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A survey of attitudes of special and regular educators toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms

Yvonne Patricia Holmes

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A SURVEY OF

ATTITUDES OF SPECIAL AND REGULAR EDUCATORS

TOWARD THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

IN REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Education

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Approved by:

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                                                 Date

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Abstract

This study assessed attitudes towards teaching students with severe disabilities in the regular class setting. The Inclusion Survey was sent to 193 special and regular educators with 86 (45%) surveys returned. Three schools were chosen from a large (26 elementary and middle schools) school district. One elementary and one middle school were chosen because they have programs for students with severe disabilities on regular education school sites. The remaining elementary school was chosen as it is a segregated special education site with a limited number of regular education classrooms. These three schools represent a sample size of 62 regular education and 31 special education teachers. Another smaller elementary and middle school district (four schools) served as a control. These four schools represent a sample size of 93 regular education and seven special education teachers. Favorable attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities in the regular education classroom were associated with increased classroom support such as teacher's aide, consultant services, and special materials. Respondents were undecided as to whether the inclusion of students with severe disabilities into the regular classroom would be detrimental to the educational achievement of the average student.

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To Glenn, my husband, editor, cheerleader and task master, without whom this thesis would not have been completed, a heartfelt thank you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Full inclusion, the practice of educating students with mild to severe disabilities with the general population in their neighborhood schools, has become one of the most controversial topics in special education during the past few years. Educational policies are most often affected by social influences. These social influences in turn lead to legislative reforms.

Legislative Reforms

Federal Legislation. Prior to 1975, it was common for states to exclude children with disabilities from public schools. Hundreds of thousands of students with disabilities received little, if any, public education (Yudof, 1984). The process of legalizing special education began in part with two early cases. In both Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania (1971), and Mills v. Board of Education (1972), lower federal courts interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection and due process clauses to require public schools "to admit previously excluded children with disabilities and to provide them with hearings and review procedures upon any change in their educational classification" (Yudof, 1984, p.163).

The civil rights movement of the 1960s was in full swing and the timing was right for special education legislation. In 1975, Congress passed the education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) (20 U.S.C.A. ss 1400- ss 1485 (1978 & Supp. 1987)) providing financial incentives for states establishing educational placement options for students with disabilities (Gallegos, 1989). This was a landmark law specifically for special education and education in general. The major provisions of this legislation were: a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, due process procedures, special and related services which were determined as necessary, a written

individualized educational program (IEP), and no eligible child would be rejected from receiving services (Patton, Beirne-Smith & Payne, 1990).

The U.S. Supreme Court, in Board of Education v. Rowley (1982), interpreted the most crucial provision of P.L. 94-142: the requirement that a cooperating state provide a "free appropriate public education" to all children with disabilities. The Court held that the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) guaranteed only access to school and some benefit to the children (Gallegos, 1989, p.259). This court ruling provided an entrance to public education for students with severe disabilities.

EHA : 1) Expanded the definition of special education to include instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and physical education; and 2) extended related services to include social work services and rehabilitative counseling. In addition, the term "handicap" was replaced throughout the Act with the term "disability," and terminology using people first has been utilized (ERIC Digest #E463). The law also required that:

> to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities
> . . . are educated with children who are not disabled, and that
> special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of
> children with disabilities from the regular environment
> occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is
> such that education in regular classes with the use of
> supplementary aids and services cannot be attained
> satisfactorily. (IDEA Sec. 612 as cited in ERIC Digest
> #E521).

The 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, s 412(5)(B)) a reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA, 1975), guaranteed that children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their needs.

Although the federal legislation is specific in defining who are considered as children with disabilities and what services will be provided for them, it is still up to the individual states and/or school districts as to how they interpret "the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes and services cannot be attained satisfactorily".

State Legislation. The California Code of Regulation, Title 5 (the regulations that govern special education) were adopted and went into effect in March, 1981 (California Department of Education, 1992). Article 3.1 states eligibility criteria for individuals with exceptional needs. The specific processes and procedures for implementation of these criteria are to be developed by each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) and included in the local plan pursuant to Section 56220(a) of the Education Code.

While the states interpret the federal legislation, each SELPA may in turn interpret the state code. If the code requires Special Education "to meet the unique needs of individuals with exceptional needs, whose educational needs cannot be met with modification of the regular instruction program," then how do we place these individuals in regular classes? How do they interpret "interaction" in order to promote maximum interaction between non-disabled pupils and students with disabilities? It appears that "instructional needs" is also a matter of interpretation if individuals with disabilities shall be grouped for instructional purposes according to their instructional needs.

Inclusion: The Beginning

Educational policies are most often affected by social influences. Full inclusion, the practice of educating students with mild to severe disabilities with the regular population in their neighborhood schools, is no exception. Traditionally, students with disabilities were taught with other students with similar disabilitating conditions. Often these settings were physically or socially isolated from their peers without disabilities (Wisniewski & Alper, 1994). There existed two separate and distinct delivery models in education: regular education and special education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). In a 1986 report to the U.S. Secretary of Education, Madeleine Will, then U.S. Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, wrote that the dual system of providing services was flawed. She maintained that the pull-out programs designed for students with mild learning disabilities were ineffective. She offered the regular education initiative (REI) in response to special education problems.

This call for reform of special education service delivery systems produced considerable debate among professionals. Advocates of REI contend that effective instruction by teachers in regular classes should accommodate the individual differences for students with disabilities (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). Others argued that the presence of students with disabilities in regular classes would make demands for increased instructional attention from the teacher and would thus adversely effect the achievement levels of all students. The policy changes proposed by the REI would no doubt effect both regular and special education service providers and their students.

Obstacles of Traditional Models

Kubicek (1994) listed what Will identified as the following as major obstacles affecting the quality and effectiveness of education programs for students with disabilities:

1. Eligibility requirements lead to fragmentation, and in some cases a total lack, of service delivery.

2. Less than ideal administrative practices lead to lowered accountability and expectation standards.

3. Stigmatization of students results from the eligibility/identification process.

4. The placement process has been turned into a battleground rather than a cooperative process among all interested parties (Kubicek, 1994, p. 28).

REI asserted that instructional services for students with disabilities be delivered within the regular education classroom (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera & Lesar, 1991). There emerged two distinct groups that advocated for REI. Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) identified the larger of the two groups, the "High-Incidence" group, as those with an interest in students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and mild/moderate mental retardation. Fuchs and Fuchs identified the smaller group as the "Low-Incidence" group whose interest was in students with severe intellectual disabilities.

These two groups differed in goals for achieving REI ideals. The focus of the "High-Incidence" group was to strengthen the academic performance of students with mild and moderate disabilities and for those at risk of school failure. While the "Low-Incidence" group, full inclusionists, focused on socialization skills, attitude change, and positive peer relations (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

Kubicek (1994) also reported that interpretations of the REI range from totally dismantling the current dual delivery system of special education services to making modest changes within the present structure. This lack of consensus was due, in part,

to the fact that Will's (1984) report was vague and imprecise with terms often ill-defined.

With as many interpretations of the REI as authors reporting on it, there appears to be three main philosophic perspectives. Kubicek (1994) identified them as the "Little Change Model," "Extreme Change Model," and "Moderate Change Model." All three models have merit and warrant review and consideration. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to critique the three perspectives. This report shall focus on the "Extreme Change Model" or the position that calls for immediate and complete inclusion of all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their condition, otherwise known as Full Inclusion.

Wisniewski and Alper (1994) reported that while school professionals had mixed support for the concept of full inclusion, many had negative attitudes toward the practice of inclusion. In a recent study Osborne and Dimattia (1994) reported that full integration of students with severe disabilities had not been realized in most school districts. Many factors contributed to that practice. One important factor affecting this practice was teachers' attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in regular education classrooms. This study assesses factors influencing attitudes of teachers toward students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms. It is also the purpose to assess the factors that influence attitudes.

Benefits of Including All Students

Reasoning for inclusionary practices ranged from a legal perspective to social justice, to the perceived ineffectiveness of "pull-out" programs, to the purported need to restructure schools to better meet the needs of all students (York & Tundidor, 1995). Whatever the reason for viewing inclusion as a viable solution to educating children, the benefits of including all students seems to have merit.

Many papers addressed the benefits achieved through inclusion (Donder & Lipski, 1981; Brown, Ford, Nisbet, Sweet, Donnellan, & Gruenewald, 1983; Kennedy & Itkonen, 1994; Stainback, Stainback, East & Sapon-Shevin, 1994). These reports document some of the benefits of inclusion as: increased interaction with nondisabled students through peer tutoring, the development of social networks, decreased busing time that allowed more time for extracurricular activities, and the opportunity to develop a positive self-concept.

Kennedy and Itkonen (1994) found that regular class participation increased a student's social contacts with peers without disabilities. Berres and Knoblock (1987) view this classroom integration as one means for nondisabled persons to develop favorable attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Other benefits for students with severe disabilities in regular education classes included increase awareness of self and others, additional skill acquisition, and opportunities that enhance the quality of the student's life (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993).

Attitudes: One Obstacle to Inclusionary Placement

There is information available documenting strategies for effective inclusionary placement of students with disabilities (Berres & Knoblock, 1987; Friend & Cook, 1993; Hunt, Haring, Farron-Davis, Staub, Rogers, Bekstead, Karasoff, Goetz, and Sailor, 1993; Stainback & Stainback,1990; and York & Vandercook, 1990). Wisniewski and Alper (1994), provide guidelines to affect a change from segregated to inclusive school settings. Five systematic phases or guidelines are given to bring about successful inclusion of students with severe disabilities. Phase 1 is to develop networks within the community. It addresses obstacles to full or partial inclusion and offered solutions.

A primary obstacle addressed in phase 1 of Wisniewski and Alper's (1994) guideline

is the attitudes that individuals without disabilities have toward students with disabilities. Wisniewski and Alper (1994) further reported that while school professionals had mixed support for the concept of full inclusion, many had unfavorable attitudes toward the practice of inclusion. Unfavorable attitudes were reportedly attributable to the lack of pre-service training, resources, knowledge of best teaching practices, and personal experiences with students with disabilities (Wisiewski & Alper, 1994). Friend and Cook (1993) contended that inclusion is about attitudes. They found inclusion works when teachers focus on students' abilities, not their disabilities. Berres and Knoblock (1987) also assert the importance of changing ideologies and attitudes of school professionals to support more inclusive professional behaviors.

Basic Assumptions

For the purpose of this study the following assumptions were made:

1. All students can learn regardless of their disabilities.

2. Teachers are able to teach all students, notwithstanding student ability levels.

3. All teachers are responsible for establishing a successful learning environment for students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to assess attitudes of regular and special education teachers toward teaching students with severe disabilities in regular classrooms. The following research questions are examined:

1. What are the attitudes of regular education classroom teachers toward teaching students with severe disabilities?

2. What are the attitudes of special education teachers toward students with severe disabilities being taught in regular education classrooms?

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used.

Sailor (1991) defines Inclusion as:

> achieved when students with disabilities attend the same schools as peers without disabilities, natural proportion of students with disabilities, zero reject philosophy, age-appropriate grade and class placement with no classes designated as self-contained for special education students, and special education support provided in regular education and other integrated learning environments.

Kirk & Gallagher (1989) define Mainstreaming as "the process of bringing children with disabilities in daily contact with children without disabilities in an educational setting: the placement of children with disabilities in the regular education program whenever possible" (p. 542).

The definition of "severely handicapped" that was applied in this study and used in the survey was supplied by the Special Education Handbook for Ontario-Montclair School District, January, 1993 as follows:

A student with severe handicaps may be an individual who is Autistic, Developmentally Handicapped, Seriously Emotionally Disturbed, Trainable Mentally Retarded, or Multi-Handicapped.(part 6, p. 25)

The student identified as Autistic exhibits some combination of the following characteristics: inability to use oral language for appropriate communication, impairment in social interaction from infancy to early childhood, obsession to maintain sameness, preoccupation with objects and/or inappropriate use of objects, extreme resistance to controls, display of peculiar motoric mannerism and motility patterns. (part 6, pp. 25 -26).

The student with Developmental Handicaps is severely to profoundly retarded and may have other physical disabilities.

Students identified as Seriously Emotionally Disturbed will exhibit one or more of the following characteristics: severe disturbance in learning that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, severe disturbance in relationships with peers and adults, severe disturbance in behavior of affect under normal circumstances, a pervasive

and prolonged state of depression or anxiety, a constant or prolonged display of psychosomatic symptoms, severe disturbance in thought processes. (part 6, p. 28)

Students identified as Trainable Mentally Retarded have an IQ range of 25-55. There is reasonable possibility of acceptable behavior in social groups. They may have some ability to acquire personal competency to become in part self-directing individuals. (part 6, p. 31)

The student identified as Multi-handicapped has concomitant impairments (such as mentally retarded-blind, mentally retarded-orthopedically impaired, etc.) the combination of which causes such severe educational problems that they cannot be accommodated in Special Education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blind children.(part 6, p. 32)

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study is to assess classroom teacher's and special educator's attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities in regular class settings.

Many researchers have assessed attitudes and changes in attitudes, the methodological procedures, and research design varied from sociometric studies (Gottlieb & Davies, 1973; Johnson, 1950; Siperstein, Bak & O'Keefe, 1988) to questionnaires ranging from semantic differential ratings (Harnadek, 1978; Spreen, 1977) to true-false formats. The range in research design and quality of instruments used made generalizability of the results from the studies difficult.

In the 1980s the literature was rich with national and international research that focused on teachers' attitudes towards mainstreaming students with disabilities (Goupil & Bruner, 1984; Harvey & Green, 1984; Larivee & Cook, 1979; Roberts & Pratt, 1987; Stewart, 1983 and Winzer, 1985). Roberts and Pratt, (1987) surveyed regular and special education teachers in Australia and found a somewhat negative attitude to integrating students with disabilities into regular classes. In 1979, Larivee and Cooke reported the significance of administrative support on teachers' attitude. In a survey of Canadian principals and teachers, Goupil and Brunet (1984) reported negative attitudes to the integration of students with intellectual handicaps.

In the United States, physical educators' attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities was addressed in the works of Rizzo (1985), Rizzo and Wright (1988), and Block and Rizzo (1995). These works explored the relationship of teachers' attributes (i.e. gender of teachers, highest degree earned, age, coursework in physical education on students with disabilities, and teaching experience with students with disabilities) and their impact on attitudes.

The shift in recent years has been from mainstreaming students with mild disabilities, in some classes to fully including them in regular education classrooms. This is a trend that may continue in the future. Putnam, Spiegel and Bruininks (1995) conducted a Delphi investigation to predict future directions in education and inclusion of students with disabilities. Their findings predicted that the movement toward inclusion will continue as will the belief that people with disabilities have the right to full participation in integrated settings and activities. Panelists could not concede, however, on the desirability of full inclusion of students with moderate and severe disabilities in regular classrooms. To date students with moderate to severe disabilities are being included in regular education classrooms; whether this trend continues into the future remains to be seen.

Given this trend and noting that teachers' attitudes toward mainstreaming were somewhat negative in the early 1980's, it is important to continually assess if attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities change over time. A comparison between a 1975 and a 1988 study was conducted by Rees, Spreen, and Harnadek, (1991) to determine if attitudes toward persons with disabilities shift over time. They reported a positive shift over the time period and offered three possible factors affecting this change. First, university students attended a course on developmental disabilities. Second, exposure to individuals with mental retardation was provided via 3 hours per week at worksites of selected agencies. Additionally, it was noted that increased public awareness of individuals with disabilities through media attention, deinstitutionalization, and increased contact with people with disabilities in the general community may have also contributed to the positive shift in attitudes. In a survey of postsecondary schools, Kearney and Durand (1992) found that courses designed to educate teachers in the rationale, instructional methods, and goals of mainstreaming would most likely improve attitudes and flexibility toward integration.

Summary

It is clear that teacher's attitudes and changes in attitudes have been an important topic of research for decades. Given that studies have ranged from sociometric studies to semantic differential ratings and true-false questionnaires, it stands to reason that generalizability of this research is difficult at best. Teacher's attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in regular classrooms was addressed in the teaching model known as mainstreaming. Mainstreaming placed students with disabilities into regular classrooms for part of the school day. Initially, teacher's had somewhat negative attitudes toward mainstreaming.

Given the ever-increasing amount of research on teacher's attitudes it is important to determine whether attitudes shift over time. A comparison study offered three possible factors affecting a positive change in attitudes. College courses designed to educate teachers on disabilities and instructional methods were found to most likely affect a positive change in attitudes. Even so, other research indicated that teachers' attributes such as gender, age, and teaching experience also influence attitudes.

Chapter 3

Method

Subjects

A survey was sent to 193 special and regular educators and 87 (45 %) teachers responded. Sixty-six (76%) teachers were female and 21 (24%) were male. The average age was 39 years. Forty-six (53%) of those surveyed were regular education teachers, and 33 (38%) were special education teachers, additionally, 8 (9%) identified themselves as 'other' with classifications such as Art, Physical Education, or Music. Grade levels taught included preschool through junior high school. There were 28 (32%) junior high school teachers, elementary teachers included 3 kindergarten, 21 primary and 27 middle grade teachers, and 4 preschool teachers. Highest degree earned were reported as 2 (2%) A.A., 41 (47%) B.A., and 43 (49%) M.A. Please refer to table 1 for detailed information.

Assessing Attitudes. The Regular Education Initiative (REI) Survey (Phillips, Allred, Brulle and Shank, 1990) was modified to assess attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms. The REI instrument was operationally defined as a measure of teachers' willingness to have students with disabilities in their classrooms and to rate their skills at providing services for these students (Phillips, et al, 1990). The first section asked for demographic information from the respondents (e.g., gender, age, years of teaching experience, etc.). The second section consisted of 30 attitude statements. Expressing agreement or disagreement toward teaching students with disabilities in regular classrooms on a 5-point Likert scale.

In the demographic section three questions were omitted (that of geographic location, students working at grade level and percentage of students from minority groups). Questions in this section were changed from categorized responses to open ended

questions. A question identifying severe disabilities was added ("Have you worked with any students who have the following severe disabilities? Autistic, Developmental Handicaps, Seriously Emotionally Disturbed, Trainable Mentally Retarded, Multi-handicapped"). A question was also added that addressed prior experience with inclusionary programming ("Have you personally participated in an inclusionary program for students with disabilities?). All references to disabilities were changed to reflect the categories within severe disabilities.

In Section II the term mainstreaming was replaced with inclusion. Statements were omitted that would not yield an attitude toward inclusion. Statements were added that addressed the needs of students with severe disabilities (i.e. Students with severe disabilities require a curriculum that is too different from the other students in my classroom.). Teachers were asked to rate their skills at providing services for these students in the statement "I presently have the skill to successfully include the following students in my class: Autistic, Developmentally Handicapped, Seriously Emotionally Disturbed, Trainable Mentally Retarded, and Multi-handicapped. The resulting survey consisted of 20 statements that assessed teachers' attitudes, toward teaching students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms.

Validity

The revised survey was reviewed by four experts in the area of teaching students with severe disabilities for content validity. Two of these were faculty members at a California State University with doctoral degrees (one with an extensive background in special education, and the other in Adapted Physical Education with extensive background in related research), the third was an elementary school principal, with a master's degree, at a segregated school for students with severe disabilities, and the fourth

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was a school psychologist with extensive experience with students with severe disabilities. Their critique lead to further modifications in the survey. This panel concluded that the survey had content validity.

Table 1
Age, Gender and Other Teacher Characteristics

	N=87	n	0%
Age			
20-29		16	18
30-39		28	32
40-49		25	29
50-59		18	21
M = 39 SD = 10			
Position			
General Education		46	53
Special Education		33	38
Other		8	9
Highest Degree			
A.A.		2	2
B.A.		41	47
M.A.		43	50
		1 missing	
Experience with inclusionary programs			
yes		35	40
no		50	58
		2 missing	
Gender			
Male		21	24
Female		66	76
Grade Level			
preschool		4	5
kindergarten		3	3
primary		21	24
middle		27	31
junior high		28	32
		4 missing	

<u>Procedure</u>

<u>Setting.</u> Site selection focused on seven schools in two southern California school districts. Three schools chosen from a large (26 elementary and middle schools) school district provided a purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993) for three reasons. First, this was an important population to survey given two of the schools have programs for students with severe disabilities on regular education school sites and one school is a segregated site for students with severe disabilities and has a limited number (7) of regular education classrooms. Second, the district provides regular inservice training's addressing special education teachers' concerns in working with severely handicapped students (i.e. behavioral management strategies, applied behavior analysis techniques, and assultive behavior defense strategies) and resources such as support staff services are readily available. Third, these school sites also provide regular education teachers with the opportunity for personal experiences with students with disabilities through mainstreaming. A nearby, smaller elementary school district was chosen for comparison for its relative size (four schools) and for the fact that it does not have a program for students with severe disabilities. The two school districts were approached through the Director of Special Education at the larger district and the Director of Pupil Personnel at the smaller district. Copies of the survey were provided for review. Permission was obtained from these directors to survey the teachers. The directors then outlined contact procedures to be used at each district. At the larger district, the investigator was advised to contact the principals at the selected schools. The smaller district provided the names of teachers at each school to contact. Surveys were then distributed to the various contact people. These people then distributed to and collected the surveys from the teachers. The completed surveys were then returned to the researcher.

Distribution procedures relied heavily upon contact people to distribute and retrieve completed surveys. A varying number of teachers were surveyed at each school site. This variability was due to the differing sizes of the schools, the effort of the contact person at each site to distribute and pick up the surveys, and the willingness of the teachers to complete the survey. Three of the schools returned less than 10 completed surveys; three schools returned between 10 and 20 completed surveys; and one school surveyed more that 20 teachers.

Results

The purpose of this study to assess attitudes of special and regular education teachers toward teaching students with severe disabilities in regular classrooms.

Four questions attempted to assess teachers' past and present experiences with students with disabilities. "Have you personally participated in an inclusionary program for students with disabilities?" This question included all levels of disabilities from mild to severe. Thirty-five teachers (40%) indicated they had participated in an inclusionary program for students with disabilities. These represents 26 teachers from the large district and 23 teachers from the small district. Teachers responded that their teaching experience was favorable. Sixty-three teachers (73%) reported a favorable experience, while 12 (14%) were undecided about their experience and only 10 (11%) teachers reported an unfavorable experience. An analysis of variance revealed a significant difference between the two school districts on this question. Teachers from both districts reported favorable experiences in working with students with disabilities.

Teachers were questioned as to what additional services may be needed to successfully teach students with severe disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers ranked their preferences in the following order: (1) teacher's aide, (2) special education consultant, (3) inservice, (4) special materials, (5) hand's on experience, (6) financial compensation and (7) more college courses. There were no significant differences in the responses between the large district and the small district in any of these areas. See table 2 for each of these items. Favorable attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities in the regular education classroom were associated with increased classroom support such as a teacher's aide, consultant services, and special materials.

Table 2
Needed to successfully teach students with severe disabilities

	Combined	Large District	Small District
Teacher's Aide	4.6	4.7	4.6
Consultant	4.5	4.4	4.5
Inservice	4.4	4.2	4.5
Special Materials	4.4	4.3	4.4
Hand's on experience	4.3	4.2	4.3
Financial Compensation	3.6	3.6	3.6
More College courses	3.5	3.3	3.7

Note: A 5-point Likart scale was used, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Teachers indicated with a high degree of agreement that they were confident in their abilities to work with parents, participate in IEP conferences and modify materials. An analysis of variance indicated a significant difference between the two districts in the areas of writing IEP's, adapting curriculum, and perceived administration support for inclusion. The larger district's mean scores were slightly more positive than the smaller district. See table 3 for the mean ratings from each district on each all of these items.

Table 3
Confidence in ability to perform specific duties

	Large District	Small District
Work with parents	4.1	4
Participate in IEP conferences	4	4
Modify materials	3.9	3.6
Adapt curricula	3.8	3.4
Give individual assistance	3.8	3.2
Write behavioral objectives	3.7	3.3
Write IEP's	3.7	2.9
Manage behaviors	3.6	3.4
Interpret assessment results	3.6	3.2

Note: A 5-point Likart scale was used, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Table 4 shows that all three categories of respondents were undecided as to whether the inclusion of students with severe disabilities into the regular classroom would be detrimental to the educational achievement of the average student. They uniformly agreed that the regular education classroom was not the best placement for most students with disabilities, with special education teachers feeling most strongly about this.

Table 4
<u>Inclusion would be detrimental to average student</u>

General Educators	3.2
Special Educators	3.4
Other	3.4

Note: A 5-point likart scale was used, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that both the special and regular education teachers surveyed generally held positive attitudes toward students with disabilities. Previous experience in working with students with disabilities was reported as a positive experience for both groups. Favorable attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms were associated with additional classroom support (teacher's aide and special materials) and additional teacher support (special education consultant and inservices). However, the data did show that current special education practices (such as special classrooms or special schools) were preferred for students with severe disabilities by all categories of respondents. These findings stand in interesting contrast to the expectations of the literature for favorable attitudes toward

teaching students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms. There were no statistically significant differences between the two districts on this point. These findings were consistent with what Phillips, Allured, Brulle and Shank (1990) reported about Illinois educators willingness to work with students with special needs. Phillips (et.al., 1990) reported that the type and severity of the disability appear to mediate teacher's willingness to work with students with disabilities.

Teachers responded to the survey based on their present teaching situation. No allowances were made in the survey for ideal circumstances for inclusion (i.e. smaller class size, support staff availability, inservices). This may have contributed to the attitude of "Yes, inclusion is a good idea, but not in my classroom" as evidenced by the results of this study.

Two implications may be taken from this study. First, the type of classroom and teacher support may need to be taken into account when preparing for inclusive classrooms. Teachers in this study felt strongly that a teacher's aide, consultant advice, inservices, and special materials were all needed to successfully include students with severe disabilities into regular classrooms.

The other implication is that institutions responsible for the credentialing of new teachers may do more to develop the skills needed to successfully include students with severe disabilities. Regular education teachers in this study indicated that they lacked skills needed to write IEP's and behavioral objectives, adapt curriculum. Course design in teacher preparation programs at the introductory level could include both regular and special education pre-teachers in actual experience in working with students with disabilities. Such courses might include techniques in applied behavior analysis, augmentative communication, and writing objectives (such experiences not usually offered in regular education courses).

Recommendations for Further Research

As the inclusion of students with severe disabilities into regular education classrooms continues, further study is needed. The results of this study support the need for further study particularly in the area of assessing the attitudes of regular education teachers who have students with severe disabilities already in place in their classrooms. A more diverse sample of educators might include high school teachers.

Limitations

Two limitations of the present study are evident. First, the present sample was relatively small with regular and special educators teaching in selected elementary schools from two suburban school districts in Southern California. As such it is unlikely that the results of this study can be generalized beyond the parameters of this population sample.

Second, the survey limited respondents accounts to their present teaching conditions. It is not beyond reason to assume that teachers may have had a more favorable response to inclusion if they thought teaching conditions would be ideal.

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