5-2008

Inclusive Education: The Benefits and the Obstacles

Nicole M. McMillan
The College at Brockport

Inclusive Education:
The Benefits and the Obstacles

by

Nicole M. McMillan

May 2008

An analytical review submitted to the

Department of Education and Human Development of the

State University of New York College at Brockport

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Education
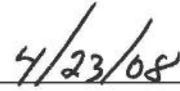
Inclusive Education:
The Benefits and the Obstacles

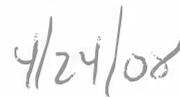by

Nicole M. McMillan

APPROVED BY:

Thomas R. Alle

Advisor

4/23/08

Date

[signature]

Director, Graduate Prog ams

4/24/08

Date

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction

There are many controversial topics under debate in education today. One such topic is the idea of inclusive education. Inclusive education is the active participation of students with disabilities in a general education classroom full time with students without disabilities. This has been a recent trend in schools across the country. In schools today, teachers and students are under intense pressure to improve academic achievement because of the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. Teachers need to be committed to ensuring that all students are meeting state standards and achieving. Educators need to understand students' learning differences and accommodate these different learning styles in classroom instruction on a daily basis. This has become more difficult for teachers to accomplish because of the implementation of inclusion in schools today.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA) originally passed in 1975, has ensured that no child will be excluded from receiving an appropriate education, regardless of their disability. This act states that children with disabilities need to be educated with their peers who do not have disabilities in a general education classroom. The IDEA also mandates that students with disabilities be taught in the least restrictive environment (LRE) as much as possible with their peers who do not have disabilities. This assures that each student with a disability receives an education that is appropriate for his/her individual needs given support and modifications in a general education classroom. It is because of this act that inclusion has come into our school systems and has become such a debatable issue for educators and parents today. The supporters of inclusion believe that this type of education is beneficial to all students, not just the

students without disabilities because they are receiving more individualized instruction and a special education teacher in the classroom to provide support. Proponents of inclusive education believe that it is not appropriate to assume that every student with a disability can be educated in a general education setting. By doing this, they believe that those students will not be getting the individualized attention they need and therefore their education will suffer (Idol, 2006).

The implementation of inclusion into classrooms today requires a lot of time, energy, and commitment on the part of the teachers, administration, and parents. Teachers are faced with the everyday challenges of having to teach to several different learning styles. The lack of additional support staff and resources in the classroom make it difficult to ensure that each child's individual needs are being met. Administration plays a critical role when it comes to implementing inclusion into their schools. Their goal is to create strategies that will help teachers embrace this idea and put it into practice in their classrooms. Perseverance, problem solving, and a strong commitment are needed if school districts and principals want to ensure that inclusion is being successfully carried out in classrooms (Salisbury, 2006). For parents, inclusion can be a cause for concern because it has an affect on their child's education. Parents of children with disabilities want to ensure that their child's needs are being met by the general education teacher, and parents of children without disabilities are concerned with the fact that their child's education may be suffering because they are being educated in an inclusive setting (Leyser and Kirk, 2004).

The controversy surrounding inclusion will continue for some time. As an educator, I chose this topic because of the impact that inclusion is having and will have

on education in the future. It is important for me to have a better understanding of the process that is involved with implementing inclusion so I will be prepared to properly serve all of my students' individual needs in my classroom. In the next chapter, I will be discussing the various aspects of inclusion and why it remains such an issue in education today.

Key Terms

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): The government's education policy, passed in 2001, that requires all children in grades three through eight, and also grade eleven, to be assessed each year in order to show adequate yearly progress in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (1991): The law that provides guidelines and protections for children with special needs and ensures that they receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Students with disabilities are required to be educated with their peers that do not have disabilities, given modifications and support in the general education setting.

Inclusion: Educating students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities in a general education setting full time.

Mainstreaming: When students with disabilities are educated primarily in a special education classroom but participate in a general education classroom for a designated part of the day.

Chapter II: Literature Review

History of Inclusion

During the early part of America's history, educators believed that students with disabilities should be put in separate programs. They perceived this as the best way for all students to receive a quality education. They believed that people with disabilities should be hidden or isolated. During the 1800's and early 1900's, "segregation of children with disabilities was seen as necessary for efficient classroom and school operation" (Osgood, 2005, p. 22).

It was not until the mid-1960's, that there was a movement in education to maximize the participation of students with disabilities into general education classrooms. At that time, millions of children were being excluded from receiving an appropriate education because they had a disability. According to Kavale and Forness (2000), after special education came under deep scrutiny, there was a strong anti-segregation movement to make a move to include all children in education. This paved the way for a new initiative in education.

In 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed into federal law. It stated that children with disabilities have the right to an education in the least restrictive environment with their peers that do not have disabilities. IDEA also required that various alternative placement options be available to assure that students' individual needs were being met.

After this law was put into place, schools generally interpreted it to mean that they should only mainstream students with mild disabilities, for example, those with learning disabilities and those eligible for speech and language services. Villa and

Thousand (2003) stated that they only included students that needed minimal support and required few or no modifications to either the curriculum or instruction. In the early 1980's, the interpretation of least restrictive environment evolved to include students with moderate to severe disabilities into regular classrooms. By the late 1980's and early 1990's, the interpretation evolved into the approach now known as inclusion, "...the principle and practice of considering general education as the placement of first choice for all learners" (Villa and Thousand, 2003, p. 19). This approach encourages educators to bring in supplemental resources and services into the classroom instead of removing students from the classroom to receive those services.

As the interpretation of least restrictive environment has changed, the number of students with disabilities taught in general education classrooms has increased consistently and dramatically (Voltz, Brazil, and Ford, 2001). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), by 1999, 47 percent of students with disabilities spent 80 percent or more of their day in general education classrooms, compared with 25 percent of students with disabilities in 1985.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized in 1997 and effectively included the principles of inclusion by requiring that students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) be exposed to the general education curriculum. As stated by Villa and Thousand (2003), this reauthorization broadened the concept of inclusion to include academic, physical, and social access to general education instruction and experiences.

Despite the evolution toward inclusive education, there have been many disparities among schools, districts, and states when it comes to defining and

implementing it. The U.S. Department of Education (2003) found that the percentage of students with disabilities ages 6-21 who were taught for 80 percent or more of the school day in general education classrooms ranged from a low of 18 percent in Hawaii to a high of 82 percent in Vermont. In some schools, inclusion means only the physical presence or social inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms; in other schools, it means the "…active modification of content, instruction, and assessment practices so that students can successfully engage in academic experiences and learning" (Villa and Thousand, 2003, p. 20). By modifying their instruction and assessment methods, teachers are allowing more students with disabilities to actively participate in their learning. The nature of inclusion varies, and until every school can define it and implement it the same way, successful inclusion will become even more difficult to accomplish.

Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusive education not only provides benefits to students with disabilities but also to their non-disabled peers. McCarty (2006) states, "it appears that special needs students in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings" (p.8). Some of these benefits include social aspects, higher academic standards, and removal of the social prejudice that exists for people with special needs.

Social Benefits

Research has shown that the benefits of inclusive classrooms reach beyond academics. When students with disabilities are isolated and taught only in special

education classrooms they are not given the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of people. By creating inclusive settings these students are now able to socially interact and develop relationships with their peers. McCarty (2006) believes that this allows the students with special needs to improve their social skills and their behavior by having appropriate examples in the general education classroom. Students with disabilities have shown improvement in their ability to follow directions and initiate contact with others, according to McCarty (2006).

When students with disabilities become part of a general education classroom, they are more likely to become socially accepted by their peers. The more students without disabilities have contact with their peers with disabilities the greater the chance they will learn tolerance and have a greater acceptance of other's differences according to Kavales and Forness (2000). The climate of the classroom should facilitate the idea that differences are natural and each student should be comfortable with being him or herself as indicated by Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001). All students should be seen as having something special and unique to contribute. Students with disabilities will feel that they are part of a learning community in their classroom because of the belief in inclusion by their peers and their teachers.

Individualized Instruction and Academic Achievement

With inclusion being implemented in more and more classrooms, students with and without disabilities are benefiting academically. Ferguson, Desjarlais, and Meyer (2000) believe that "the regular education class can provide an environment in which students with special needs have more opportunities to learn, to make educational

progress in academic achievement" (p.207). The academic benefits include having additional staff in the classroom to provide individualized and small group instruction to all of the students, and allowing for students with special needs to be exposed to a richer curriculum. Often, in special education classrooms, teachers can be forced to stray away from the curriculum due to fear that their students will not understand the important concepts and will not be able to master the material as stated by Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001). In an inclusive setting, students with special needs are being exposed to age-appropriate curriculum and are receiving individualized instruction to support them in the general education classroom. This can lead to students with special needs feeling more confident in themselves because they are being given important work that is challenging them academically, compared to completing work that is easy and feeling like their accomplishments were minimal. Kavales and Forness (2000) believe that if students feel that they are being given authentic, meaningful work, the more likely they will show pride and accomplishment in that work.

In the inclusive classroom, because of the diversity of students involved, it is necessary for teachers to vary their instructional strategies. One approach will not fit all. Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) feel that special attention must be paid to differentiating what is taught, as well as how it is taught. Direct instruction with teacher led lessons are sometimes needed, but it is also important to have more constructivist, learner-centered activities and lessons to give students with and without disabilities the chance to have ownership in their learning. As noted by Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001), the sole reliance on direct instruction would deprive students with disabilities the opportunity to develop greater independence and the ability work with and learn from their peers. Cooperative

9

learning models can also be effective in inclusive classrooms because of the heterogeneity of the students. During these cooperative learning activities, the teachers in the room can provide direct instruction and additional support to those students that need it.

Improvement in Behavior

In inclusive classrooms, students with special needs tend to behave more appropriately compared to when they are taught in isolation with other students with disabilities. Students with disabilities learn how to act appropriately in diverse settings by being surrounded by their peers without disabilities. According to Daniel and King (2000), "models of appropriate social behavior are more readily available in regular education classrooms...this environment more appropriately reflects mainstream society and establishes a supportive, humane atmosphere for all students" (p.68).

Also, in general education classrooms, the expectations the teacher places on appropriate behavior are much higher than in special education classrooms. According to Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001), students with disabilities are more able to understand the desired behaviors and will try to abide by them to avoid the consequences if they are taught and shown models of these behaviors.

Collaboration of Faculty and Staff

All of the teachers and staff that are in inclusive classrooms need to be committed to the idea of inclusion and be willing to work together to make it successful. The faculty needs to work as a team to make sure that the needs of every student is being met and that

all students are being supported in reaching their maximum potential, as stated by Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001). By working together, teachers are more likely to create more diverse, engaging lessons for students who have a wide range of abilities, interests, and intelligences, according to Villa and Thousand (2003). They will also be able to discuss their different instructional and assessment techniques.

Removal of Social Prejudice

By being exposed to inclusive settings, students have a better understanding and are more tolerant of individual differences. When the classroom climate respects and reflects diversity, so will the students that are exposed to that environment. As soon as students with disabilities do not have the "special education student" label while in inclusive classrooms they do not feel singled out or embarrassed in any way (Brown, 2001). When every student is included in the learning activities occurring in the classroom, students are unaware of the students that receive special education services, according to Brown (2001).

By using cooperative learning groups, teachers can mix students with disabilities into groupings based on their strengths; they will feel that they belong because they are not being taken out of the room or being segregated from their peers. By doing this, their peers will see them as contributing members to the classroom and not as "different" or "special". Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) feel that every student has something unique to share and differences among students should be openly acknowledged and addressed. Differences should be valued and seen as assets to students' learning.

Every student should feel comfortable in their classroom and that they are part of a learning community. By exposing children to diversity, teachers are exposing them to reality (Brown, 2001). By doing this in inclusive classrooms, students with and without disabilities are forming friendships, gaining an improved sense of self-worth, and are becoming better human beings by learning tolerance.

Obstacles to Inclusion

Although inclusion seems to have many promising benefits for students, it has become increasingly difficult to implement due to the fact that there are many different setbacks that need to be overcome by teachers and administration. Also, many people question if it is practical and realistic for all students to be educated successfully in the same setting.

Lack of Teacher Training

Teachers who support inclusion identified critical problems with its implementation. Research suggests that training and education are critical to the success of inclusion programs (Winter, 2006). Teachers are feeling ill equipped to teach in an inclusive setting because they feel that they did not receive appropriate training or professional development to properly implement inclusion into their classrooms. According to Smith, Tyler, and Skow (2003), many general and special education teachers feel that they were not prepared to plan and make adaptations for students with disabilities.

Researchers have found that inclusion is inadequately addressed and often neglected in teacher training. The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) found that almost 60 percent of all public school teachers indicated that they did not feel well prepared to meet the social and emotional needs of students with special needs from their teacher education program. As Winter (2006) states, ensuring that newly qualified teachers have a basic understanding of inclusive education is the best investment that can be made. Pre-service preparation is a critical factor in helping teachers formulate their beliefs about inclusion as well as affecting their ability to teach students with special needs. Cook (2002) stated:

> If pre-service teachers do not possess the knowledge and skills to implement inclusion appropriately, the included students with disabilities in their future classes will certainly have diminished opportunities to attain desired outcomes regardless of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive reforms (p.263).

In another study, researchers found that forty-five percent of the teachers they surveyed believed that they did not receive adequate staff development regarding teaching students with special needs (Pavri and Hegwer-DiVita, 2006). Without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of students with disabilities, attempts to include these students in the general education classroom become extremely difficult. In order for inclusion to be considered successful it is important that teachers are prepared and have the confidence and the skills to teach in inclusive settings by providing instruction to every student (Winter, 2006).

The General Education Classroom

Although many educators agree with the principles of inclusion, they question whether or not the general education classroom is equipped to accommodate students

with disabilities. According to Kavale (2002) "the general education classroom is a place where undifferentiated, large-group instruction dominate" (p.206). Teachers are more concerned with conformity and maintaining routine than with meeting individual differences (Kavale, 2002). General education teachers feel increased demands on them when they are teaching in an inclusive setting because they are concerned that they lack the knowledge and training to effectively implement inclusion in their classrooms. Kavale (2002) concluded that teachers were most comfortable when they used generic and nonspecific teaching strategies that were not likely to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities.

The uniqueness of special education was not being achieved in most inclusive settings. General educators are not trained to provide differentiated instructional methods or are able to cope with the needs of diverse learners (Cook, 2002). In a comprehensive evaluation of inclusive settings, Cook (2002) concluded that, "there was almost no specific, directed, individualized, intensive, or remedial instruction for students who were clearly deficient academically" (p.253).

Many students with disabilities actually preferred special education pull-out programs over programs delivered exclusively in the general education setting, as found by Cook (2002). Most students with disabilities also felt that the special education setting was a supportive and quiet environment where they could receive extra academic help. Sometimes the general education setting can produce undesirable achievement outcomes for students with learning disabilities such as not being able to keep up with the curriculum and failing to meet grade level standards. Cook (2002) found that whether at the elementary or secondary level, many students with learning disabilities preferred to

receive specialized instruction outside of the general education classroom for part of the school day.

Lack of Support Staff

Once a general education classroom becomes an inclusion setting it usually means that there will be more staff in the classroom to assist the general education teacher. According to the National Education Association (2004), inclusive classrooms should have no more than 28 students, and of those, students with disabilities should make up no more than 25 percent of the class. It has been estimated that approximately 290,000 special education paraprofessionals are employed in schools, with many playing an increasingly prominent role in the instruction of students with disabilities, especially in inclusive settings (Ghere and York-Barr, 2007).

Schools, however, have had difficulty retaining paraprofessionals and support staff. According to Ghere and York-Barr (2007) there have been several explanations offered for paraprofessional turnover, including inadequate wages, few opportunities for career advancement, and a lack of administrative support and respect. Stress and ambiguity also negatively affected the retention of paraprofessionals.

A high rate of turnover adversely affects the development of a skilled paraprofessional workforce. As found by Ghere and York-Barr (2007), teachers estimated that it takes between 3 to 12 months for new paraprofessionals to become proficient at working with students. It also took a significant amount of time and money for school districts to hire, interview, and train a new paraprofessional. According to Ghere and

York-Barr, it is estimated that the cost of replacing an employee varies between 70 percent and 200 percent of the departing employee's salary (2007).

This turnover also affects the teachers and students involved in the inclusion program. When there are changes in personnel, this can result in extra demands and stress put on the teachers. They then need to take the extra time, which no teacher has, to train the new paraprofessional and teach them the routines and help them become familiar with the students they are working with. Paraprofessional turnover also impacts students because they build strong relationships with the paraprofessionals and when they leave, it is a significant loss for them, socially and academically.

Academic Aspects

Although it seems very beneficial to be exposing students with disabilities to age-appropriate curriculum, many argue that it is not realistic to have these students keep pace with all of the other students without disabilities and be successful. This is especially true, if teachers are not modifying the curriculum to meet these students' needs. According to Bateman (2002), there are greater chances that students with disabilities will fall farther behind because the general education classroom is not as individualized as a special education setting.

There are also greater academic expectations put on students with disabilities when they are in an inclusive setting. This is especially true with the emphasis and added pressures of state assessments. These students need to make sure that they are paying attention to the instruction which can be a challenge for them because it may be coming to them at a much faster pace than they are used to and they may also be receiving more

information. There are also more students in a general education classroom compared to a special education classroom which can become more of a distraction to them. Kavale and Forness (2000) claimed that students found a special education setting to be a "...supportive and quiet environment where they could receive extra academic assistance" (p.285). Lastly, tasks given by the general education teacher may not be modified and explained to the students with disabilities enough so they may become frustrated and embarrassed if they can not successfully complete them. This can cause a decline in self-confidence for them.

There may also be issues when it comes to teaching the general education students in an inclusive setting. Critics have warned that the class content may be simplified to address the needs of the students with disabilities, placing average and high achieving general education students at a disadvantage, as stated by Wilson and Michaels (2006). By placing students with disabilities in the same group as students without disabilities, teachers are not allowing the average and high achieving students to learn at their highest potential. The teachers become more concerned about differentiating instruction and making accommodations for the students with disabilities than challenging their students that need it.

Social Aspects

Students with disabilities can face many hardships when they come into the general education classroom. Becoming socially accepted by their peers in this classroom setting can be very difficult. This is especially true for students who are experiencing

inclusion for the first time. These students are not used to being around their peers without disabilities so it is difficult for them to socially interact with them.

Becoming socially accepted also depends on the severity of a student's disability, according to Voltz and Brazil (2001). Students without disabilities soon realize the differences in capabilities of those students and label them and treat them differently, as found by Kavale and Forness (2000). This can result in students without disabilities rejecting them as friends, especially if their behaviors are unusual or inappropriate.

Sometimes even with modeling and explanations of behavior expectations, students with disabilities can find it difficult to follow the rules set in the general education classroom. This is especially true if the teacher does not take the time to model and explain the behaviors they expect frequently enough for them to finally learn and understand them. If students with disabilities become frustrated they may act out inappropriately (Voltz and Brazil, 2001). Being in a larger classroom with more students and more noise can become a distraction for them and a catalyst for inappropriate behavior. Voltz and Brazil (2001) found that students with disabilities may also display inappropriate behavior because they are mimicking another student that is not abiding by the rules.

All of these issues can take up precious instructional time, so the teacher feels like they are doing more disciplining than teaching. This can be especially true if the general education teacher does not have any additional support staff in the classroom to help them. Forlin (2001) found in one study that one of the greatest stresses of teachers during inclusion was the actual behavior of the students with disabilities. Over 70 percent of teachers reported that the students with disabilities disturbed others in their class.

Collaboration of Faculty

Successful inclusion requires teamwork and collaboration from everyone involved. Voltz and Brazil (2001) believe that "in order to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities, it is critical that general and special education teachers routinely meet to engage in collaborative planning and problem solving" (p. 30). This can be difficult if there is not additional time given to teachers to plan and modify the curriculum that is needed for students with disabilities to succeed. This can lead to the general education teacher taking the lead teacher role and the special education teacher becoming more like an instructional aide than a co-teacher, especially if they are not aware of the content being taught (Voltz and Brazil, 2001). Wilson and Michaels (2006) have found that feelings of frustration and helplessness can arise from students with disabilities and teachers when this type of teaching arrangement occurs. Students with disabilities feel that they are not receiving the individualized instruction they need. Teachers feel that they are lacking the support they need from administration to make accommodations in their classroom to successfully implement the inclusion process.

Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Inclusion

There are many people that take part in the inclusion process especially with the number of students with special needs that are being included in the general education classroom increasing dramatically. There are several teachers, administrators, parents and students that are affected by inclusion that each has their own perspective and opinions on this controversial topic. Understanding each of these individual's feelings toward

inclusion can be important in identifying what is needed for inclusion to be considered successful.

Teachers' Attitudes

General education teachers play a major role in the education of students with disabilities. Teachers help develop and implement inclusive models of education that address the social and academic needs of all students served in general education classrooms. The attitude of teachers towards students with special needs is a key factor in determining the success or failure of inclusive education. As stated by Salisbury (2006), attitudes toward inclusion were mostly influenced by the amount of education and academic preparation teachers received. Teachers who had specific training to teach students with disabilities expressed more positive attitudes towards inclusion compared to those that did not have specific training (Lambe and Bones, 2006).

Another factor influencing teachers' attitudes is the severity of the students' disabilities. Kniveton (2004) states the more severe the disability of a student, the less positive inclusion was regarded by teachers. Including students with severe disabilities requires a greater amount of responsibility on the part of the general education teacher because it may be difficult for students with severe disabilities to conform to the routines and rituals of a general education classroom. Having students with severe disabilities in the classroom can become an added stress to the general education teacher. Lastly, teachers' concerns with receiving the proper support from their administration also played a part in their views of inclusion. If teachers were not provided with the proper training or professional development opportunities they needed to teach students with

special needs, they believed that they were not being fully supported by their principal. Also, if the principal did not equip teachers with the appropriate teaching staff to support the students with special needs in their classroom, such as a paraprofessional or a special education teacher they would not have a favorable view of inclusion.

Daane and Beirne-Smith (2001) interviewed 324 elementary teachers and found that although they agreed that students with disabilities had the right to be in the general education classroom, the majority of them disagreed that they could receive effective instruction in the general education classroom. They also believed that the presence of students with disabilities in the general education classroom increased the instructional load of the general education teacher. Instructional modifications were viewed as difficult to implement and required extra time and planning. Not only was this an issue but the teachers also indicated that there were more management problems in the classroom when they included students with disabilities. Daane and Beirne-Smith (2001) also found in their study when they interviewed a number of special education teachers that they felt it was necessary to still use pull out services for some students with disabilities because they needed more one-on-one attention and assistance than the general education classroom can not provide. They also believed that the general education teacher should not have the primary responsibility for the education of students with disabilities when they are in an inclusive environment because they thought that the inclusion process is too great a task for any one teacher to implement alone and it is beneficial to include the expertise of the special education teacher to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving all of the support they need in the general education classroom (Daane and Beirne-Smith, 2001).

Overall, teachers feel that inclusion should not be something that simply happens but rather something that requires careful thought and preparation (Kavale, 2000). Teachers support inclusion but become frustrated if it is not treated as a process that requires time and energy to implement. If teachers receive the proper support and resources to implement inclusion successfully then they would have more positive attitudes towards this method of instruction.

Administrations' Attitudes and Perceptions

Principals and other administrative officials play a critical role in creating conditions necessary for inclusive education practices to be implemented into their school systems. They are ultimately responsible for ensuring that every student in their school or school district is receiving an appropriate and equal education. They acknowledge that inclusion requires a strong commitment and support from the entire school community. After interviewing several principals from elementary, middle and high schools, Salisbury (2006) discovered that these principals believed that inclusion was more than about students with disabilities, "it was about a philosophy in which schools needed to value diversity, acceptance, and membership" (p.76). All of the principals also believed that every student, including those with disabilities is part of the school community, and belonged in a general education classroom.

When it came to evaluating administrators' attitudes toward inclusion, Salisbury (2006) found that principals in schools that were partially inclusive had different views than principals in fully inclusive schools. Principals of inclusive schools seemed to address the topic of inclusion in a more committed manner. They felt that not including

these children was not an option, and that unless they were in a general education classroom, they would not learn (Salisbury, 2006). Principals of partially inclusive schools also used language and examples that reflected a strong commitment and support of inclusive education. Nonetheless, they still stressed the need for pull out services for students with disabilities in special education classrooms. Salisbury (2006), however, found after administering a large survey study that only 20 percent of the elementary principals held positive attitudes toward inclusion, and those with the most positive attitudes were more likely to support placements in less restrictive settings for students with disabilities.

Administrators also admitted that there are many challenges they face when implementing the inclusion process. The implementation of inclusion was not without a struggle. The most frequently mentioned barrier identified by the principals that were interviewed was the negative attitudes of teachers and parents, as stated by Praisner (2003). Other challenges mentioned were staffing issues, time, and meeting individual student needs. Each of these challenges had an effect on the momentum of change in the principals' schools, as found by Praisner (2003).

Principals stated that problems with staff shortages, turnover, attitudes, and changing roles and responsibilities for teachers affected the implementation of inclusion. Time was also a major concern identified by all of the principals that were interviewed. Salisbury (2006) noted that due process and Individual Education Program planning meetings were specifically mentioned by several principals as particularly time consuming. Lastly, and most importantly, principals had to ensure that all students were learning. It is essential that they meet the complex needs of every student with a disability

that are in general education classrooms. They need to do this by ensuring the knowledge and skills of the teachers that are educating these students by providing several training and professional development opportunities. Principals admitted that it takes a lot of perseverance and problem solving to help students with disabilities and their teachers to succeed in general education classrooms.

Administrators did acknowledge that if the implementation of inclusion was to be successful, there was a need for instructional and administrative supports. They asserted that inclusion requires a collaborative effort and a philosophical commitment on the part of the entire school community (Praisner, 2003). Also, it requires a great deal of leadership to bring about this type of reform to a school or school district, which can affect how much or how little is accomplished. Lastly, Salisbury (2006) discovered that principals placed a lot of importance on ensuring that educators have the proper knowledge, skills, and training to educate students with disabilities effectively. Salisbury's findings indicate that principals understand the importance of inclusion but realize that it does come without a substantial amount of time, energy, leadership and commitment.

Parents' Perceptions and Attitudes

Parents' views of inclusion are also considered to be very important because they play a major role in the education of their child. Parents need to be dedicated to the inclusion process in order for it to be successful and effective for their child. Children with and without disabilities are now being educated together in the same inclusive

environment and parents need to be involved to help teachers become aware of what is best for their children.

Parents also had different views of inclusion. Parents seemed to be concerned about their child's inclusion in all areas of life as well as the school environment. Brown (2001) found that parents focused on the social aspects of inclusion and normalization. Many parents of children with disabilities wanted them to have a normal life experience and not be excluded or isolated from their peer group (Brown, 2001).

Parents did acknowledge the benefits of inclusion. Parents of children without disabilities believed that being in an inclusive setting helped their child by preparing them to live in the real world and enhanced their awareness about individual differences, as noted by Leyser and Kirk (2004). In a study done by Brown (2001) revealed that the children without disabilities also showed an improved sense of self-worth from helping their peers, social cognition, and a greater acceptance of diversity. Parents of children with disabilities also identified many benefits. Parents found their child's ability to socialize with their peers as being very important. It also gave them increased opportunities to foster their acceptance and provided them with an interesting and creative environment to stimulate their learning (Brown, 2001). Parents of children in an inclusive setting also felt that their child's current placement facilitated their children's peer relationships and friendships. In a parent survey, Peck (2004) found that over 80 percent of respondents believed that the experience of inclusion had enhanced their child's social and emotional growth. Also, over 90 percent of parents agreed that having a student with severe disabilities in their child's class had been a positive experience for them (Peck, 2004).

Although parents acknowledged the benefits of inclusion for their children, they also expressed some concerns. Some of the concerns were lack of attention from teachers, their child's emotional well-being, and the quality of services their child is receiving in an inclusive setting. Many of the parents were concerned that the professionals that were working with their child with a disability might not have time to provide the direct attention and instruction their child needs. Being ridiculed and rejected by their peers and social isolation were also fears of parents of children with disabilities (Leyser and Kirk, 2004).

Another area of concern was the services their child was receiving and the instructional skills of the general education teacher. According to Leyser and Kirk (2004), after conducting a parent survey, more than one-fourth of the respondents felt that general education teachers were unable to adapt classroom programs for students with disabilities, and about one-third felt that general education teachers lacked skills needed to integrate students with disabilities into their classrooms. Parents felt that their training was different, and so was their expertise. In fact, 60 percent of parents felt that instruction is done more effectively by special education teachers, as noted by Leyser and Kirk (2004). Parents believed that some teachers did not want to be bothered with the issues that students with disabilities can bring into the classroom and many general education teachers do not want to teach special education students.

Overall, parents support for inclusion was found to be conditional. There were certain factors that influenced parents' beliefs of inclusion. One of these factors includes the attitudes of the teachers, administrators, and school district as a whole toward inclusion. The severity of their child's disability also influenced parents' attitudes toward

inclusion; parents of children with mild disabilities expressed significantly more positive views of inclusion compared to parents of children with moderate to severe disabilities, according to Leyser and Kirk (2004). The child's age and the number of years their child has received special education also influenced their views of inclusion.

A child's education is very important to parents and they want to be certain that their child is receiving all of the support and encouragement for them to be successful in an inclusive learning environment.

Students' Perceptions and Attitudes

Of everyone involved in the inclusion process, students are the ones that are the most affected. They experience inclusion on a daily basis. Students without disabilities are now being exposed to students with disabilities and are learning with each other in the same inclusive environment. General education students and students with special needs expressed very positive views toward inclusion. Brown (2001) found that students without disabilities showed no hesitance when they were asked to work with their peers that had disabilities. In fact, they enjoyed the opportunities to meet and befriend peers that had diverse personalities. Students with disabilities also believed that they felt more accepted by their peers now that they were in an inclusive setting (Brown, 2001). They felt comfortable around their classmates. Furthermore, students without disabilities that were in inclusive settings showed a greater understanding of individual differences and were less likely to hold prejudices or stereotypes toward their peers that had disabilities compared to students who were not taught in an inclusive setting, according to Brown (2001).

If students observe their teacher providing support and respect to each and every student in their classroom, then the students will follow suit. Students need to have positive role models that fully support inclusion and diversity in order for them to accept and embrace it.

Strategies to Create Successful Inclusion

As previously mentioned, there are many components that need to be in place in order for successful inclusion to take place. These strategies can have a significant impact on whether or not inclusion is effective. One of these strategies is ensuring that school districts are providing training and professional development opportunities to educators to help them better accommodate every child's learning needs and understand how to appropriately manage an inclusive classroom. When teachers create a positive climate in their classrooms that embraces diversity it helps inclusion become part of the school culture. Collaboration and shared responsibility between all faculty and administration is also a very significant component of inclusion's success. Lastly, when teachers use different instructional strategies and provide modifications to the curriculum they are ensuring that every student in their classroom is receiving the education that they are entitled to.

Providing Training to Teachers

As mentioned earlier, many practicing teachers do not have any prior training in special education and are not adequately prepared to teach students with disabilities. Leyser and Kirk (2004) found that general education teachers generally use strategies and

adaptations directed toward the class as a whole and incorporate only minor or no modifications based on student needs. Administrators need to provide their staff with training and professional development opportunities that give them the knowledge and skills needed to successfully implement inclusion into their classrooms. General education teachers have training needs in curriculum modification, differentiated instruction strategies, assessment of academic progress, behavior management, development of Individual Education Programs (IEP's), and use of assistive technology, according to Leyser and Kirk (2004). There should also be training to help teachers understand the different disabilities that their students may possess and will be dealing with on a daily basis. As Leyser and Kirk (2004) believe, training should be aimed at facilitating a better understanding of the perspectives of families of students with disabilities, as well as in strategies to promote communication and collaboration with parents.

More training also needs to be offered to teachers at the preservice level. Leyser and Kirk (2004) stated that "a single three-credit hour course in special education for education majors in the United States, is not enough" (p. 283).

With the proper knowledge and skills, teachers would have more positive attitudes toward inclusion because they would feel better prepared to include students with disabilities in their classroom. They would willingly embrace inclusion with few or no reservations as long as they receive the guidance they need, as found by Leyser and Kirk (2004).

Classroom Climate

In order for students, including those with disabilities, to feel safe in their school environment, they must feel accepted by their teachers and peers. This implies the need to develop respect for differences. To make this happen, Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) suggest that teachers first model an attitude of respect for individual differences. The words and actions presented by the teacher must reflect the idea that everyone is equal. Directly discussing various types of human diversity, as well as the individual strengths and weaknesses that we all have, can be used to develop a sense of acceptance and understanding, according to Voltz et al. (2001).

There needs to be a sense of community in the classroom. Students with disabilities should not feel that they are an addition to a general education classroom, but a part of it and they belong there. When teachers make accommodations and support student participation, every child feels respected. Every student needs to be encouraged to participate in all classroom activities and their contributions should be valued. Teachers need to foster mutual respect among all of their students.

The rules of the classroom should reflect a positive learning environment that exhibits respect, cooperation, and acceptance, as found by Ferguson, Desjarlais, and Meyer (2000). Every student should be held accountable for their actions, whether positive or negative. By setting the standards and discussing them early in the school year, the students will be responsive and considerate of the rules and expectations in place.

Collaboration and Shared Responsibility

Everyone involved in the inclusion process needs to be committed to making it work. It is critical that general and special education teachers routinely meet to engage in collaborative problem solving around issues that may arise in the inclusion process, as found by Voltz et al. (2001). There should be open communication between general education and special education teachers to negotiate co-teaching responsibilities and expectations prior to initiating the inclusion process into their classroom. One teacher should not have the sole responsibility of the instruction of all of the students. General and special education teachers need to work together effectively to create diverse learning opportunities for learners who have a wide variety of interests, learning styles, and intelligences (Villa and Thousand, 2003). In order to do this, there needs to be more time devoted to collaborative planning. Administrators need to provide this common time for general and special education teachers to meet to discuss the individual needs of their students and address common classroom issues, such as behavior management, academic expectations and assessment.

Administrators need to show their dedication to the process of inclusion just as their teachers do. As previously mentioned, they need to provide their teachers the necessary training and professional development opportunities on an ongoing basis to give them the knowledge they need to effectively teach in an inclusive setting. Teacher visitations to successful inclusive classrooms, discussion groups focused on challenges in implementing inclusion, and peer coaching to provide support and guidance should be offered to ensure that inclusion is being implemented appropriately (Voltz et al., 2001). This ongoing support creates a professional learning community and helps teachers

31

reflect on their co-teaching experiences, resolve problems, and experiment with new approaches (Friend, 2007). When administrators are trying to establish criteria for judging the quality of the co-teaching program they have in place in their school, Friend (2007) suggests administrators ask themselves the following questions:

- Are both teachers actively engaged in the instructional process?

- Do both teachers contribute to discipline and classroom management?

- Are they grouping students in ways that will help them meet their learning goals?

- Are they addressing student learning needs and making use of each teacher's strengths? (p.51)

When everyone involved in the inclusion process shows their commitment to it by sharing common goals and roles they are taking responsibility for it and would like to contribute to its success.

Instructional Strategies

When working with students with special needs, teachers need to become flexible by using various instructional strategies, especially in an inclusive setting. Students with disabilities need a variety of modifications made to the curriculum and also require different methods of instruction in order for them to be successful in an inclusive classroom.

Teacher directed lessons should not be the only instructional strategy used, student-centered lessons that require peer support is especially important to use in inclusive classrooms. Carter and Kennedy (2006) believe that cooperative learning

lessons are very beneficial for both general education students and students with disabilities. They are given the opportunities to learn from their peers and support each other in small groups. This can help students have a better understanding of the content being taught because of the help they receive in cooperative groups. It also fosters meaningful participation from every student because of the amount of communication and cooperation that is needed when working with their peers (Carter and Kennedy, 2006).

It is important that students with special needs are gaining as much access as possible to the general curriculum and age appropriate activities (Janney and Snell, 2005). In addition to the instructional modifications students with disabilities need, some students also require adaptations to the tasks that are given to them. Some examples of these adaptations are, having students complete only specified problems for math homework, following picture cues to perform a multi-step task, and giving oral rather than written responses to comprehension questions. It is important, however, that the tasks that are given are related to the content that is being taught so they are able to experience the general curriculum. These types of tasks may also require alternate assessments to evaluate the students with special needs progress within this curriculum.

Furthermore, peer support interventions are also seen as beneficial to help students with severe disabilities have access to the curriculum and develop meaningful peer relationships. It is typically used in the middle school and secondary setting. These interventions involve one or more classmates without disabilities providing academic and social support to a student with severe disabilities. Under adult supervision, students without disabilities provide individualized support to help differentiate activities and

lessons. The students are provided with training in delivering support to their peers with severe disabilities. Examples of objectives for peer support strategies are, adapting class activities to facilitate their participation, supporting behavior intervention plans, providing frequent, positive feedback, and modeling age-appropriate communication skills, as stated by Carter and Kennedy (2006). This type of support provides students with severe disabilities with academic and social engagement. Carter and Kennedy (2006) believes that it leads to these students having a more complete inclusive experience, by being exposed to the general education curriculum and being actively engaged in learning opportunities with their peers.

By incorporating different types of instructional strategies, modifications to tasks, and peer support strategies in inclusive settings, teachers are improving the likelihood that the students with disabilities that are in their classroom are going to be successful. Most students with special needs can meet the high standards being set in today's general education classrooms; it is up to teachers to find ways to tap into their potential.

Chapter III: Reflection

After reviewing the literature on the topic of inclusive education, I have realized what a truly controversial topic inclusion is in education today. It is an issue that will continue to grow as the context of American education changes. Inclusion is simply not a process that can be done to a school or a classroom; it is a philosophy that needs to be embraced by everyone involved. Inclusion is a philosophy of acceptance and diversity. It is an idea that is being brought into our schools that requires a substantial amount of change on the part of everyone in the school community.

Schools have had a long history of segregation, especially when it comes to educating students with disabilities. People felt that anyone with a disability was incompetent and that they had nothing valuable to contribute to society. It has only been in recent years that education has made an effort to understand the philosophy of inclusion and incorporate it into schools. The purpose of education is to ensure that *every* student gains access to knowledge, skills, and information that will prepare them to contribute to America's communities and workplaces. Students with disabilities should not receive any less of an education compared to their peers without disabilities. Every child has the right to an appropriate and equal education in this country. Everyone needs to be committed to ensuring that this happens in our schools.

As I have found from the research, inclusion has many different aspects that make it such a debatable issue. For as many positive components inclusion has and benefits it provides to students, there are also several drawbacks if it is not implemented appropriately. Inclusion requires a lot of preparation and commitment. It is not just a trend that schools need to follow.

I believe that as educators, we need to place students in the least restrictive environment. There has been a steady increase in the integration of students with disabilities but difficulties have resulted from the least restrictive environment coming to be interpreted as solely the general education classroom, regardless of a student's disability. As I found from the research, the general education classroom is not yet prepared to accommodate all students with disabilities. There needs to be more effort made to create learning environments that promote educational success and a sense of belonging for all students. A commitment to diversity needs to be established first and foremost in every classroom.

As the research has shown, it is important that all students in inclusive classrooms achieve academic success. I believe that more research needs to done on how much academic progress students with disabilities make in inclusive and general education classrooms. It seems that students with disabilities show academic progress when they are receiving all of the individualized attention they need in inclusive classrooms compared to being placed in a general education classroom without much if any differentiated instruction and support. Educators must take an active role in ensuring students' success by utilizing teaching strategies that facilitate learning by all students and help create the appropriate, effective learning environment. Researchers need to provide more evidence of the importance of placing students with disabilities in the environment that provides them with the best possibility to achieve academic success.

Researchers have also discovered that inclusion provides many social benefits to students. It has been shown that students with disabilities that have been placed into inclusive settings have improved self-esteem and social skills by being exposed to their

peers without disabilities. I think that most of the research focused on the social benefits that it provides to students at the early childhood and elementary school level. For students with disabilities at the intermediate and secondary level that are in inclusive classrooms, there was a lack of evidence that proved that they are provided with many social benefits. It has been shown that peers without disabilities at the intermediate and secondary level may be less accepting of individual differences if they have not have had much exposure to students with disabilities as a young child. The social stigma for students with disabilities is harder to overcome as they get older. Research has revealed that by exposing preschool and elementary aged students without disabilities to students with special needs there is a greater likelihood of acceptance. There is research that states that the longer students with special needs are in inclusive classrooms the greater likelihood that they will become more social and develop friendships with their peers without disabilities.

By looking at the research I have realized that inclusion means different things to different people. The research has identified that each individual involved in the inclusion process has had different experiences with it which has caused them to have different viewpoints. The different perceptions and attitudes of teachers, administrators, parents, and students are very important. The information schools can receive from these groups of people can be used to improve the effectiveness of the inclusion process in their district. The more negative views of inclusion that individuals hold, the greater likelihood that inclusion will not be accepted and its' implementation will be unsuccessful. Research has demonstrated that as long as everyone involved in the inclusion process has the same

understanding and commitment to it, inclusion will be viewed positively and will be implemented effectively.

As a substitute teacher in several school districts, I have experienced inclusion at many different levels. In classrooms I have observed and taught in I have seen and experienced the benefits of inclusion and what it truly means to include students with disabilities effectively. With the diversity of students' abilities now in general education classrooms I have seen each student's needs being met with the support of the general and special education teachers. The teachers also held all of their students to high standards and provided individualized attention and instruction that resulted in meaningful learning taking place by every student. Everyone in the classrooms seemed to be knowledgeable, comfortable and confident about the process of inclusion. This school understood the philosophy of inclusion and put in the effort to ensure its success by preparing their teachers to educate students in an inclusive setting effectively and to ensure that all students experience a sense of acceptance and support.

However, I have also been on the other side of the spectrum and have seen and experienced what it is like to be in classrooms that have not been appropriately prepared to handle and embrace inclusion. The students with disabilities have just been placed in general education classrooms. There was no evidence of differentiated instruction taking place and individualized attention could not always be given to students because most of the time there was only one general education teacher in the room. These general education teachers were also not properly trained to educate students with disabilities. They seemed to be very overwhelmed, frustrated, and clearly not prepared for inclusion;

it was just something that they were put into without much knowledge and understanding of what inclusion means.

As a general education teacher, I have been affected by the changes being made in our schools today. I have been in many inclusive classrooms where inclusion has not been implemented successfully. It can be very overwhelming task. I feel that the education I have received has not properly prepared me to educate students with disabilities. I have been in these classrooms feeling very overwhelmed at times because there is no additional support given to the students in the classroom. There is no special education teacher and paraprofessional present in the classroom at all times. The special education teachers serve as consultants and pull out the students that receive services or push in for support for a short period of time. They are needed throughout the entire school and there is not enough staff and resources to go around, which is the case in many schools today.

If the students with disabilities do receive any services it is usually outside of the classroom in small groups. When they return they are expected to complete the work they missed which causes even more frustration because they feel they will never understand the material and be able to catch up. Students with disabilities are simply expected to be able to keep pace with the general education curriculum without receiving any modifications or differentiated tasks. I have seen the frustration students with disabilities are experiencing when they are trying to complete a task that is too complex for them. This defeats the whole purpose of inclusion. Instead of having students with disabilities feel empowered and confident, they are feeling discouraged and helpless in this type of system.

Also, in these classrooms I have seen and heard students with disabilities being teased and bullied by their peers without disabilities because the classroom climate did not reflect the aspects of diversity and acceptance that are needed for inclusion to be successful. Inclusion and diversity were not topics of discussion that the teacher had with all of their students and because of this; the students with disabilities were left to suffer from the ridicule.

It seems schools are just simply placing students with disabilities into general education classrooms only because they think it is the right thing to do, and not because they are truly aware of the philosophy of inclusion and the effect it has on everyone involved. By sending students with disabilities into these artificial inclusive classrooms we are not giving them the education they deserve. There needs to be more attention paid to providing training and professional development opportunities for teachers to ensure that they understand how to teach effectively in an inclusive setting. By doing this, we can avoid the risk of having more and more ineffective inclusive classrooms that are not providing students with the education they need. Also, schools need to provide general education teachers with support staff and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms to provide the individualized attention that is needed by students.

I support inclusion and the benefits it provides to students with disabilities but it needs to be properly implemented in order for it to be successful so our students can see and experience the positive aspects of it. Schools need to realize the significance of inclusion and adopt inclusive practices. Just making sure students with disabilities are in the same classroom as their peers without disabilities is not enough. Every student should be engaged in meaningful learning together. Inclusion is based on the concepts of

diversity and individuality. All students learn better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interests, and differences. As educators, it is our job to ensure that our students are receiving the attention and support they need in order to be successful. By doing this we are providing our students with an equal and appropriate education they deserve. The question for education today and for the future must not be "should schools implement inclusive education?" it ought to be "how do schools implement inclusive education and make it successful?"

References

Bateman, D. (2002). What does a principal need to know about inclusion? Retrieved
September 30, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Brown, K.T. (2001). The effectiveness of early childhood inclusion: Parents'
perspectives. Master of Science Action Research Project, Loyola College
Retrieved September 30, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Carter, E.W. & Kennedy, C.H. (2006). Promoting access to the general curriculum using
peer support strategies. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities,*
31(4), 284-292. Retrieved September 29, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Cook, B. (2002). Inclusive attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses of pre-service general
educators enrolled in a curriculum infusion teacher preparation program. *Teacher*
Education and Special Education, 25(3), 262-277. Retrieved September 29, 2007
from ERIC Digest database.

Daane, C.J. & Beirne-Smith, M. (2001). Administrators' and teachers' perceptions
of the collaborative efforts of inclusion in the elementary grades. *Education,*
121(2), 331-338. Retrieved October 7, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Daniel, L.G., & King, D.A. (2000). Impact of inclusion education on academic
achievement, student behavior, and self-esteem, and parental attitudes. *The*
Journal of Educational Research, 91, 67-80. Retrieved October 1, 2007 from
ERIC Digest database.

Ferguson, D.L., Desjarlais, A. & Meyer, G. (2000). *Improving education: The promise of*
inclusive schooling. National Institute for Urban School Development. Retrieved
September 29, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Forlin, C. (2001). Inclusion: Identifying potential stressors for regular class teachers. *Educational Research, 43*(3), 235-245. Retrieved October 7, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Friend, M. (2007). The coteaching partnership. *Educational Leadership, 41*(3), 48-52. Retrieved February 29, 2008 from ERIC Digest database.

Ghere, G. & York-Barr, J. (2007). Paraprofessional turnover and retention in inclusive programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, *28*(1), 21-32. Retrieved October 9, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Giangreco, M.F. (2007). Extending inclusive opportunities. *Educational Leadership, 64*(5), 34-37. Retrieved September 30, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Hines, R.A. (2001). Inclusion in Middle Schools. Retrieved October 9, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Idol, L. (2006). Toward inclusion of special education students in general education. *Remedial and Special Education*, *27*(2), 77-94. Retrieved September 19, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Janney, R.E. & Snell, M.E. (2005). Modifying schoolwork in inclusive classrooms. *Theory Into Practice, 45*(3), 215-223. Retrieved September 30, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Kavale, K.A. (2002). Mainstreaming to full inclusion: From orthogenesis to pathogenesis of an idea. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 49*(2), 201-214. Retrieved September 19, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Kavale, K. & Forness, S. (2000). History, rhetoric, and reality: Analysis of the inclusion debate. *Remedial and Special Education, 21*, 279-296. Retrieved September 29, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Keefe, E.B. & Moore, V. (2004). The challenge of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms at the high school level: What teachers told us. *American Secondary Education, 32(*3), 77-88. Retrieved September 30, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Kniveton, B.H. (2004). A study of perceptions that significant others hold of the inclusion of children with difficulties in mainstream classes. *Educational Studies, 30(3)*, 331-343. Retrieved September 19, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Lambe, J. & Bones, R. (2006). Student teachers' perceptions about inclusive classroom teaching practices in Northern Ireland prior to teaching experience. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 21(2),* 167-186. Retrieved September 29, 2007 from ERIC Digect database.

Leyser, Y. & Kirk, R. (2004). Evaluating inclusion: An examination of parent views and factors influencing their perspectives. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, *51*(3), 271-285. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Marshall, J., Ralph, S. & Palmer, S. (2002). I wasn't trained to work with them: Mainstream teachers' attitudes toward children with speech and language difficulties. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 6*(3), 199-215. Retrieved October 1, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

McCarty, K. (2006). Full inclusion: The benefits and disadvantages of inclusive schooling. Retrieved October 1, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). *Teacher quality: A report on the preparation and qualifications of public school teachers.* Retrieved October 1, 2007, from http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/1999080/index.asp? sectionID=6.

National Education Association. (2004). *Inclusive classrooms: Resources.* Retrieved September 30, 2007, from http://www.nea.org.

Osgood, R.L. (2005). *The history of inclusion in the United States.* Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Pavri, S. & Hegwer-DiVita, M. (2006). Meeting the social and emotional needs of students with disabilities: The special educators' perspective. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 22,* 139-153. Retrieved September 30, 2007 from ERIC Digest data-Base.

Peck, C.A. (2004). Parent perception of the impacts of inclusion on their nondisabled child. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 29*(2), 135-143. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Praisner, C.L. (2003). Attitudes of elementary principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 69*(2), 135-145. Retrieved October 1, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Sailor, W. & Roger, B. (2005). Rethinking inclusion: Schoolwide applications. *Phi Delta Kappan, 86*(7), 503-509. Retrieved September 19, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Salisbury, C. L. (2006). Principals' perspectives on inclusive elementary schools. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 31*(1), 70-82. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Schwartz, P.A. (2007). Special education: A service, not a sentence. *Educational Leadership, 64*(5), 39-42. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Smith, D.D, Tyler, N. & Skow, K. (2003). Effective inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. The IDEA and Research for Inclusive Settings Center. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

United States Department of Education. (2003). *The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).* Retrieved September 29, 2007, from http://www.ed.gov.

Villa, R. A. & Thousand, J. S. (2003). Making inclusive education work. *Educational Leadership, 61*(2), 19-23. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Voltz, D.L., Brazil, N. & Ford, A. (2001). What matters most in inclusive education: A practical guide for moving forward. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 37*, 23-30. Retrieved September 21, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Wilson, G.L. & Michaels, C.A. (2006). General and special education students' perceptions of co-teaching: Implications for secondary level literacy instruction. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 22*, 205-225. Retrieved October 7, 2007 from ERIC Digest database.

Winter, E.C. (2006). Preparing new teachers for inclusive schools and classrooms.

Support for Learning, 21(2), 85-91. Retrieved September 30, 2007 from ERIC

Digest database.