

A Quantitative and Qualitative Study of the Attitude and Preparation Teachers

Have on the Success of Special

Education Students

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the attitudes and preparation involved with teachers who have special education students in their classroom. Previous researchers such as Hastings and Oakford, Leyser and Tappendorf have done similar studies. They both found that teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion based on the area of special needs. Meaning, the higher level of disability the more negative the attitude. Hastings and Oakford (2003) used an Impact of Inclusion Questionnaire (IIQ) for their study on the attitudes teachers have towards inclusion. Leyser and Tappendorf stated that teachers in the district used for the study did not have an “unfavorable attitude toward mainstreaming” (pg.757).

This particular study was given to high school teachers at Woodbury High School in Woodbury Minnesota. The survey was given online with an email sent to every teacher in the building. A total of 46 teachers participated in the survey. The survey

of this survey compared to other research is that there was an option to write comments about the core questions.

This proposal found that teachers at Woodbury High School had positive attitudes towards inclusion. It was also discovered that teachers strongly agreed and agreed that students with emotional/behavior problems played a distinct role in their attitude towards inclusion. Most teachers at Woodbury High School which is one of two high schools in the district believe having special education students in a mainstream class can be a positive experience for both types of student.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Students within special education programs are often blamed for problems with the Special Education system. . This is both done directly and indirectly in the classroom and curriculum by lower test scores, discipline problems, lack of resources, and teacher issues. The research previously done on the inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms involves the attitudes of teachers and the idea behind the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The levels of disabilities range from learning disabled, emotional/behavioral, speech/language impairment, etc. Emotional and behavioral disabilities seem to have the most negative comments, usually associated with the lack of experience and education of the teacher.

This research proposal will attempt to look beyond the basic attitudes of the teacher and explore several other issues of attitudes such as the opinion of teachers about the success rate of a student in their classroom, the training of the teacher and the ability of the students to interact play a direct role in the success of a special education student. Knowing the feelings of mainstream teachers, whether or not they believe a special education student can be successful in the classroom, could impact the actual success of the student.

A survey will be given with a 5 point likert scale along with a space for comments to the secondary teachers at Woodbury High School within the South Washington County District. South Washington County school district has a Full Time Teacher Equivalent (FTE) total of 290.7 teachers in the secondary level. Woodbury High School in the district has a total of 73.43 FTE equivalents which is the secondary school in the district.

There are eighteen questions with a separate section of seven demographic questions. With the set of eighteen questions there will be space to write comments after each answer to clarify the reason why they chose that specific answer.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to illustrate the attitudes and preparation of teachers and whether that particular action interacts with the role of the student and their success. Specifically what does the attitude of the teacher do to change the success of a special education? Are the attitudes of the teachers a reflection of their experience and their training?

Assumptions/Limitations:

It is assumed for this research that every teacher has had contact with a student with special needs. A limitation to this study is the district being used in the study, the level of diversity within the student body and the level of experience of the teacher. Most people think that gaining experience means gaining knowledge. The more years you put in the more you'll learn and be able to use in the classroom. Another limitation could be the time line given to the teachers to complete the study. Also the time of year the survey is given could play a role in the attitudes of the teachers.

Definition of Terms:

There are several terms that should be defined for the purpose of this study. These are:

FTE Equivalents: Full Time Equivalent, this is a term used to give a job description of a full time teacher working a full day. A rating of 1.0 signifies that a teacher is at full time status.

Mainstream Classroom/Teacher: Mainstream is a term used for classrooms or teachers that teach a core area or an area that is not specifically special education. Typically the teacher does not hold a special education license.

Inclusion: Inclusion is used in reference to the IDEA law and how special education students have the right to a mainstream education class.

Differentiated Classroom: Differentiated classroom is a concept that many schools are moving towards for the classroom. The idea is that there is active planning with the teacher to incorporate all student differences for a whole education. The idea is that there is not one way to always teach a subject matter.

Core/Elective Courses: In most schools core courses are required classes in the math, science, English, social studies, etc. Also available to students are elective classes such as business, art, and family and consumer sciences.

Special Education Students: Classifying a student as special education usually involves testing at the school level or privately. Most students within special education programs have some type of mental or possibly physical disability. This could be a learning disability like dyslexia, attention deficit disorder or a cognitive disability.

Methodology:

An anonymous survey was made available to the entire teaching staff of Woodbury High School during the spring semester of the 2006-2007 school year. The survey was given online and the invitation to take the survey was given via email. A two week window was given for survey completion. There was a basic demographic section with questions relating to how many years they have been teaching, courses taken, years in the district, etc. The other section of the survey consisted of eighteen questions

ranging from education to specific types of special education disabilities seen in the classroom.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was created to enable students with disabilities equal education in a mainstream classroom. IDEA guarantees students with special needs an equal education in all schools. The IDEA law has created both a positive and negative atmosphere in a classroom. The attitudes of teachers can directly affect the classroom atmosphere as well as the success of a student with special needs. A mainstream teacher's education regarding inclusion and experience with students with special needs also play an intricate role in the success of inclusion. This chapter will explore the correlation between a mainstream teacher's attitude toward inclusion and the training they have received. The attitude of the teacher also relates to the level or type of disability. Outlined in this section research has found that more favorable attitudes are found for the student with a simple learning disability versus a student with emotional or behavior issues as disability. Once more with this particular issue training and experience of the teacher in the classroom is examined.

Attitudes Towards Students with Different Levels of Disabilities

Titles that are given to students with different levels of disabilities can be daunting especially in a classroom with students that are both mainstream and special education. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) explore the attitudes of teachers and their feelings towards inclusion by looking at past research. They found that most teachers' attitudes directly correlate to the level of disability within the child in the classroom. More favorable attitudes are found for the student with a simple learning disability versus a student with emotional or behavior issues as a disability. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) also examined the difference in attitude between a pre-service professional and a

classroom teacher. Their findings included that pre-service or college students were more likely to have a positive attitude towards inclusion versus a teacher with more years of experience.

Hastings and Oakford (2003) used an Impact of Inclusion Questionnaire (IIQ) for their study on attitudes towards inclusion. The results were typical of most readings on inclusion which suggest that teachers have a more positive attitude when dealing with students who have intellectual disabilities and negative attitudes toward students with emotional/behavioral problems that impact other students in the classroom. The impact of these negative attitudes can also relate to the school environment, administration and other teachers.

Hastings and Oakford (2003) used a self report questionnaire with two sections. The first section included demographic information of the participants. This particular section also included questions in relation to their experience with students with special needs. The questionnaire also included domains that were unique to this study. The domains included acceptance/rejection by classmates, their personal development, and their academic development. Also explored with the questionnaire were domains that included contact time with teachers, behavioral problems, and their learning opportunities (pg. 89).

Hastings and Oakford (2003) found the following results with the IIQ “that the majority of the domains of the student teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion measured by the HQ were affected by the nature of the special needs of children considered as candidates for inclusion” (pg. 92). According to the IIQ results given by Hastings and Oakford (2003) have found that children who have emotional and behavioral problems

create a negative impact on other children in the classroom. Hastings and Oakfords (2003) "main findings of the present study was that student teachers expressed more negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with behavioral and emotional problems than they did towards children with intellectual disabilities" (pg. 92).

Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) studied the attitudes of the teachers and also quality of education given to the students in mainstream situations. Leyser and Tappendorf set compared the difference between mainstream classrooms in rural districts and more metropolitan and suburban areas. Their methods included 91 participants in a rural country district found in a Midwestern state. They would then compare the results to data reported by other authors in relation to inclusion and mainstreaming students.

Leyser and Tappendorf identified reports about mainstreaming for rural areas were not completely accurate. Typically past reports identified negative expression. But Leyser and Tappendorf noted that that teachers in the district used for the study did not have an "unfavorable attitude toward mainstreaming" (pg. 757).

Training and Experience Level of the Classroom Teacher

Henning and Mitchell (2002) reported that:

In one national survey, more than 90% of secondary education teachers reported having students with learning disabilities in their regular classroom, and more than 90% of the same teachers indicate that their undergraduate education did not adequately prepare them to teach special population (Rojewski and Pollard, 1993).

Henning and Mitchell (2002) also reported that teachers acknowledge the need for mainstream inclusion but offer few adjustments to curriculum. Henning and Mitchell

(2002) study responds to the growing need for more pre service education of special needs students in the regular classroom. Henning and Mitchell (2002) designed a model for improvement of attitudes of teachers in the classroom. The model brought to light one aspect of inclusion that collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teacher is an absolute must.

Burke and Sutherlands (2004) research has supported some of the previous research with concern to the “inadequate training of general education teachers to work with students with disabilities” (pg. 170). Another concern this study brought forth is the lack of support from other personnel in the building.

Burke and Sutherland (2004) research supported the need for training which could possibly change the attitudes of the teachers for inclusion. The more training service teacher or pre-service a teacher has the more favorable they are towards having special need students in their classroom. This could lead to a higher success rate of both regular students and special education students.

Hastings and Oakford (2003) noted a correlation between attitudes and level of teaching with experience. The study identified that the more years of experience in the classroom the more likely they are to express negative feelings towards inclusion. Hastings and Oakford (2003) noted that contact or experience with people with special needs and the amount of teaching experience can directly affect the attitudes in the classroom. The one issue not addressed was the education the teachers have gotten in relation to special needs. Actual classes and workshops were not discussed in relation to students with special needs. If a teacher wants more training or needs more training in

dealing with students with special needs then the training needs to be more specific to those needs.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) reported that the more experience a teacher has had with a student with special needs the more confidence that teacher gains. Although it is a challenge for teachers to have these students in the classroom, the experience has not become a negative one. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) pooled resources of other studies on the subject of inclusion and found several variables. In their research it appears the variables are: child-related, teacher-related, educational support and human support.

Avramidis and Norwich found that most studies were done with likert scales. That most teachers believe the level of disability matters, their education or availability to education, the support given to the students are factors in inclusion. The researchers were also able to compile facts on the gender of the teachers. According to the research it is inconsistent between male and female. What was stated is that female teachers have a tendency towards more positive attitudes than males (p.136). Along those same lines, the research found that the more experience a teacher had- 14 years or less- teachers had a more positive outlook on inclusion (p.137)

Looking to the future – a Differentiated Classroom

Mainstreaming and Inclusion are words often used with an educational system as stated above. There is a new wave headed to schools that want successful students no matter who the student. The belief is that differentiated classroom teachers need to actively plan for students and the differences found, that not everyone “gets it” the same way. Tomlinson (2003) believes. “... to teach more effectively, teachers must take into account *who* they are teaching as well as *what* they are teaching.”(pg 1-2)

The percentage of students involved in inclusion has grown steadily over the past few years. It is no longer a classroom of cookie cutter learners, even if a student doesn't qualify for special education they could be different type of learner. A differentiated classroom revolves around this fact. However, one limitation to this new research is that there is training involved for teachers who want to incorporate it into the classroom.

According to Tomlinson's (2003) research all students have the same needs in a classroom. Those needs are affirmation, contribution, power, purpose, and challenge all of which need to be met by every student no matter the level of ability. It is Tomlinson contention that the ability changes not the need. Along those same lines, students have their needs in a classroom, teachers have their own responses. According to Tomlinson (2003) teachers need to respond by invitation, opportunity, investment, persistence, reflection. One critical piece of this research is a time conflict in implementing and not having to create several different lesson plans for one lesson. What is good for a group of students may not be best for all students.

In conclusion the literature for inclusion practices delves into the attitudes and practices of mainstream teachers. It is a general consensus with much of the research that more education is needed for pre-service teachers. The research is not as strong with the success rates of the students with special needs. Success in the classroom entails more than the attitudes and experience of the mainstream teacher. The factors include the other students, the support staff and the classroom environment.

Chapter III: Methodology

The education teachers have to rely on some certainties there will be students with special needs in the classroom and the degree of special needs. Some special needs will include learning disabled, emotional and behavioral problems as well as speech and hearing impairments. Previous research suggests that the attitudes of teachers on inclusion change as the number of years teaching increases. The research of this study will attempt to answer the questions.

1. Do mainstream classroom teachers believe special education students can be successful in mainstream course?
2. Do regular education teachers have the training and resources to help make a special education student a success in the mainstream classroom?

In the following section the sample, instrumentation and data information will be thoroughly discussed.

Selection and Description of Sample

The school chosen for this research paper was chosen because of its size and location in Minnesota. The district has approximately 15,850 total students in the district. It is a suburban district with a mixed of veteran and new teachers. The district has several Five Star rated schools based on the No Child Left Behind criteria. The school district is also the place of employment for the writer of this thesis paper.

The school district has two high schools, four junior highs and sixteen elementary schools, as well as an Alternative Learning Center. For the purpose of this study the largest high school in the district Woodbury High School was used. The choice to use this school came down to access, permission and time available. Woodbury High School has

a reported 1,933 students in 10-12th grades. There are approximately 3,481 students total in both of the high schools and 3,718 students housed in the four junior highs for the district. Information on the teacher's ages, gender, and experience levels will be requested on the survey as demographic information.

Full time equivalents is the term used for teachers, 1.0 FTE is a one full time teacher. Woodbury has a total of 73.43 FTE teacher assignments. With 13.0 of those FTE's being solely special education teachers.

Instrumentation

A survey was created for the purpose of this study (see appendix A). Demographic questions were asked for descriptive numbers of the sample but no names were requested. The questions created for the survey were generated from the literature reviewed in chapter two. Research has been done several times on the attitudes of the teachers in the classroom. Most research studies included demographic information to investigate differences and similarities. Specific demographic information for this study include person's age, gender, level of experience, and number of courses taken on special education. The demographic section also asks if the individual has taught different age levels and if they teach core classes, elective classes or both classes. Something that can happen is that a teacher can teach a core class such as biology which is required by all tenth graders. But also teach an anatomy class which is considered a higher level elective. In this particular example the teacher is seeing all different types of students in one day. An instructor who only teaches a core could never be witness to the different levels of special education students.

The format of the second part of the survey is consists of questions that participants respond to using a 5 point Likert scale. The range of the scale is from “strongly disagree” or “strongly agree” with an option to stay neutral. The survey also includes a comment section after each question so participants can clarify responses. This survey has been created for this particular research; no measures of validity or reliability have been documented.

Data Collection Procedures

Initially the survey was introduced at an all staff meeting a week prior to launching the survey. This survey was distributed via email by giving an URL to the teaching staff. Consent to participate was given at the beginning of the survey so continuing implied that the teacher agreed to take participate. Permission was given by the building principal to send all correspondence via email for reminders and to answer any questions. The survey was given in the middle of the last quarter of the spring semester. Teachers were given two weeks to take the survey. Two reminders were sent out to the teachers. Teachers were not allowed to go back into the survey to change answers.

The survey was designed by the author and access was provided by the University of Wisconsin- Stout. The web tool also provided up to date progress of information given as individuals took the survey.

Data Analysis

As stated in the introduction of this section this research is looking at answering two basic questions regarding special education students in regular classrooms. The survey provided descriptive analysis but there was an option to comment after each

question. The data was analyzed by total responses and percentages. The comments given will add to the descriptive nature of this survey.

Limitations:

The one most obvious limitation would be the sample group. The diversity of the school would play an intricate role as to whether it could relate to other schools and teachers. Although the potential sample size in comparison to the size of the school could produce some excellent results, the number of people who actually take the survey could create a limitation. Another potential limitation could be the time limit placed on taking the survey. Some participants could start the survey and not finish because they did not allow enough time. Teachers could not return to complete the survey. In addition, the time of year the survey was given could play an intricate role on the attitude of the teachers. At the beginning of the school year a teacher may be more refreshed and willing to participate in a survey however at the end of the year that same teacher may have less motivation to participate.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to study the attitudes and preparation of teachers in dealing with special needs students and whether how these influence their interactions with student and potentially impact their students' successes. This study will attempt to answer the questions.

1. Do mainstream classroom teachers believe special education students can be successful in mainstream course?
2. Do regular education teachers have the training and resources to help make a special education student a success in the mainstream classroom?

In order to answer these two research questions a survey was given. The survey consisted of questions related to demographics and eighteen specific questions on various special education related concept (see appendix A). The survey was given to high school teachers at Woodbury High School in Woodbury, Minnesota. They were given two weeks to complete the survey online at the end of the last semester of the school year. A total of 46 people participated in the online survey with a potential of over 73 people to take the survey. The survey was completely anonymous and participants were only allowed to take it once.

The survey included a section of eighteen questions that participant's responses used a 5 – point Likert Scale; answers ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree but with an option to say Not Applicable (N/A). Another unique aspect of this particular survey not utilized in many of the other surveys mentioned in the literature review is that participants were allowed to write comments to clarify their position on the question.

Results of Demographics

The first section of the survey asked several questions related to the demographics of the participants. Although the survey stayed anonymous, the sex of the participant was inquired. Table one will show the results of the demographics given from participants.

There were a total of 46 participants. The survey on average took most people less than 10 minutes to finish. Those who took the opportunity to write comments took slightly longer than those who simply answered the Likert Scale. They participant remained anonymous but certain questions were asked that made them distinct from other participants. This section asked gender, years of service, age group taught, as well as courses taken on special education.

Table 1
Demographic Details from Survey

Sex	Response Total	Response Percent
Male	19	41%
Female	27	59%

Number of Years of Teaching	Response Total	Response Percent
0-5	9	20%
6-10	8	17%
11-15	7	15%
16+	22	48%

Number of Years with Current District	Response Total	Response Percent
0-5	17	37%
6-10	13	28%
11-15	7	15%
16+	9	20%

Age Groups You Have Taught	Response Total	Response Percent
K-6	12	26%
7-9	28	61%

10-12	46	100%
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Average Number of Students with Special Needs In Class for One Term	Response Total	Response Percent
0-3	10	22%
4-5	10	22%
6-8	9	20%
8+	17	37%

Number of Classes Taken for Help with Students with Special Needs	Response Total	Response Percent
0-2	28	61%
3-4	6	13%
5-6	1	2%
7+	11	24%

Subject Area	Response Total	Response Percent
Core Courses	17	37%
Elective Courses	16	35%
Core and Electives	12	26%
None of the Above	1	2%

Within the demographic section participants were allowed to write specific classes they took to aid them with special education students. One person has taken several workshops on “Differentiated Instruction” as well as “Brain- based education.” Another person has taken a course in the realm of “students with challenging issues in education” along with “meeting the needs of special education student in outdoor recreation and fieldtrip activities.” Not everyone listed exact title of classes but if a comment was made it was about the type or area. For example, a few teachers have

taken classes on emotional and behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, development cognitive disabilities, attention deficit disorders, among a few others.

Results of Eighteen Core Questions

Table two illustrates the findings for the eighteen questions asked of the participants. The questions relate specifically to the participants opinions on inclusion, their own education and the areas of disabilities. There is a scope of questions from students in the special education program to mainstream students in particular how each group affect each other. Also necessary to ask is whether the specific area of disability plays a role in the attitude of teachers – do teachers have a negative attitude about students with aspergers autism versus attention deficit disorder.

Table 2

Paraphrased Core Questions of the Survey – full survey Appendix A.

Questions	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	N/A (%)
1. Direct Collaboration w/spec.ed teachers	10 (22)	21(46)	5 (11)	3 (7)	5 (11)	2 (4)
2. Time to seek out assistance w/curriculum	9 (20)	15(33)	9 (20)	6 (13)	4 (9)	3 (7)
3. Time to seek out assistance w/curriculum	7 (15)	23(50)	13 (28)	4 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)
4. Classroom hindrance btwn. spec. ed. students and reg. ed. students	1 (2)	10(22)	11 (24)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
5. Ability to achieve higher academic standards	4 (9)	19(41)	12 (26)	7 (15)	2 (4)	1 (2)

6. Capable to change curriculum	9 (20)	29(63)	2 (4)	8 (17)	0 (0)	0 (0)
7. Understanding of terms and acronyms	9 (20)	16(35)	8 (17)	13 (28)	0 (0)	0 (0)
8. Spec. ed. students do not dominate time	1 (2)	15(33)	12 (26)	10 (22)	4 (9)	3 (7)
9. Spec. ed. students set positive examples	5 (11)	5 (11)	23 (50)	11 (24)	3 (7)	0 (0)
10. Adequate training through college for spec. ed needs	6 (13)	12(26)	5 (11)	17 (37)	5 (11)	0 (0)
11. Adequate training within district for spec. ed. needs	4 (9)	10(22)	12 (26)	14 (30)	6 (13)	0 (0)
12. Level of reporting on spec. ed. students becomes time consuming	6 (13)	17(37)	7 (15)	13 (28)	2 (4)	0 (0)
13. Adequate amounts of resources to help spec. ed. students	0 (0)	13(28)	11 (24)	13 (28)	9 (20)	0 (0)

Questions 14- 18 deal with the type of special needs often seen in the classroom. Tell whether or not the type/level of a student's disability plays a distinct role in your attitude towards inclusion.

Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	N/A (%)
14. Learning Disabled	6 (13)	18 (39)	13 (28)	5 (11)	2 (4)	2 (4)
15. Emotional/Behavioral	14 (30)	21 (46)	5 (11)	2 (4)	2 (4)	2 (4)

Problems						
16. Speech Impairments	2 (4)	10 (22)	13 (28)	13 (28)	4 (9)	5 (11)
17. Hearing Impairments	2 (4)	8 (17)	16 (35)	10 (22)	4 (9)	6 (13)
18. Aspergers Autism/Autism	5 (11)	18 (39)	10 (22)	5 (11)	3 (7)	6 (13)

Response to Research Questions

1. Do mainstream classroom teachers believe special education students can be successful in mainstream course?

Question three in the core question section of the survey asked whether there are positive feelings towards inclusion which relates directly to the first research question posed. Seven people strongly agreed, 23 people agreed, 13 people remained neutral, and 4 people disagreed. As part of the comment section one teacher replied “strongly agree” the participant is female and has been teaching for 16+ years. Her comment to this question was:

“With in my classroom, which is a special education classroom, I see that inclusion takes time and it is a beautiful thing when it is nurtured, but it does not happen without the nurturing. The choice has to be both general education and special education. I do not think that throwing students together and calling it inclusion works. It requires training.”

Contradictory a different female teacher with 16+ years of teaching experience wrote “... if a student cannot meet the course outcomes in a reasonable way, so the

course becomes something different for them, then a different option should be available.” This teacher is a female and has been teaching for 16+ years as well.

Questions four and five of the survey ask whether teachers believe having special education students in the classroom helps or hinders regular education students and vice versa. Question four showed that 10 people agreed, 11 people remained neutral, and 14 people disagreed that mainstream students are not affected by special education students in their classes. Contrary to that in question five 19 people agreed, 12 people remained neutral, and 7 people disagreed when asked if having mainstream students with special education students helps that student. The results for question were spread out across the board as to whether it does or does not hinder (see table 2) but the comments given were by those who think it depends mainly on the number of students with special needs in the classroom. One participant wrote “Sometimes... the problem usually comes when you have multiple students that have special needs. I don’t think I have ever had one or two... usually 10 at a time.” This teacher is a female who teaches elective courses and has been teaching for 11-15 years.

Question five included responses “special education students may achieve higher” but that it may be more about regular education students gaining “respect for differences among people.” Some comments dealt with support of the special education student and the type of disability seen in the classroom. A female teacher who has taught for 16+ years noted that

“It really depends on the disability of the student. There is no way to generalize a one size fits all standard with special education because there will be some instances where they will succeed better than a regular students and other

instances where if their disability prevents them from doing work that the class may not be the appropriate class to take.”

Question nine referred to the belief that students with special needs set positive examples for regular education students. One comment refers to the attitude of the teacher. One participant is quoted as saying;

“It really depends on the teacher... if the teacher supports and provides a positive environment for special education student by including them in all activities and making sure he/she is involved with regular students- then they are positive examples because of the teacher support.”

2. Do regular education teachers have the training and resources to help make a special education student a success in the mainstream classroom?

Of the comments given by participant's response to this research question most were in agreement neither their college education nor the district provided them with adequate training. Between questions ten and eleven most people strongly disagreed that they received enough education with 17 disagreeing to question 10 and 14 disagreeing to question 11. Most “education” in this sense comes from being with people with disabilities and learning directly from them.

Question thirteen asks specifically about the amount of resources in the classroom. “Resources is not what they need” is one comment given by a female participant who has been teaching for six to ten years. Another participant who is female and has been teaching for 16+ years in the core area simply wrote “There is never enough money available in the district budget.”

The first question asked dealt with collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers. Most believe agreed or strongly agreed that there is a direct collaboration. Other teachers tend to be the biggest resource when helping special education students. A female teacher who has been with the district for 11-15 years made the comment "As far as curriculum... I make all of the accommodations"

Lastly question six inquired about if the participant felt capable to change curriculum. Most agreed that this is possible, with one person commenting "Some of the adaptation limitations that frustrate me as a teacher is the limited technology that I have access to for teaching in the classroom."

Questions 14-18 dealt with specific types of disabilities. Research by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) indicated in their own research that the type of disability interferes with the attitude of the teacher. The largest response came from students who have emotional/behavioral problems and that most teachers strongly agree with this level of disability their attitude changes on inclusion. This type of disability along with the others comes down to time taken in the classroom. Most comments dealt with the fact that discipline can become a huge issue which relates to how well a teacher can actually teach at times. An experienced teacher of 16+ years commented under the emotional/behavioral problems "Many of these students are often on psychotropic medications that are very serious and many teachers are not trained to recognize symptoms in order to provide the help the student may need to provide intervention before a problem escalates."

Chapter V: Discussion

Recognition of teachers' attitudes in relation to special education is an important step to building a special education programs. This study attempted to answer two research questions by conducting a survey with teachers at Woodbury High School. The survey consisted of a demographic section and eighteen core questions. The core questions were designed to answer the following research questions.

1. Do mainstream classroom teachers believe special education students can be successful in mainstream course?
2. Do regular education teachers have the training and resources to help make a special education student a success in the mainstream classroom?

Woodbury High School is one of two high schools in the South Washington County school district. The high school is located in Woodbury Minnesota. The survey was given online with a link sent to every teacher in the building. They were given two weeks to take the survey at the end of the 2006-2007 school year. A total of 46 teachers participated in the survey.

Limitations

As stated before in chapter three, the one obvious limitation is the sample group and sample size. A total of 46 teachers took the survey but there were also eight teacher's who started the survey but never finished. Potentially 73 teachers could have taken the survey. Woodbury High School has 13 special education teachers who were allowed to take the survey because it was anonymous and sent to everyone. Another limitation is the time of year the survey was given. Typically at the beginning of the year teacher's are refreshed and attitudes are often more positive. This survey was given at

the end of the school year when teachers are trying to fit in curriculum. Motivation with the students and teachers could have been sluggish which could have limited the results of the survey.

Conclusions

The answer to the first question in relation to the success of a special education student is mixed. One correlation between the literature reviewed for this proposal and the end results of the survey were that teachers strongly agree that students with emotional/behavioral problems who qualify for special education can change how the teacher feels about inclusion. Teachers who have dealt with this particular area of student find the unknown of what could possibly happen daunting.

Teachers at Woodbury High School who took the survey have positive feelings towards inclusion and that although they could use more time and resources it is working. This seems to be the underlining theme within the literature reviewed. Henning and Mitchell (2002) reported that teachers offer few adjustments to curriculum and which is opposite of what happens at Woodbury High School. According to the survey most teachers agree that they have the opportunity to seek help from a special education teacher to get assistance with curriculum.

Both the survey given and research stated in the literature review support the need for more training either through college courses or workshops. Of the teachers who took the survey at Woodbury High School fourteen people disagreed with the idea that the district gave them adequate training with the second majority of the people staying neutral to that question.

Recommendation for Future Research

It is said that teaching is a noble profession that without teachers the world wouldn't have the professionals it has today. It is quite obvious with this survey and all of the others given that it is still somewhat inconclusive. It's not a "one size fits all" type of research. Future research should start to dive into perhaps why people become special education teachers versus a regular education teacher. This potential question could open doors to answering the question of why attitudes can change the atmosphere of a school system. It takes a certain personality to work with students, if people are asked why they chose special education this information could relate back to the question of attitude.

Another recommendation for future change is creating a better understanding of the special education system. If teachers can take more workshops or courses on specific types of special needs they may be able to use this information in their classroom. Differentiated learning as introduced in the literature review discusses the need for brain based education. That each student, even students not in special education, learns in different ways. In the future, teachers should be required to actively plan for those differences. It will be important for teachers to "think outside of the box" and work with the students they have in each class and not treat each class the exact same way.

One last recommendation would be to survey students both mainstream and those who are in the special education system. Although there are rules and recommendations when wanting to survey people who are under age, it could be important step in finding true results of the attitudes teachers. Although some teachers may be able to hide some potential bias with students, there are students who are intuitive. This type of survey or

study could be an eye opener for schools. It would be important to survey the students at different times throughout the year to get a more accurate understanding of results.

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Appendix A: Copy of Survey Questions

Part One: Demographics

This part of the survey is for demographic information.

1. Sex: ___ Male ___ Female
 2. Number of Years Teaching: ___ 0-5 ___ 6-10 ___ 11-15 ___ 16+
 3. Number of Years with Current District: ___ 0-5 ___ 6-10 ___ 11-15 ___ 16+
 4. Age Groups You Have Taught: ___ K-6 ___ 7-9 ___ 10-12
 5. Average Number of Students with Special Needs in Class for One Semester:
___ 0-3 ___ 4-5 ___ 6-8 ___ 8+
 6. Number of Classes Taken for Help with Students with Special Needs:
___ 0-2 ___ 3-4 ___ 5-6
- List Topic Areas:

7. ___ Core Courses ___ Elective Courses ___ Core and Electives

Part Two: Inclusion Survey: Using the following 5 point Likert Scale answer the following questions. Feel free to put comments to clarify your point of view.

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree Strongly

1. I have a direct collaboration with the special education teachers in my building.
2. I have taken the time seek out assistance from special education teachers in relation to my curriculum.
3. I have positive feelings toward inclusion in the classroom.
4. Having special education students in a mainstream classroom hinders the education of a regular education student.
5. Having regular education students in a classroom with special education students allows that student to achieve higher academic standards.
6. I feel capable to change curriculum as needed for special education students.
7. I understand the terms and acronyms used for special education students and their disabilities.
8. I feel students with disabilities do not dominate my time in the classroom.

9. I believe that special education students set positive examples for regular education students.

10. I feel that I have received adequate training in dealing with students with special needs through my college education.

11. I feel that I have received adequate training for special education students within my district.

12. I believe the level of commitment for reporting on special education students becomes time consuming in the daily business of my classroom.

13. I feel I have adequate amounts of resources in helping special education students succeed in my class.

The level of a student's disability plays a distinct role in my attitude towards inclusion.

14. Learning disabled

15. Emotional/Behavior problems

16. Speech Impairment

178. Hearing Impairments

18. Aspergers Autism/Autism

Appendix B: Consent Form

UW-Stout Implied Consent Statement for Research Involving Human Subject

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Title: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study of the Attitude and Preparation Teachers Have on the Success of Special Education Students

Investigator:

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Research Sponsor:

Diane Klemme
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Description:

The objective of this research is to examine the attitudes of teachers who play a part in teaching students with special needs and to seek out ways these relationships may affect the educational system, the teachers, and the students. First, academic literature examines the implications of mainstreaming students with special needs. However, very little literature is done about the attitudes teachers have about the mainstreaming. With a detailed survey given to 100 teachers in a high school setting will attempt to open dialog into the potential need for more training or in services for teachers. Specifically research will allow teachers to anonymously discuss their attitudes towards having special need students in the classroom and whether they feel prepared. Specific research questions I will address include: I have a direct collaboration with the special education teachers in your building; I understand the terms and acronyms used for special education students and their disabilities; and I feel that I have received adequate training in dealing with students with special needs through my college education.

The second objective of my research will be to see how teachers feel about having students with special needs in class. If they feel it is a positive or negative atmosphere. Whether either group of students are role models for each other. The research will look at whether teachers are capable or ready to have students with special needs in their classroom. Specific questions I intend to ask: believe that special education students set positive examples for regular education students; Having regular education students in a classroom with special education students allows that student to achieve higher academic standards; and have positive feelings toward inclusion in the classroom.

Risks and Benefits:

One potential risk is the tone that the survey is taken in. I can explain that my intention is purely informational and out of curiosity of my own attitude. Others may take the tone of the survey to mean something else. As I explain the survey and the purpose of my research I would hope to dispel any negative tone that might occur.

The biggest benefit is to raise awareness for the need for more training and understanding of special education needs. The survey is designed and the research is needed to show that regular classroom education teachers and special education teachers need more support to teach the students. It would also have implications for colleges in how they train potential teachers for a classroom with special education students. On average I have 5 or more students with special needs per class every day, I need to maintain curriculum of quality and perhaps modify as necessary. This fact takes thought and training that I don't think I have had. I don't think I am the

only teacher in this position and I want research to prove my idea. Another benefit is that the research could open dialog between teachers and administration for potential in service programs or other types of training sessions.

Time Commitment and Payment:

The survey should take less than thirty minutes. There are 25 questions that are on a Likert Agree-Disagree Scale. There is also an option to type comments after each question. There is no payment for taking this survey.

Confidentiality:

Your name will not be included on any documents. We do not believe that you can be identified from any of this information.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. However, should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator:

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Research Sponsor:

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Statement of Consent:

By completing the following survey you agree to participate in the project entitled,
A Quantitative and Qualitative Study of the Attitude Teachers Have on the Success of Special
Education Students