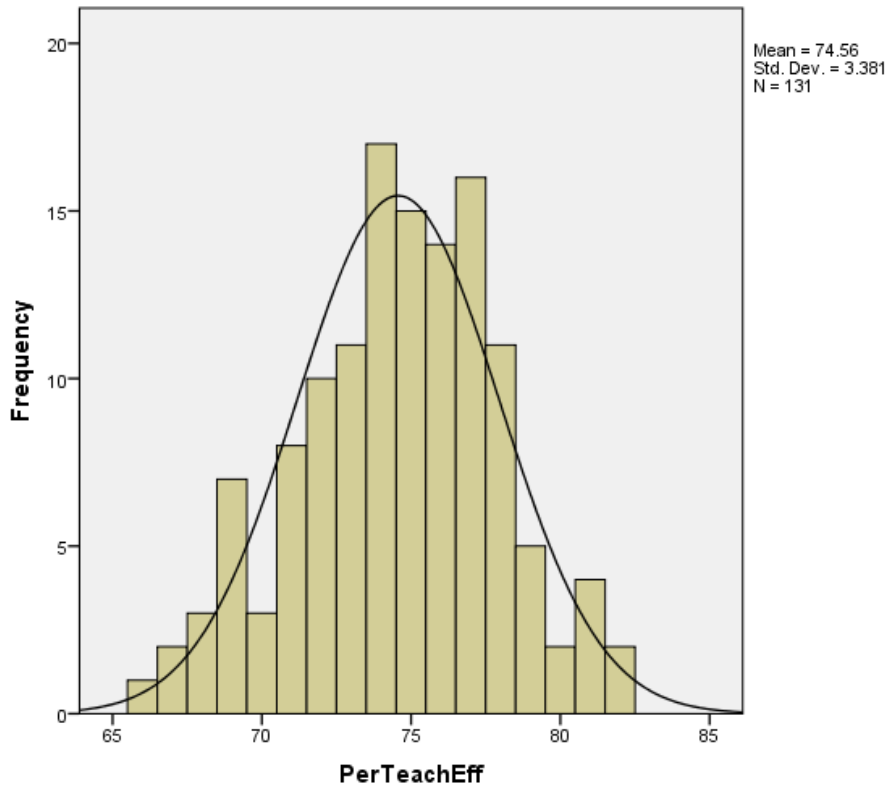


Figure 4: Normality Histogram for Perceptions of Teacher Efficacy, With Normal Curve Displayed



Another method for determining normality is to utilize the skewness and kurtosis numbers given in SPSS 21 (Green & Salkind, 2014). Skewness measures the symmetry of the distribution and kurtosis defines the shape of the distribution. Skewness and kurtosis values more than twice their standard error is taken to indicate a departure from symmetry, and thus normality. However, if the skewness and kurtosis values fall within a range that is +/- twice the standard error for skewness and kurtosis, then the distribution is considered normal (Field, 2013; Salkind & Green, 2011). Only one variable, PercBenIncEd, fell slightly outside of this range for skewness, and none fell outside of this range for kurtosis. These numbers confirm the normality observed in the histograms in Figures 1-4 (see Table 4).

Table 4

Skewness and Kurtosis Values for All Dependent Variables

Variable	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PercIncEd	131	-.26	.21	-.39	.42
PercBenIncEd	131	-.49	.21	-.41	.42
PercBenClassMan	131	-.20	.21	-.35	.42
PerTeachEff	131	-.21	.21	-.22	.42
Valid N (listwise)	131				

The final assumption test, which determined equal variances, was the Levene's test for Equality of Variances (Table 5). The Levene's Test for Equality of Variance results were as follows:

Overall Perceptions of Inclusion .30, Perceptions of the Benefits of Inclusion .11, Perceptions of Class Management .30 and Perceptions of Teacher Self-Efficacy .68. The Levene's Test for Equality of Variance results for all research questions were above the .05 level so equal variances was confirmed.

Table 5

Levene's Test for Equality

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
PerIncEd	Equal variances assumed	1.131	.290	-3.796	129	.000	-16.989	4.476	-25.844	-8.134	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.981	90.886	.000	-16.989	4.268	-25.467	-8.511	
PerBenIncEd	Equal variances assumed	2.653	.106	-4.100	129	.000	-7.003	1.708	-10.383	-3.623	
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.328	92.475	.000	-7.003	1.618	-10.216	-3.789	
PerBenClas	Equal variances assumed	1.077	.301	-3.314	129	.001	-7.049	2.127	-11.256	-2.841	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.485	91.506	.001	-7.049	2.023	-11.066	-3.031	
PerTeachEff	Equal variances assumed	.174	.677	-1.292	129	.199	-.816	.631	-2.065	.433	
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.266	76.572	.209	-.816	.644	-2.098	.467	

Results

Research Hypothesis 1

There will be a statistically significant difference in perceptions of inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting.

Results

Hypothesis 1 was tested using a two-tailed, independent samples *t*-test (see Table 5) to compare high school general education and high school special education teachers' overall perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. A significant difference was found between high school general education teachers' overall perceptions of inclusion ($M = 77.42, SD = 24.84$) and high school special education teachers' overall perceptions of inclusion ($M = 94.40, SD = 21.76$); $t(129) = -3.79, p = 0.001$, thus allowing for rejection of Null Hypothesis 1. The effect size for this analysis ($d = .66$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a moderate effect ($d = .50$). These results indicate a significant difference between high school general education teachers' overall perceptions of inclusion and high school special education teachers' overall perceptions of inclusion. The results demonstrate that special education teachers have a more positive perception of the overall benefits of inclusion with a mean difference of 16.98.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results (General Perceptions of Inclusion)

Group	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
General Education Teachers	89	77.42	24.84	-3.79	.001
Special Education Teachers	42	94.40	21.76		

Research Hypothesis 2

There will be a statistically significant difference in the perception of the benefits of inclusive education for students (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting.

Results

Hypothesis 2 was tested using a two-tailed, independent samples *t*-test (see Table 6) to compare high school general education and high school special education teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusive education. A significant difference was found between high school general education teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion ($M = 79.45, SD = 9.52$) and high school special education teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion ($M = 86.45, SD = 8.19$); $t(129) = -4.10, p = 0.001$; thus allowing for rejection of Null Hypothesis 2. The effect size for this analysis ($d = .72$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a moderate effect ($d = .50$). These results indicate a significant difference between high school general education teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion and high school special education teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion. Data analysis indicated that special education teachers hold a more positive perception of the benefits of inclusion with a mean difference of 7.

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results (Perceptions of the Benefits of Inclusion)

Group	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
General Education Teachers	89	79.45	9.52	- 4.10	.001
Special Education Teachers	42	86.45	8.19		

Research Hypothesis 3

There will be a statistically significant difference in the perception of classroom management in inclusive education (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teacher who teach in an inclusive setting.

Results

Hypothesis 3 was tested using a tow-tailed independent samples *t*-test (see Table 7) to compare high school general education and high school special education teachers' perceptions of classroom management in inclusive education. A significant difference was found between high school general education teachers' perceptions of classroom management in inclusive education ($M = 75.62, SD = 11.82$) and high school special education teachers' perceptions of classroom management in inclusive education ($M = 82.67, SD = 10.28$); $t(129) = - 3.31, p = 0.001$, thus allowing for rejection of Null Hypothesis 3. The effect size for this analysis ($d = .58$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a moderate effect ($d = .50$). These results indicate a significant difference between high school general education teachers' perceptions of classroom management in inclusive education and high school special education teachers' perceptions of classroom management in inclusive education. Special education teachers were found to have a more positive perception of classroom management with a mean difference of 7.05.

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results (Perceptions of Classroom Management)

Group	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
General Education Teachers	89	75.62	11.82	- 3.31	.001
Special Education Teachers	42	82.67	10.28		

Research Hypothesis 4

There will be a statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers' personal teaching efficacy (as measured by the Opinions Related to Inclusion) between high school general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting and high school special education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting.

Results

Hypothesis 4 was tested using a two-tailed independent samples *t*-test to compare high school general education and high school special education teachers' perceptions of personal teaching efficacy (see Table 8). No significant difference was found between high school general education teachers' perceptions of personal teaching efficacy ($M = 74.30$, $SD = 3.31$) and high school special education teachers' perceptions of personal teaching efficacy ($M = 75.12$, $SD = 3.50$); $t(129) = -1.29$, $p = .20$. Null Hypothesis 4 could not be rejected. The mean difference of .81 between the two groups indicated that the perceptions were not significantly different.

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Results (Perceptions of Self-Efficacy)

Group	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
General Education Teachers	89	74.30	3.31	- 1.29	.20
Special Education Teachers	42	75.12	3.50		

Summary

This chapter presented the demographic information for the population surveyed, descriptive statistics for each dependent variable, assumption testing, and tests of the hypotheses for this study. The data revealed that the assumptions of independence and normality could be met for all study variables and an independent samples *t*-test could be used to determine differences in teacher perceptions.

The study had four research questions. Research Hypothesis 1 addressed the overall difference in teacher perceptions of inclusion. Special Education teachers were found to have more positive perceptions of inclusion than general education teachers, with a mean difference of 16.98. Hypothesis 2 addressed teacher perceptions of the benefits of inclusion for students. Special Education teachers were found to have a more positive perception of the benefits of

inclusion for the students, with a mean difference of 7.03. Hypothesis 3 addressed teacher perceptions of the classroom management of inclusive classrooms. Special Education teachers were found to have a more positive perception of the classroom management of inclusive classrooms, with a mean difference of 7.04. The final hypothesis, Hypothesis 4 addressed teacher perceptions of their personal teaching efficacy in the inclusive classroom. The results were found to have no significance, with a mean difference of .81. The significance of all findings will be discussed in Chapter Five in light of the theoretical framework that guided this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter presented data analysis that utilized independent samples *t*-tests to measure the differences in high school general education and special education teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The independent samples *t*-test was also used for the other three research questions regarding teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion, teachers' perceptions of classroom management in the inclusive classroom, and teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy in the inclusive classroom. Chapter Four also presented the descriptive statistics for the research questions; assumption testing that confirmed the viability of utilizing the independent samples *t*-test for analysis, and the results of the hypothesis testing.

The purpose of Chapter Five is to review the results of the previous chapter in light of the related literature and theoretical framework that guided this research. The chapter is divided into six sections: summary of the findings, discussion and implications, recommendations, limitations, delimitations, and conclusion.

Summary of the Findings

Research Hypothesis 1

The overall research question asked if there was a statistically significant difference between high school general education and special education teachers' perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This researcher hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups of educators. The results of the independent samples *t*-test confirmed this hypothesis because the difference was statistically significant, with a moderate effect size ($d = .66$).

Research Hypothesis 2

Research question 2 asked if there was a statistically significant difference between high school general education and special education teachers' perceptions of the benefits of inclusion for students. This researcher hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups of educators on this issue. The results of the independent samples *t*-test confirmed this hypothesis because the difference was statistically significant, with a moderate effect size ($d = .72$).

Research Hypothesis 3

Research question 3 asked if there was a statistically significant difference between high school general education and special education teachers' perceptions of classroom management in the inclusive classroom. The researcher hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups of educators regarding classroom management. The results of the independent samples *t*-test confirmed this hypothesis because the difference was statistically significant, with a moderate effect size ($d = .58$).

Research Hypothesis 4

Research question 4 asked if there was a statistically significant difference between high school general education and special education teachers' perceptions of teacher self-efficacy in the inclusive classroom. This researcher hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the perceptions of the two groups of educators on this issue. The null hypothesis could not be rejected for this question.

Discussion and Implications

Overall Perceptions of Inclusion

The descriptive statistics for both groups showed that special education teachers hold a positive overall perception of inclusion ($M = 94.40$), while general education teachers' perceptions were significantly less positive ($M = 77.42$). Prior research by Obiakor et al. (2012), indicated special education teachers see the general education classroom as the place for their students with disabilities to observe and imitate general education skills and concepts, as well as encounter age appropriate models of behavior and problem solving, a finding in alignment with this study. Special education teachers may have more positive perceptions because they are able to practice the six essential skills identified by Rice et al. (2007) that create positive perceptions of inclusion. Those essential skills for teachers are: professionalism, articulation and modeling of instruction, assessment of student progress, knowledge or course content, willingness to work with a wide range of students and willingness to analyze their teaching styles. Both Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) predict that special education students would learn best through modeling, imitation, and observation of peers (Obiakor et al., 2012). Special education teachers recognize the general education classroom as the best place for this modeling, imitation, and observation to occur (Alquraini et al., 2012).

However, the results identifying the less positive perceptions of general education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities indicate that general educators still find inclusive education to be less than ideal. Battige (2008) found that less positive perceptions could be due to several factors, such as the perception that inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom results in increased workloads, slower pace of instruction,

decreased depth of instruction, more responsibility for IEP goals and objectives, and increased stress level for the general education teachers. Boyle, Topping, and Jindal-Snape (2013) suggested that insufficient time, support, and training cause general education teachers to have negative attitudes about inclusion. High-stakes testing and the recent connection of student test results to teacher compensation (Georgia Department of Education, 2011) may have also had an overall negative effect on teacher perceptions in general, and teacher perceptions of inclusion specifically (Jones & Egley, 2004). This high-stakes testing could be causing stress for general education teachers in Northeast Georgia, especially in light of the new Teacher Evaluation Keys, implemented this year in the surveyed schools, which compensates teachers with salary increases based in part on student achievement on statewide assessments. The implementation of yet another set of math and reading standards, referred to as the Common Core Performance Standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2011), is also another possible cause of stress among Georgia educators.

The negative perceptions held by general education teachers could also be the result of a school culture of negative perceptions of inclusion. Most school and district administrators have little special education training or experience. This lack of practice and training leaves administrators with few skills to help the general education teacher with the day-to-day difficulties in the inclusive classroom (Hang & Rabren, 2008; Hill, 2009). Research by Fernet, Guay, Senecal, and Austin (2012) indicated this perceived lack of assistance or support from administrators and school leaders causes teachers to feel unsupported, which may then lead to negative perceptions of inclusion. The negative perceptions then become part of the school culture, which is difficult to change (MacFarlane & Woodson, 2013).

Perceptions of the Benefits of Inclusion

The descriptive statistics also indicated that special education teachers hold a more positive perception of the benefit of inclusion for students ($M = 86.45$), while general education teachers' perceptions were significantly lower ($M = 79.45$). The research literature suggests special education teachers generally perceive inclusion to be positive for students with disabilities (Saldana & Moreno, 2011). Fiero (2012) described the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities as access to: superior content instruction (especially in math), more varied and thought provoking classroom discussions, and the content specific expertise of teachers. General education teachers receive many content specific courses during their college training, while the special education teachers concentrate on disability specific knowledge (Sharma et.al, 2006). This focus on subject specific courses allows for a greater depth and breadth of content specific knowledge in the general education classroom, where the general educator is the expert in the content. Most special education teachers in inclusive classrooms serve students with disabilities in a variety of different content areas, while the general education teacher is usually responsible for only one subject area.

Perceptions of Classroom Management in Inclusive Classrooms

In addition, the descriptive statistics indicated that special education teachers hold a positive perception of classroom management in the inclusive classroom ($M = 82.67$), while general education teachers' perceptions were significantly lower ($M = 74.30$). This difference in perceptions indicates that general educators perceive the inclusion of students with disabilities as creating difficulties in classroom management. The researcher expected this result because research by Milner and Tenore (2010) and Oliver and Reschley (2010) suggested that classroom management of the inclusive classroom can cause general education teachers to have less than

positive perceptions of inclusion. General education teachers are now teaching classes that include more students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, as well as students on the autism spectrum, which the teachers perceive as difficult to manage while teaching required content standards (Wilson & Michaels, 2006). While most special education teachers are required to take courses during their teacher education programs in the classroom management and behavior management of students with disabilities, including students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, general education teachers generally do not receive the same training (McCray & McHatton, 2007). Special education teachers are taught problem solving approaches to behavior management, such as conducting functional behavioral assessments and analysis and constructing behavior intervention plans. High school general education teachers are taught lesson planning and methods to transfer content knowledge (Knostner & Kincaid, 1999).

Improving teacher perceptions regarding the management of inclusive classrooms is possible. Soodak (2003) found that while school-wide positive behavior supports work for creating positive, supportive inclusive environments and better behaved students, including students with disabilities, most current district and school discipline policies are designed to punish and exclude students from the general education classroom. Until general education teachers receive the needed training in classroom management for the inclusive classroom, negative perceptions will likely persist.

Perceptions of Teacher Self-Efficacy

The descriptive statistics for this study indicated there is very little difference in teachers' perceptions of personal teaching efficacy. For general education teachers, the mean was 74.30, while the mean for special education teachers was 75.12. This result, although not statistically different, does indicate that both groups have a low sense of personal teaching efficacy.

Research by Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012) suggested that teacher efficacy is determined by several factors, such as their ability to instruct, collaborate, and discipline. The present research study indicates that neither group of teachers perceives their ability for instruction, collaboration, and discipline in the inclusive classroom in a positive light. These findings are consistent with research that asserts that general education teachers at the high school level are accustomed to teaching in isolation and find it difficult to allow special education teachers to interfere or assist with delivering instruction in their classes (Boyle et al., 2013; Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010; Lusk, Thompson, & Daane, 2008). The reluctance from general education teachers to share the instruction of the inclusive classroom is one possible explanation for the generally low perceptions of special education teacher efficacy in the inclusive classroom. The addition of more students with diverse disabilities in the general education classroom, which general education teachers are not trained to teach, could be a cause of the low perceptions of general education teachers regarding their teaching efficacy (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010).

Social Interaction

The results of this research support the theoretical framework, which relied on three theories put forth by Vygotsky (1978). The first is that social interaction is essential for cognitive development. Students with disabilities need the social interaction of the general education classroom to actuate cognitive development. The social interactions that take place during group tasks, discussions, and exchanges in the general education classroom give the student with disabilities more access to the grade level content, which increases their cognitive development and knowledge. Torff (2011) found that teacher perceptions and beliefs shape the

learning of all students. Therefore, teachers with negative perceptions can become a barrier to student achievement and success (Conteras, 2011).

More Knowledgeable Other

The second Vygotskian theory that served as a framework for this study was that students need a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). Mariage, Englert, and Garmon (2011) found that special education teachers can serve as the MKO in the general education classroom not only students with special needs, but also for general education students. The special education teacher can help students by scaffolding their performance on tasks, nurturing the discourse in class, structuring complex processes for access, and encouraging student responsibility for their own learning. The general education teacher can serve as MKO for the specific content, while the special education teacher helps scaffold learning so students can access the knowledge and skills that are presented in the general education classroom (Mariage, Englert, & Garmon, 2011). Students can also serve as the MKO for their peers, both typically developing and with disabilities. Huong (2007) found that when students were assisted by peers with more knowledge of the content, they were able to acquire new concepts and skills quicker and use the skills more readily. Access to peers with more knowledge and skills, including social skills, gives the student with disabilities more individual assistance than in the resource classroom with only one teacher, or even in the inclusive classroom with two teachers (Ferraioli & Harris, 2011).

Zone of Proximal Development

The third theory of Vygotsky's that was used as the theoretical framework for this study is that students learn best when they are given assignments that are within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development is defined by Daniels (2007) as the distance between a student's ability to complete a task with assistance and the ability to

complete a task independently. These assignments should be challenging, but able to be completed with the appropriate scaffolding by peers and adults. Students with disabilities must be in the general education classroom for the age and grade level social interactions to occur that will lead to completion of difficult tasks, as Vygotsky suggested. The general education classrooms have students with many different zones of proximal development. Research by Johnson (2013) indicated that access to peers, who can scaffold academic and social skills for student with disabilities, is helpful for increased achievement. Special education teachers may see the inclusive class as an opportunity to gain access to social learning for students with disabilities, while high school general education teachers generally perceive the classroom as a source of content (Ferrailoi & Harris, 2011). This different view of the object of the inclusive classroom may result in negative perceptions of inclusion by the general education teacher (Bulgren et al., 2006).

Social Learning Theory

The final theoretical framework that undergirded this study was Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2012). This theory states that people learn from each other by imitation, observation, and modeling. Students with disabilities need general education peers to imitate, observe, and model appropriate behavior, skills, and concepts (Thousand et al., 2005). The special education classroom limits the social interactions needed for learning and cognitive development (Nevin et al., 2013). The general education classroom is the place where all students learn from each other and everyone benefits. Research by Morcom and MacCallum (2012) indicated that high school special education teachers perceive inclusion as positive because it not only gives students access to the rich content of general education, but also general education peers to model, observe, and imitate. General education teachers have a more

academic and content focus for instruction, therefore they often see students with disabilities as disruptive to the academic emphasis of the general education classroom, and consequently they hold perceptions that are less positive than special education teachers (Nevin et al. 2013).

Limitations

There were several limitations present in this research study. The first was in the design of the research study. The design was nonexperimental, therefore the variables could not be manipulated or randomly assigned (Creswell, 2008). The teachers were surveyed after they had already taught in inclusive settings and were not assigned to the groups by the researcher. The limited number of schools involved was also a limitation. Six small rural high schools is not representative of the state as a whole, or the country.

The selection of participants was also a limitation. All participants were from one geographical region of Georgia, with a predominantly Caucasian faculty and student body. The generalizability of this study to other ethnicities, areas of Georgia, or the nation is limited.

Additionally, the schools in this research study were in the first year of implementation of the new teacher accountability and compensation plan, as well as in the process of implementing the Common Core performance standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Gardner (2013) found that change without input and sufficient communication causes stress for teachers, especially in the initial timeframe. Teachers may have developed different perceptions once they had gone through the new evaluation cycles several times and had had sufficient practice in applying the new performance standards over multiple years.

Delimitations

The major delimitations, boundaries set by the researcher, for this study were the study participants and small sample. The participants for the study were delimited to math, science,

social studies, and English/language arts general and special education teachers. The study excluded elective, health, physical education, fine arts, and career and technical teachers that may have had a very different perception of the inclusion of students with disabilities. Another delimitation of the research was that the study delimited the participants to only those with a minimum of one-year experience in an inclusive classroom. New teachers and new teaching teams may have had more positive perceptions of inclusive education.

Conclusion

The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has been a slow process in this country. Many parents, educators, administrators, and even students are opposed to inclusive education. Yet research has shown that the most effective means of educating students with disabilities is in the general education classroom with their normally developing peers (Boyle & Topping, 2012, Nix et. al, 2009). The problem has typically been that many teachers are opposed to inclusive education because they perceive it to be ineffective, not beneficial for all students, and difficult to manage. This study explored the perceptions of both special educators and general educators in order to quantify their perceptions about inclusive education. The results of the study identified a difference in the perceptions held by high school general education teachers and high school special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The research revealed that special education teachers' perceptions are more positive than their general education colleagues about inclusive education overall, the benefit of inclusive education to students, and the management of student behavior in the inclusive classroom. The findings of this study suggest that general education teachers need support for managing the inclusive classroom and

recognizing the benefits of inclusion in order to improve their perceptions of inclusion as a whole.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practical Applications

The recommendations for practical application drawn from the results of this research are as follows:

- More special education training should be required at the college level for preservice general education teacher preparation, as well as those in educational leadership and administration. Every preservice educator and school administrator should be required to take classes in the following two areas: classroom management of the inclusive classroom and benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities. The more information and strategies that educators and leaders have at their disposal, the fewer negative perceptions of inclusion will be held (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011).
- The benefits of inclusion for every student should be expressed to all teachers, but general education teachers particularly. General education teachers should be aware that they are essential to the success of all students, not just general education students. This could be accomplished through targeted professional development and professional learning communities designed to help general educators recognize their importance to the education of all students (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008).
- General education teachers need targeted professional development to teach them how to manage the inclusive classroom. This could include how to structure the inclusive classroom and lessons for student engagement, as well as behavior intervention techniques for students with disabilities.

- Special education teachers must stress the importance of inclusion to their general education colleagues so that general education teachers perceive inclusion in a more positive light for both typical students and students with disabilities. The special education teacher should have the opportunity to model special education pedagogical strategies in the general education classroom, such as providing multiple means of presenting information and knowledge, accepting multiple means of expressing that knowledge, and utilizing multiple means of engaging all students. This is accomplished with strategies, such as differentiated instruction, which help all students achieve (Reis et al., 2011).

Recommendations for Future Research

This research highlighted the differences in the perceptions of inclusion held by two groups of teachers. However, this study exposed areas where more inquiry is needed in order to either add to this study's findings or fill gaps identified during the course of the research.

This study found that a difference in the perceptions of inclusion held by high school general education and special education teachers exists. However, the research did not determine *why* there is a difference in perceptions. A researcher could conduct a study to determine why special education teachers hold more positive perceptions of inclusion than general education teachers, and inversely why general education teachers' perceptions were less positive than those of special education teachers. This information could help administrators develop targeted professional development opportunities to improve the perceptions of all teachers, which is important for optimal student achievement (Wogamon, 2013).

There is also a need for research to determine if the negative perceptions of inclusion held by the general educators are pervasive throughout the culture of the school system, or solely the views of the participants in this study. This could be achieved by comparing the perceptions

of the teachers, administrators, students, and parents. This would give a more complete picture of all of the stakeholders' perceptions, and of the school climate and culture in regards to inclusion.

This study could be repeated with different populations. Some possible participants could include urban school teachers, teachers of different grade levels, and teachers from other areas of the state and country. Other studies could compare veteran educators and new educators to determine if the same differences exist in those two groups; these results could then drive teacher education program design. A population of traditionally trained and alternately trained educators (such as Teach for America), could be surveyed to see if the differences in perceptions for inclusion are influenced largely by training, or more by school culture. Future research could also be designed to determine if the difference in perceptions exists just in small rural schools in Georgia, or if the difference extends to all grade levels and to all areas of the country. This type of study would provide statistical information for additional analysis and be more generalizable.

A longitudinal study that compares the academic outcomes of students with disabilities that receive services in inclusive classrooms with the academic outcomes of students with disabilities that receive services in resource classrooms would also be insightful. Such a study would quantify the long-term benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities, if any exist.

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APPENDIX A: PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER CONSENT FORMS

CONSENT FORM

Comparing the Perceptions of Inclusion between General Education and Special Education Teachers
Debra Bruster
Liberty University
Department of Education

You are invited to be in a research study comparing the perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms held by general education and special education teachers in the inclusive classrooms. You were selected as a possible participant because you have experience teaching in an inclusive classroom. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Debra Bruster, doctoral candidate Department of Education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to compare special education teacher and general education teacher perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. I am asking for teachers with a minimum of one year of teaching experience in an inclusive classroom to participate.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: Follow the link to the online survey, complete the demographic information, and continue to the 25 survey questions. It should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has risks such as a breach of confidentiality by the participant, researcher or other person. The risk to participants is considered minimal and no greater than those encountered in everyday life.

There is no direct benefit for the participants of this study.

Compensation:

You will not receive payment for your participation.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be

stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. The results will be analyzed and reported as either special education or general education not by school or teacher.

The data survey results will be kept on a USB flash drive secured in a locked box at the home of the researcher and destroyed after 5 years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Banks County, Habersham County, Hart County, Dawson County, Lumpkin County and Stephens County school systems. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Debra Bruster. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or at her home [REDACTED] or her dissertation chair [REDACTED] or at her home [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 [REDACTED]. *You should print a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. Continuing to the survey site constitutes consent to participate in the study.

IRB Code Numbers: 1650.091913

IRB Expiration Date: 9/19/2014

APPENDIX B: TEACHER EMAIL SCRIPTS

Email 1 for the study

My name is Debra Bruster and I am conducting research for my Doctorate of Education dissertation with Liberty University. You are invited to be in a research study regarding teacher perceptions of the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Your participation in this research would be very much appreciated, but it is not required. As you consider your participation, please read the attached information and consent form. Please ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. I would be very appreciative of you taking 10-15 minutes of your time to respond to this questionnaire. The information gathered in this survey will help determine the perceptions of inclusion held by high school teachers.

Below is a link to take the online survey. This study has no affiliation with (insert county name) County Schools and all responses will remain anonymous. There are no studies without potential risks. However, this particular study has very minimal risks and the risks associated with this study are no more than you would encounter on a daily basis in your profession as a teacher. The benefit of this particular study is that it may assist educational leaders in deciding how to better support teachers in the future.

The researcher conducting this study is Debra Bruster, Ed.S. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd. Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu. By participating in this survey, you are giving consent to use your responses as data collection. This survey must be complete no later than (fill in date). Thank you for your time and commitment to excellence in education.

Click here to take the survey:

Sincerely,
Debra Bruster

Email 2 –Reminder Email

This is just a reminder that the survey for teachers in inclusive classrooms is closing in 7 days.

Please take a few minutes and complete the survey at :

Information about the survey is attached and is in the previous email. Once again thank you for your time and assistance.

Debra Bruster

APPENDIX C: IRB PERMISSION LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 19, 2013

Debra Bruster
IRB Exemption 1650.091913: Comparing the Perceptions of Inclusion Between General Education
and Special Education Teachers

Dear Debra,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.



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