

Special Education:  
Educators' Attitudes Toward Inclusion and  
Its Effects on Collaboration

by

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**ABSTRACT**

What does it take for the idea of inclusion to be successful in a special education program? The educators are key factors in the success of inclusion and special education. It is important for the principals, general educators and special educators to work in a collaborative manner. Collaboration is affected by the attitudes each participant holds toward special education. The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes that the principal and general/ special education teachers have towards inclusion/mainstreaming and how their attitudes affect collaboration in a special education program.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted and conclusions and recommendations were reported. The review focused on the roles of the principals, general education teachers, and special education teachers and their attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities. It also included an examination of the literature on collaboration and its effect on successful inclusion.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

We can learn a lot from a box of crayons. Some are sharp, some are pretty and some are dull. Some have weird names and all are different colors, but they have all learned to live in the same box (Anonymous, 2001).

A box of crayons is like a classroom of children. Each one is different. Like the box of crayons the children in the classroom need to learn how to live with each other. The best way for children to learn about others who are different from themselves is to have the chance to talk and to learn with them. Adults in the classroom are there to model and guide the children in learning about their differences.

In response to the diversity found in today's classrooms, the roles of the principal and school teachers seem to have expanded. Numerous laws that have been passed and amended multiple times; it seems hard to keep up with the standards of today's ideals. One concept that has become an issue in all schools is the inclusion of students with disabilities. Inclusion is when a child with special needs is included in a general education classroom because it has been determined that it is their least restrictive environment. In other words, it has been determined that the general education classroom is where the child will have the opportunity to make reasonable progress in the curriculum with their general education peers. In order to understand inclusion it is important to note how inclusion began.

Long before inclusion was legislated, some educators recognized the need to educate all children, regardless of ability. John Dewey viewed education very differently than his peers in 1937. He believed every child should be entitled to an equal educational opportunity. This was expressed when he stated "each one is equally an individual and entitled to equal opportunity of development of his own capacities, be they large or small in range" (p. 459). It was not until

recently that this idea has been made mandatory for children with disabilities by the federal government. One widely known Public Law is 94-142.

Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, is a law that was passed to mandate that people with disabilities receive equal opportunity of education (Rebore, 2001). Basic rights and procedures are stated in this law to ensure a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. In 1990, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Flagle, 2007). Public Law 105-17 amended IDEA in 1997. This amendment emphasized children with disabilities to become more involved with the general education curriculum, increased the general education teachers role in an Individual Education Program (IEP) team, added disciplinary procedures for students with disabilities and added more requirements for parent involvement in their child's education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 reserved the basic structure and civil right guarantees of IDEA, but made some significant changes to the law. Not only did this Act align closely with the No Child Left Behind Act, but it also changed parts of the IEP process, transition procedures, early intervention money, evaluation of specific learning disabilities, increased the standard for teachers, due process and discipline rules.

Due to these laws, educators find themselves working more closely with one another than in the past. These educators include principals, general education teachers and special education teachers. Each of these stakeholders has different beliefs and attitudes about inclusion, students with disabilities, and their roles and responsibilities in the special education process. The "quality of inclusive education is ... a primary determinant of education outcomes for a large and rapidly growing group of student with disabilities" (Cook, Tankersley, & Cook, 2000, para. 1).

Attitudes affect people every day. Attitudes help people determine what they will and will not do. It is important to understand the attitudes of the principal, general education teachers and special education teachers in order for an inclusive special education program to work effectively.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of the principal and teachers, both general and special education, toward inclusion/mainstreaming and the effects the attitudes have on the collaboration between principal and teacher on the effectiveness of a special education program.

### *Research Questions*

The study addresses the following research questions.

1. What is the role of the principal in a special education program?
2. What is the role of the general education teacher in a special education program?
3. What is the role of the special education teacher in a special education program?
4. How does the education of principals and teachers play a role in special education?
5. What are the benefits and barriers associated with collaboration?

### *Definition of Terms*

Special Education: instruction developed to help meet the needs of children with disabilities (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009)

Mainstreaming: children with disabilities attend some general education classes but go to resource rooms to get assistance (Stout, 2001)

Inclusion: children with disabilities are included in the general education classroom for most or all of the school day and they get assistance most often in the general education classroom (Stout, 2001)

Least restrictive environment: environment where the child will make reasonable progress in the educational curriculum (Stout, 2001)

IEP: (Individualized Education Program) a program made up of goals in different developmental areas specific to each individual child to help them succeed (Stout, 2001)

### *Limitations of the Study*

A limitation to this study was that no human subjects were used. Though the information gathered came from studies with human subjects, without the human study it is hard to fully express the attitudes of principals and teachers and how they can affect the collaboration in a special education program.

It was hard to distinguish between attitudes of general educators and special educators in some studies. To address this limitation, I made a judgment about which group I felt the attitude pertained to or I did not use the source if the attitudes were indistinguishable. This limitation also provides another reason why a human study would have been beneficial.



## Chapter II: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of principals, general education teachers and special education teachers on the concept of inclusion/mainstreaming and the effects these attitudes have on the collaboration between principal and teacher in a special education program. The following narrative will illustrate the importance of collaboration between principal and teacher in order for a special education program to succeed.

The topics that will be discussed in the narrative will be the role, attitudes and education of the principal and teacher, and the importance of collaboration.

### *Role of the Principal*

The principal's role has changed drastically in previous years. Principals not only have to manage the function of a school and its employees, they also are now responsible for developing and managing special education policies and practices (Sage & Burrello, 1994; Patterson, Marshall & Bowling, 2000). Similarly, principals are also responsible for handling logistics, including scheduling and transportation and getting access to resources such as staff, materials and inservice training (Janney, Snell, Beers & Raynes, 1995). According to a study done by Patterson et al. (2000), one teacher interviewed said "principals are the key in being able to provide (the) school special education services" (para. 5). Other teachers expressed "the principal's attention to special education could determine its direction significantly," "the principal was crucial in (our) efforts" in the development of a special education program and the "policy implementation (was) dependent on principal leadership" (para. 4). In order for the principal to lead their school in providing special education services the principal should have knowledge, skills, strategies and attitudes that will allow them do so.

Patterson et al. (2000) recommended through their study that principals must know five basic things in order to make a special education program successful. Principals must (1) understand district norms regarding support/guidance of policy implementation; (2) have a basic understanding of special education services, laws, and regulations, court cases and funding; (3) understand district policies and their implications for the entire school; (4) participate in ongoing education regarding leadership philosophy and strategies that facilitate both site-based management and inclusive practices; and (5) participate in ongoing education regarding changes and trends in the field of special education. Additionally, Idol (2006) indicated in her study that principals need to assume the instructional leadership role by supporting their teachers (i.e. visiting classrooms and realistically helping teachers so they can better include all children) and providing professional development in the area of special education. Success of integration lies with the principal (Janney et al., 1995). “The principal sets the tone in the building, and his or her positive attitude toward the integration effort, and toward the student with disabilities themselves... (is) imperative to success” (p.432).

### *Principal Attitudes*

Teachers see principals as the key to a successful special education program. It is important for principals to see their importance as well. One way to gauge how principals see themselves as part of a special education program success is to find out their attitudes toward inclusion. In a study done by Praisner (2003), principals were given a survey to measure their attitudes on inclusion. The results of the survey indicated when the idea of inclusion was phrased in a generic and unregulated way most principals agreed with the idea of inclusion, but when the wording on the survey became specific and implied mandatory compliance the attitudes of the principals became less agreeable. In the same study, the researchers also asked participants to

indicate where they would place children across a variety of disabilities. Most principals chose a full-time regular education classroom with support. The researchers found a positive relationship between principal attitude and inclusiveness because the more positive the attitude toward inclusion, the more inclusive the placement selected. There were eleven participants, however, who felt they could not answer that question on the survey because they felt decisions would be best made on a case by case basis. Cline (1981) pointed out when compared to special education experts, principals were more apt to place children with certain categories of disabilities, such as severely handicapped and cognitively disabled, closer to mainstream than the experts. This result concerned the researchers and they stressed that it is important for the principals to become more knowledgeable about children with special needs.

Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn and Schertz (2001) found through their extensive study that most principals did not mention how their engagement in support strategies for a special education program would make it succeed; instead they gave examples of what teachers were doing. They were quick to talk about all the challenges of an inclusive program and what others needed to change, but never stated what they had to change.

In McAneny (1992), dissertation on the impact of school principals' attitudes toward mainstreaming students with special needs, it was reported that principals who had a positive attitude toward inclusion thought activities and lessons teachers do in the general education classroom for a general education student would also be appropriate for children with special needs. It was also stated that children with special needs should be given the opportunity to function in the general education classroom when possible. Some support strategies these principals thought were important to establishing their goal of mainstreaming were to have qualified teachers and give teachers behavioral management strategies in order to meet the needs

of the children in the classroom. In contrast, principals who had more negative attitudes believed that children with disabilities would probably be best served through a special education placement. Idol (2006) discovered that administrators agreed with the idea of inclusion and believed that inclusion would work best if there were extra adults in the classroom who would provide assistance to all children in the classroom.

According to a study done by Bain and Dolbel (1991), both special education and general education principals identified the willingness of the principals to work collaboratively and have a positive attitude about the concept of mainstreaming were critical factors in successful special education programs. A few principals interviewed in a study done by Brotherson et al. (2001) stated, "I am pulled in too many directions. Can't do it all though I work 60 hours a week." "My traditional duties continue to increase along with these added expectations." "The role as principal has become so demanding and stressful that I need to consider other career options" (p. 42).

### *Principal Education*

Researchers have studied how the principals' education could affect their attitudes and abilities to lead a successful special education program (Brotherson et al. 2001). However, Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998), did not find a relationship between the number of years of principal experience, either in administration or special education, and attitudes, positive or negative, toward inclusion. Brotherson et al. (2001) noted in their study that of the principals they studied, one-third did not have any education in elementary, special, or early childhood education. Principals in this same study made comments about the lack of education in early childhood and special education. Another concern principals have are working with program models that they are unfamiliar with due to their lack of training. They went on further to voice

their main concern was dealing with the challenging behaviors that come along with special education because of the increased services needed for children with autism, severe cerebral palsy, and multiple disabilities. One principal stated the following:

To be better leaders, we need more strategies to deal with special needs. It is so overwhelming to try to be an expert in every area. It is unrealistic, and so we need to know where to go for the resources, whether it's through the area education agency or somewhere else. (p. 41)

### *Role of the Teacher*

Although the principal is an important role in the success of a special education program, teachers also have an essential role. Duquette and O'Reilly (1988) found that "it is generally accepted that positive teacher attitudes contribute to the success of mainstreaming of exceptional students in the school" (p. 400). A study done by Cook, Semmel and Gerber (1999) was based on the idea that the type of support from special education teachers had for inclusion could affect the success of the program. Villa, Thousand, Meyers and Nevin (1996) did research in a variety of inclusive schools. Their research indicated that both the general and special educators "believed that educating student with disabilities in general education classrooms results in positive changes in educators' attitudes and job responsibilities" (p. 40). Idol (2006) noted a trend of how educators were "moving more and more toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes" (p. 91).

### *General Education Teacher*

Like the role of the principal, in recent years, the role of the general education teacher has changed as well. General education teachers have gone from teaching overall typically developing children to teaching more and more children with special needs. DeBettencourt

(1999) found that a startling one fifth of the students being taught in each general education classroom being studied were children with special needs. General education teachers were initially hesitant and thought of worst case scenarios when presented with the idea of including children with disabilities in classrooms (Janney et al., 1995). The authors of the same study explained how pacing the entry of children with special needs into the general education classroom would help teachers become less overwhelmed. This slow pace method was called “start small and build” where the amount of time children with disabilities spent in the classroom was gradually increased. In this way, both the child and the teacher get used to the new situation. According to Parasuram (2006), “teacher attitude is one of the most important variables in the education of children with disabilities” (p. 231).

*General education teacher attitudes.*

I was hired to teach children. I ... Believe that all kids have the right to learn and that the best way for children to reach their potential literacy level is to interact with kids at all different levels. I went into the field of education because I believed in helping children- - whether they were the normal or the average child or the special needs child (Olson & Chalmers, 1997, para. 19).

Elementary educators’ attitudes toward inclusion ranged “from staff being willing to accept and try—to being very much in favor of” (Idol, 2006, p. 83). In the same study it indicated most educators supported children with disabilities because of the overall positive attitudes toward children with disabilities. In contrast, Debettencourt (1999) results showed sixty-one percent of general education teachers disagreed with the concept of mainstreaming or did not have strong feelings about mainstreaming, however, fifty percent stated it would be beneficial to have mainstreaming for students with mild disabilities. A study done by Scruggs

and Mastropieri (1996) revealed that there was variability in support for mainstreaming. It varied by the “degree of intensity of mainstreaming and the severity level of students with disabilities who are mainstreamed” (p. 62). Later in the study it was noted teacher support for mainstreaming/inclusion was consistent with teachers’ willingness to teach children with disabilities on the basis of the severity of the disability and the required amount of added teacher responsibility. Parasuram (2006) pointed out the participants in her study had more positive attitudes toward inclusion if acquainted with a person with a disability than if not acquainted with a person with a disability. This finding was the only variable that significantly influenced general educators’ attitudes toward inclusion.

Similar to having prior experience working with children with disabilities, one study found that teacher efficacy was a factor in general education teachers’ support of inclusion. Teachers who have low levels of “confidence in their own ability to work with students with disabilities” (p. 152) are less likely to have a positive attitude about inclusion because they do not believe they can teach and influence students with special needs. The lack of general educator confidence in working with children with special needs is also due to their lack of IEP writing and IEP conference knowledge. Another factor influencing general educator confidence is the level of support from special educators and administration. This perceived level of support could affect their confidence, hence affecting their attitudes toward inclusion (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick & Scheer, 1999).

A teacher interviewed in a study done by Olson and Chalmers pointed out the following: Obviously, special needs students don’t learn the same as the other children in the room; not one of the 25 learn the same, so I do adjust my expectations and that is really important for me to do. If that means shortening the assignment or folding the paper four

different times so they only have to see a few of the problems at a time, I will do it (para. 22).

General educators associated their attitudes toward teaching children with disabilities with how much administrative support was given, how much time was allowed for collaborating, and their personal experiences with children with “severe and profound disabilities” (Villa et al., 1996, p. 41). Similarly, general education teachers who had previous contact with children with disabilities were more willing and interested to volunteer to integrate children with disabilities into their classrooms (Janney et al., 1995). In turn, these teachers were able to encourage other teachers to try integration because they provided others with useful information and a positive example. Additionally, another study noted general education teachers concerns were also about adequate class-sizes to be able to teach children with special needs, lack of in-service training opportunities and time to meet with families (Buell et al., 1999). In another study, the importance of general educators to get more attitude and awareness training for working with children with disabilities was emphasized (Debettencourt, 1999).

### *Special Education Teacher*

Another important role in a successful special education program is that of the special education teacher. The role of the special education teacher has changed from working with children either one on one in a resource room or working with a class of children with special needs in a self contained classroom with a paraprofessional. The role of the special educator has changed so that they are now working with paraprofessionals out of the classroom and other adults such general education teachers. York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke and Ghery (2005) explained the following:



In a traditional model, students were served in special education classrooms in which special educators and paraprofessionals worked in close proximity (making paraprofessional direction and support relatively easy) and in which specialized equipment and materials were readily available. In an inclusive and decentralized model, personnel, materials and other resources must move 'out there' with the students into a variety of locations that are largely controlled by other professionals. Such a decentralized model makes the work of the special educator more complex (p. 210).

Special educators' roles and responsibilities have become complicated. Their roles and responsibilities have become supervising paraprofessionals; assessing children with special needs; developing and implementing individual programs; facilitating communication between themselves and other adults, such as the general educators; learning new ways of working with children with special needs; and attending to program budgets. Their list of jobs continues to grow. Every day they are called to classrooms to deal with behavioral issues and to address physical or health needs of the children. They have also become involved with the interview process in selecting new paraprofessionals. Then they train the paraprofessionals in working with students and specific sites as well as conducting performance evaluations on the paraprofessionals even though supervision is not legally something special educators are responsible for (York-Barr et al. 2005).

Special educators provide the consistency that children with special disabilities need. The child may have many other professionals that work with them, but the special educator takes responsibility all day, every day for the whole child. The special educator is the person that brings all the other professionals together to collaborate, such as, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and parents.

*Special education teacher attitudes.* Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) found through their survey research that special education teachers are concerned about children with disabilities receiving all their needed services and supports in a general education classroom. These concerns and the changes in responsibilities, roles, classroom activities and time possibly affect their attitudes of inclusion.

Special educators associated attitudes toward teaching children with special needs in the general education classroom by the amount of collaboration with general educators and by the amount of support from administrators (Villa et al. 1996). According to York-Barr et al. (2005), “relationships, especially those with general educators (are a way) to stay continuously updated about and access resources and support” (p. 206).

### *Teacher Education*

General educators who have taken special education courses indicated they use instructional strategies more frequently than those who have not taken any special education courses (Debettencourt, 1999). It was also noted that the amount of strategies they used increased as the number of courses increased. Similarly, Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) found that teachers who had training in mainstreaming anywhere from three to six or more courses used more variations in their instruction than teachers who had no training or only took one or two courses. According to Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), teacher education programs are still not efficient, in fact, they note that teacher preparation is no more effective then it was over two decades ago.

Special education teachers use adapted and varied instruction extensively more often than general education teachers (Leyser & Tappendorf, (2001). The principals studied by Brotherson et al. (2001) expressed how there is a lack of applicants who are qualified to teach children with

special needs. One principal went on to further explain there was a need for a teacher to be experienced in both general education and special education so that inclusion would be more likely supported by these teachers than a teacher with only general education experience.

Another principal expanded on that idea by indicating that having experienced teachers helps the principal because, in many cases, they have not taken any child development classes in decades.

Hsien (2007) gathered through her literature findings that general education teachers and special education teachers agree on the principle of inclusion, however their attitudes about the reality of an inclusive program working successfully are different because of self efficacy influenced by experience and training.

A merge of special education and general education is encouraged by inclusion and all teacher education programs should educate teachers in the appropriate information they will need to execute inclusion to meet the needs of all children across the education curriculum courses instead of in one course on special education (Monahan, Marino & Miller, 2000). Besides education, collaboration is another way to help teachers gain knowledge to better teach an inclusive classroom.

### *Collaboration*

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) findings indicated that most teachers have uncertainties about mainstreaming and inclusion but they believe they can succeed if there are reliable supports to help. As stated earlier one support that is crucial is the support of the principal. The principals in one study reinforced how teacher and principal positive attitudes are a major contributor to the success of a special education program (Bain & Dolbel, 1999). A principal in a different study described the importance of collaboration to researchers, "Collaboration is the

only way we are going to make changes” (Brotherson et al., 2001, p. 40). Teacher-teacher collaboration is also important.

As stated previously, a majority of general education teachers were initially hesitant and thought of worse case scenarios at the idea of including children with disabilities in their classrooms (Janney et al., 1995). These educators felt this way because they felt their students and themselves “would be left to fend for themselves” (p. 431). However, their hesitations soon subsided because of the support they received from special educators and the benefits they saw in all the children they taught. Correspondingly, in a study where participants were part of an inclusive school, general and special education teachers reported positive experiences in shared responsibility, decision making and team teaching (Villa et al., 1996). If all educators are seen as essential in the inclusive process, they are less likely to be defensive (Rebores, 2001). Similarly, Buell et al. (1999) noted for inclusion to work the teacher efficacy needs to be positive and “in order to promote teacher efficacy, schools should include all teachers in decision-making concerning classroom policies, student instructional planning, and even the in-service training programs offered” (p. 152). Additionally, inclusion was successful for educators who were interviewed from five Virginia schools because everyone was involved in the planning and preparation (Janney et al., 1995). These schools took a team approach by including parents, teachers and related service providers by allowing team members to voice recommendations and opinions about the topics discussed. Critical to the success of this program was due to maintaining good communication.

### *Barriers*

Many principals’ interviewed in a study done by Brotherson et al. (2001) felt the teachers at their schools needed the opportunity to go to other school districts and take a look at their

programs to see the different ways things can be done in the classroom. However, a barrier to give this opportunity to teachers is finding the money to hire good substitutes. Another barrier was being able to find time for new teachers to spend time with mentors. Studies done by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), Idol (2006), and Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) also mention time as a barrier to affect collaboration efforts. Likewise, Olson and Chalmers (1997) indicated collaboration was difficult to do because there was never enough time for it. One second grade teacher they interviewed stated ““There is never enough time to plan, to make the program inclusive, as finely intertwined as we would like”” (para. 28).

Debettencourt (1999) pointed out a fifth of every classroom were children with special needs and only “fifty percent of the general education teachers consulted less than 1 hour a week with special education teachers” it goes on to say that these results “suggest that an increase in time consulting might increase general educators’ use of instructional strategies” (p. 33).

### Chapter III: Discussion

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to conduct a review of the literature about the attitudes of the principal and teachers, both general and special education, toward inclusion/mainstreaming and the effects their attitudes have on the collaboration between the principal and teacher on the effectiveness of a special education program. Five questions were asked:

1. What is the role of the principal in a special education program?
2. What is the role of the general education teacher in a special education program?
3. What is the role of the special education teacher in a special education program?
4. How does the education of the principals and teachers play a role in special education?
5. What are the benefits and barriers associated with collaboration?

#### *Conclusions*

Principals play a huge role in the success of a special education program. They are the ones who help to secure funding for the programs and the ones who should be supporting their staff in special education program implementations especially in collaboration efforts. The general and special educators both have important roles to play in order for the education of all children to be beneficial. General educators need to have a positive attitude about inclusion and special education. Special educators can help the general education teachers see a value in inclusion if they also have positive attitudes. It is essential that they work collaboratively as a team in order for inclusion to be successful. Both principals and teachers need the proper training and education in the area of special education to fully engage in a prosperous special education program. Collaboration between principals and teachers, as well as, teachers and teachers is vital

in order to meet the needs of the children they teach and in order for inclusion to be successful. Most principals and teachers want inclusion to be successful, however, barriers such as funding, space, and time challenge the success (Brotherson et al. 2001).

Though collaboration between principals and teachers does have a positive effect on the success of a special education program, the principal and the teachers cannot do it by themselves. “Inclusion is only one aspect of a greater need for community collaboration and partnerships” (Brotherson et al., 2001, p. 44). These aspects include families, social services agencies, the medical community and early childhood programs. Collaboration helps to secure space for children with special needs in early childhood programs, such as Head Start, and also helps in the success of these placements when working together. Similarly, Monahan et al. (2000) noted that everyone, including parents, teachers, administrators, and other related service staff, must see a benefit to inclusion in order for the implementation of it to work.

### *Recommendations*

District Administrators are important contributors to the success of an inclusive special education program (Janney et al., 1995). Principals and teachers are more likely to comply with integration efforts if district administrators clearly communicate their goals for the district as a way to help children with disabilities achieve positive outcomes. District Administrators interviewed recommended not to plan and present integration to teachers and principals, but to instead stress the importance of it as to how it will benefit children. Principals and teachers want district administrators to provide resources they will need to appropriately integrate and then to show them the work they have done is appreciated. One resource district administrators can help facilitate is providing resources to the principals so they can provide training to their teachers.

Villa et al. (1996) recommended general educators and special educators participate in training and pre-service training together instead of separately. They also emphasized these sessions to be on collaboration skills such as team teaching and problem solving. In addition, attitudes that allow all teachers to work successfully with children with special needs should focus consistently in pre-service and in-service education (Monahan et al., 2000). DeBettencourt (1999) stressed the importance for all educators and pre-service teachers at the university level to learn the best skills and strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners and learn ways to work collaboratively, such as being part of a team, so that all children can receive an appropriate education. According to Barnett and Manda-Amaya (1998), there needs to be more consistency in defining inclusive philosophy and practices to better meet the needs of all children.

Idol (2006) recommended that “statewide testing data for children with disabilities be examined and reported separately from ... general education students at the local level” (p. 93). Doing this would encourage classroom teachers to include children with special needs in their general education classrooms because they would not be held accountable for low test scores earned by students with special needs. The negative impact of this practice may be that teachers may not hold students with special needs to the high standards that they are capable of achieving.

#### *Recommendation for Further Study*

The area of special education has many different elements. The issues discussed above are a small part of a greater picture. More research needs to be conducted in the special education realm and more specifically inclusion. Numerous sources mentioned in their studies the issues of the education of educators and training that educators receive. More specifically, program modifications, ways to assess academic progress, ways to adapt curriculum, how to manage student behavior, the process of developing IEP's, and ways to use assistive technology are



topics general educators would like to learn more about in teacher training (Buell et al., 1999). Additionally, one study revealed that the participants who had a Master's degree had a more positive attitude than participants who had a Bachelor's degree (Parasuram, 2006). It would be interesting to do a study on the idea of making dual licensing part of an early childhood program at the university level. Dual licensing would consist of all grade school educators also obtaining a certification in special education. The thought behind this is that it would eliminate the gap in knowledge between general educators and special educators. It would also be interesting to explore the relationships between age, years of experience, or gender of the teacher on their attitudes toward inclusion.

In one study, a relationship was found between age and positive attitudes towards inclusion from those who were between the ages of 20-30 and 50.1-60 (Parasuram, 2006). In the same study, teachers with less than five years of experience and more than 25.1 years of experience had more positive attitudes than teacher with over five years experience and less than 25 years experience. Another study noted female teachers more often than male teachers adapted their lessons to meet the needs of children with disabilities in their classrooms (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). In contrast, Parasuram (2006) indicated no differences in attitudes among males and females towards disabilities.

Inclusion is a large part of an already broad category of special education. There is a never ending list of potential research studies that could be done. Many times research studies can be beneficial and reveal a need for change. Special education has come a long way even within the last five to ten years. With continued research more knowledge can be gained to carry on making positive changes to help meet the needs of all children.

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