

Teacher Attitudes of Inclusion in a Native American School

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A Research Project Report

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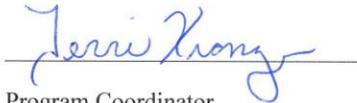


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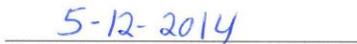


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**TEACHER ATTITUDES  
OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE  
AMERICAN SCHOOL**

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

How important is a general education teacher's attitude in providing an inclusive environment towards students with disabilities? Does it change with different categories of special education? It is a reality that more and more special education students are being serviced in the general education classroom. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 59% of all special education students spent at least 80% of their time in the regular education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2008), American Indian and Alaska Native American students were more likely than students of other racial/ethnic groups to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Specifically, in 2006, 14% of American Indian/Alaska Native children were served by IDEA, compared to 9% of the general population. Due to the high percentage of students receiving special education services in both Native American Schools and public schools, it is imperative that teachers are aware of how their attitudes affect student's performance both academically and socially. This study will examine the differences and similarities in teacher attitudes/perceptions toward the inclusion of elementary students with disabilities in a Native American school as compared to existing research in public schools.

### **Problem Statement**

This study will examine the differences and similarities in teacher attitudes/perceptions toward the inclusion of elementary students with disabilities in a Native American school as compared to existing research in public schools (see Appendix D). The findings from this study

may contribute to understanding the impact of attitudes on successful inclusion in a native population.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify teacher attitudes that can affect the success of special education students in an inclusive setting. This study may help determine why some teachers have a positive attitude and some have a negative attitude toward inclusion of special education students. The results could help determine if specific strategies could be implemented that would assist in changing a teacher's attitude to be more positive. Limited research has been done in specifically looking at teacher's attitudes in a Native American School. In this study, teacher attitudes in a Native American school will be compared to those in a public school setting, to find if there are any differences or similarities between the groups.

### **Research Hypothesis**

It is predicted that teachers in a Native American elementary school will have a more positive attitude toward providing education in an inclusive setting than non-native public elementary school due to having more experience in serving special education students in their classroom. It is also predicted that if a teacher has not had as many positive experiences with special education students, they would likely develop a negative attitude toward inclusion.

### **Nature of Study**

A qualitative casual comparative design using a survey for data collection in a Native American School is being implemented for this study. This type of study is designed to compare information about individuals and then make a comparison between two groups without

manipulating the data (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995). This survey will consist of questions that are related to teacher attitudes of the inclusion process. At the end of the survey, participants will have the option to add additional comments and add insight as to the reasons why they may have a positive or negative view of inclusion. With the information that is gathered, the teacher attitudes will be compared to existing research of those interested to teach at a public school.

### **Significance of Study**

There is limited research that has been done in Native American Schools in regards to teacher attitudes of inclusion. As previously noted, there is an overrepresentation of Native American students being served in special education. The current research being done in this study will examine the relationship between past research on teacher attitudes of inclusion in public schools and then compare the findings to teacher attitudes of inclusion in a Native American School. All students could potentially benefit from the awareness that is provided by this study. It may lead to more teachers participating in extra training, better collaboration and the possibility of differentiating their instruction.

### **Definitions**

Attitude/perceptions - A positive or negative way of thinking or feeling in regards to a person's behavior.

Inclusion - Is the practice of educating children with disabilities into the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day.

General Education – This consists of a classroom environment where students without disabilities are generally taught.

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Special Education - According to IDEA, Special Education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability in the classroom, home, hospitals, institutions and other settings.

Public school – Typically includes a school in the United States that is supported by public funds and provides a free education for children.

Native American School – A federal based school that primarily serves Native American students.

Collaboration – An interactive process between two parties that enables them to work together as equals and share in decision making.

Pre-service training - This is the education and training provided to student teachers before they have undertaken any teaching responsibility.

In-service – The training and/or education that is given to existing teachers throughout their careers.

### **Delimitations**

Specific delimitations exist for this study. First, this study will only include general education elementary teachers in grades K-5 within a public school setting. It will not focus on other content areas such as Physical Education, Art, Music or Media. These specialist classes play a vital role in the overall success of a student's education, but will not be addressed in this study. Second, one Native American school with approximately 12 teachers will be used to compare teacher attitudes with those interested to teach in a public school. Finally, teachers that are involved will vary in teaching experience and experiences, specifically working with students that are categorized with special needs.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of the study is that it only examines teacher attitudes/perceptions and little emphasis will be put on specific strategies for teachers to use in an inclusive setting. Second, the researcher is only involving surveys of elementary teachers currently employed at one Native American school. Thirdly, cultural differences may affect teacher perceptions altogether, not just about inclusion. Another limitation of the study is that the researcher works in the setting of the data collection. In addition, the existing comparative data was performed by others and this researcher is taking validity of their study as described by them. Self-reporting could vary day to day depending on the most recent experiences whether they are positive or negative. Last, the existing research from which to compare public schools will not be from the same geographic area as the Native American school.

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed that more and more special education students are being served within the general education classroom. It is also assumed that if a general education teacher has a negative attitude toward special education students, they will not provide the best possible outcome for students in an inclusive setting. In addition, it is assumed that attitudes can be relatively accurately collected via the survey this study adopted. It will be assumed that all pre-service teachers will teach in a public school setting. The last assumption being made is that teachers in a Native American School have more experience and opportunities with special education students than those in public schools due to the higher percentage of special education

students represented in the Native American population. Many of the teachers being surveyed in this study have extensive experience in dealing with the native culture, which could give them a greater understanding of native students.

### **Conclusion**

This study will investigate and make comparisons of teacher attitudes/perceptions of inclusion between public elementary schools and a Native American elementary school. Along with the literature review, teachers will participate in self-report surveys at a Native American School. Research is limited with Native American schools when specifically looking at teacher attitudes of inclusion. Findings from the study may increase an awareness of teachers' attitudes as it pertains to inclusion in the field of education. Results may also contribute to how to create appropriate strategies to alleviate apprehension in an inclusive classroom setting in the Native American school setting. The upcoming literature review will assist in answering the question as to why some teachers have a positive attitude toward inclusion and others have a negative view.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

Attitudes and perceptions of teachers play a role in the success of inclusion of students with emotional/behavioral disorder (E/BD) and all special education categories, both socially and academically. Because of this, teacher attitudes and perceptions have become a point of emphasis since the reauthorization of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Educators have a difficult challenge in regards to providing an inclusive classroom where all students may have an appropriate and meaningful education. Much of the existing research is based on teacher attitudes, proper training, teaching experience with special education students, collaboration time, and support that is given from teacher, special education staff, administration and students. The literature review will focus on the past practices of inclusion and/or similar concepts with children with E/BD and how they are being handled in today's classrooms.

### **Evolution of Inclusion and Teacher Attitudes**

Since 1975 and the implementation of what is now referred to as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the term inclusion has evolved. Multiple changes have been made to the basic premise of inclusion. The term in the 1960s and 1970s was mainstreaming, which transformed into the Regular Education Initiative (REI) in the 1980's, and full inclusion in the 1990's and finally to the present day practice of inclusion. The present day practice of inclusion is quite different than previous forms. Although the definitions vary, they are all centered on including special needs students in the general education classroom. As general education teachers' attitudes and perception of students with special needs play a significant part in the success of students, and especially with E/BD students, focus on this aspect of current inclusion practices is warranted. Students with E/BD can present a complex dynamic or

challenge that sets them apart from all other special education categories. This segment of the review will focus on studies and articles that explore teacher's views of the inclusion of E/BD students.

### **Present and Past Attitudes of Inclusion**

A keynote article frequently referenced throughout the literature reviews was written by two special education teacher professors by the names of Scruggs and Mastropieri. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) compiled surveys about teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/inclusion from 1958 to 1995. With surveys, they performed a research synthesis to analyze teacher responses across time and geographical location. Their research found that not much has changed over those 37 years. Some of the results were positive, as shown by teachers supporting the concept of inclusion/mainstreaming. Teachers were willing to teach students with disabilities. Initially, the authors found that students do benefit from mainstreaming/inclusion. However, on the negative side, teachers had a different perception when asked to personally implement inclusion. Teachers said they don't have enough time and/or resources for mainstreaming/inclusion of special education students. They also indicated they didn't have sufficient training or expertise to accommodate for special needs students in their classrooms. Teachers perceived that special needs students could be disruptive to the classroom.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) stated that the way the questions were worded made a significant impact on the results. Typically the generally worded questions were more positively rated as compared to the strongly worded questions. What was derived from the synthesis was that no systematic relation existed between teacher attitudes and the year of publication. This research will help determine if teacher perceptions about

inclusion/mainstreaming have changed over the years. Because throughout the existing studies teachers were calling for more time, more opportunities for training, more personal and material resources, reducing class size if students with disabilities are included and consideration of the severity of the disability, the following is concluded. If the above mentioned variables were met, the researchers predict teacher's positive attitudes/perceptions of inclusion would be increased.

Snyder (1999) looked at the negative and positive attitudes of teachers regarding full inclusion of special needs students. The goal of the qualitative study was to determine the teachers' attitudes and if they had any concerns with inclusion. In the surveys, teachers were asked to reflect on the status of special education at their school, the support provided by administration and special education staff to support inclusion, and the training that teachers had received in working with students who have special needs. The results of the study revealed a negative view of inclusion as viewed by general education teachers. Many components led to the negative attitudes of teachers. For starters, teachers felt that they didn't receive support from their administration because they were not provided with training to work with special needs students. The teachers also didn't feel prepared to work with special needs students because of a lack of opportunities in their graduate and undergraduate studies. These two reasons were the underlying reasons as to why 84% of the teachers were not confident about working with special needs students. The study showed that administrators, teacher educators and special educators need to be more proactive to prepare general education teachers for working with students with special needs. A lack of training and experience led to a lack of confidence and negative attitudes toward inclusion. Along with training, there was also a need for collaboration between the general education teacher, special education teacher and administration.

The purpose of Sedbrook's (2002) study was three fold: to assess teacher attitudes of inclusion, determine if attitudes differ between types of disabilities and define the overall relationship between teacher attributes and attitudes toward inclusion. This study was performed in a midwestern state and included 12 school districts and 512 teachers from all age levels. The results showed that collectively, general education teachers displayed negative attitudes toward inclusion. Orthopedic impairments and sensory impairments were the two areas in which general education teachers demonstrated a more positive attitude when compared to students with cognitive disabilities and students with E/BD.

The study also found the correlation of four variables that affected teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities. Perceived competence had the strongest correlation with teacher attitudes. This was followed by professional experience, pre-professional experience and university courses taken. The study displayed how attitudes are formed through the many variables. The teachers who expressed more positive attitudes had more experiences in working with students with disabilities. The study found that if teachers are provided with opportunities to develop their skills, a possibility exists to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion.

### **Studies Centered around E/BD**

Heflin and Bullock (1999) researched teacher attitudes about full inclusion of E/BD students. The survey was administered in three school districts in Texas that involved elementary, middle and high school. When asked about their reactions to inclusion, general education teachers were only willing to include students with special needs as long as the appropriate support was in place. General education teachers believed they needed training related to inclusion and collaboration to modify instruction so that it can be appropriate. None

of the professionals believed that full inclusion is the best alternative for all students. Building administration advocated for full inclusion for E/BD students. The general education teachers in this study resisted full inclusion, citing already overwhelming workloads and inability to serve students with disabilities adequately. The surveys taken in the three districts produced similar results in that the perceptions of teachers was that full inclusion wasn't possible across all districts and student ages. The goal was full inclusion; however, only one school attempted full inclusion and that ended after two weeks into the semester.

This next study didn't directly measure teacher attitudes of inclusion. Instead, it offered instructional practices that could make inclusion more successful and build more positive attitudes about inclusion. Niesyn (2009) took a look at how educators can use evidence-based instructional practices for students with E/BD. Niesyn's view was that teachers are resistant about inclusion due to a perceived lack of competency. There were several proposed instructional strategies (teacher praise, direct instruction and student choice), behavior management strategies (classroom rules, procedures and teacher directives), and student self-management strategies (self-monitoring and self-instructions), that as suggested, would help teachers be more prepared to teach inclusion of E/BD student. Elementary teachers are especially encouraged to utilize the above mentioned strategies that are proactive, empirically researched and antecedently based.

A study conducted by Cassidy (2011) compared teacher attitudes of inclusion between students with autism and E/BD. The research included 25 general education teachers who have had experience with special needs students or will likely work with this population in the future. Cassidy stated that both students with autism and E/BD present more challenges than any other special education category when it comes to inclusion. Teacher attitudes in past research have

reinforced that theory along with the severity of the disability being a contributing factor. The results of this particular study displayed that teachers would be more receptive of a student with autism than an E/BD student. The teachers felt more confident in adapting lessons, implementing Individual Education Plans, and collaborating with teachers and support staff for a student with autism compared to an E/BD student. Teachers also preferred and were more accepting of the characteristics of a student with autism. The author suggested that more training and/or mandatory training was needed to assist with inclusion of students with autism and E/BD. Furthermore, it said training could lead to more positive attitudes of teachers, which would benefit students with autism and E/BD in an inclusive setting.

### **Studies of Different Factors that Affect Inclusion**

Do teachers' experiences affect their attitudes toward inclusion? A study performed by Burke and Sutherland (2004) wanted to determine whether or not a relationship existed between pre-service (future teachers) and in-service (current) teachers' experiences with disabled students and their attitudes toward inclusion. Burke and Sutherland believed that teacher attitudes were formed by teaching experiences and knowledge of students with special needs. Their study measured teachers' knowledge of special education, preparation for inclusion, willingness to teach in inclusive classes and the effectiveness of inclusion for students with disabilities. The results repeated what other researchers have found. There was inadequate training for general education teachers to provide an effective inclusion model. The general education teachers also didn't have enough personnel support and teachers didn't have enough time to support inclusion. As a result, Burke and Sutherland (2004) proposed that building administration should carefully screen and select teachers based on attitudes, knowledge and experience. The authors also stated, "Inclusive teachers don't ask, "How does this student have to change in order to be a

fourth grader?” Rather they question, “How do we have to change in order to offer full membership to our students with disabilities?” (Burke & Sutherland, 2004, p. 164). It is when the final question can be answered, that teacher attitudes of inclusion can be more positive.

A more recent article was also written in regards to the attitude of pre-service teachers. McCray and McHatton (2011) ascertained a better understanding of pre-service teachers’ perceptions about inclusion and investigated if a difference between elementary and secondary education students exists. The sample included 77 elementary education majors and 38 secondary education majors. The study was performed with pre-service teachers in a college course that focused on students with disabilities. The study involved a survey and five open ended questions to give more insight. The questions were geared to determine if the students’ perceptions had changed, what were the students strengths, where did the students feel they still needed support, what information was most beneficial and what questions did they still have. Findings from the study showed participants were more positive toward inclusion of students with disabilities at the end of the course. This validates a need for classes that educate about teaching students with disabilities and possibly more comprehensive classes that involve inclusion. Effective preparation for including special education students in the general education setting will make general education teachers less afraid to have special education students in their classrooms (McCray & McHatton, 2011).

Building administration also plays a role in the success of inclusion. Daane, Beirne-Smith and Latham (2000) emphasized the importance of administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions of the collaborative efforts of inclusion in the elementary grades. The school system included in this study had been implementing inclusion for two years. A survey was administered to 366 teachers and their administrators. The surveys were designed to address

collaboration efforts, instruction of students with disabilities, and teacher preparedness for meeting the needs of students with special needs. The results displayed a mixed view of all aspects of the study. Administrators, general education teachers and special education teachers all responded that collaboration was taking place, but at varying degrees. They all agreed that more needs to be done to make inclusion more beneficial for staff and special education students. In the area of instruction, teachers and administrators viewed inclusion as a means to meet the requirements of IDEA and not what is best for each individual student. In regards to teacher preparedness, all the responders agreed the general education teachers were not prepared for inclusion. All parties involved thought that general education teachers needed more training on the multiple aspects of inclusion. Overall, the responders and authors viewed the social aspects of inclusion to be one of the most beneficial components of inclusion.

Cook, Tankersley, Cook and Landrum (2000) researched how teacher self-nominated attitudes of all students affect what they perceive about students in an inclusive classroom. The study took place in six school districts in mostly suburban Ohio. Seventy general education teachers of inclusive elementary classrooms nominated their general education and special education students in the attitudinal categories of attachment, concern, indifference and rejection. With the categories established, three concepts were emphasized: 1) analysis of the teacher attitude categories, 2) representation of inclusion students in teacher nominations, 3) and variables of representation of the inclusion student in concern or rejection category. The results displayed an overrepresentation of inclusion students in the concern and rejection category and an underrepresentation in the attachment category. Although it was overrepresented, a teacher rating of inclusion students in the concern category was promising by showing teachers have concern, and are aware of a student's progression in their classroom. As for the rejection

category, the results show that many E/BD students could be placed in the rejection category because of disruptive behavior and noncompliance, which could seriously affect the inclusion process and continue to foster the negative attitudes of teachers. Overall, there wasn't support to predict that formal training in special education, inclusion training, collaboration, in class support and class size affected the proportion of special needs students nominated in the concern and rejection categories. However, inclusive teaching experience did play a role in the amount of special education students in the concern category. As a result, the recommendation of the authors was to place special education students with teachers who have the most inclusive experience, whenever possible.

### **Summary**

Inclusion has had a magnitude of meanings over the years depending upon the teacher, school, district, and state. Implementation of inclusion varies widely from one school to another. This is also true with teacher attitudes of inclusion. It is evident that teacher attitudes play a significant part in the success of inclusion. For inclusion to be deemed successful, a positive attitude needs to be in place to foster the inclusive classroom. The research showed that when variables such as teacher training, support, collaboration, preparation of teachers, and experience are in place, inclusion can foster positive experiences. Attitudes of teachers also vary greatly depending on the severity of the disability and disability area. However, a majority of teachers view inclusion of E/BD as even more of a challenge. E/BD students do bring about many challenges that teachers are not prepared for, but teacher attitudes can be changed.

Due to federal mandates, inclusion of students with disabilities will continue to grow. Ultimately, it is the general education teacher's responsibility to educate all students. Most

teachers in the studies were initially open and had a positive attitude about inclusion before actually implementing the process. Much of the research focused on the negative attitudes of teachers and how those attitudes were developed as opposed to how attitudes can be changed to represent a positive outcome.

Most of the research articles relied on self-reporting as the sole means to gather teacher attitudes. There could be a bias on both the positive and negative aspects in how a teacher views themselves and their abilities as teachers. These attitudes are reinforced by what teachers perceive special education students are able to accomplish. However, it was shown that once a teacher recognizes his/her attitude, it can give him/her an opportunity to reflect on his/her view of inclusion (Cook, Tankersley, Cook & Landrum, 2000).

A noticeable gap in the research exists with teacher attitudes of inclusion in Native American Schools. Traditionally, Native American Schools have a smaller student population than most public schools and thus would have a much smaller sample size. Another possible reason for the lack of research is the limited number of Native American Schools in the country. The upcoming study will look at teacher attitudes of including students with E/BD in one specific Native American School.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to compare how teacher attitudes vary that may affect the inclusion process in a Native American school compared to a public school. About 20 percent of students at Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools receive special education services (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). The questions being posed are: Will a general education teacher's attitude affect the success of an inclusive setting and what factors affect teacher attitudes toward inclusion? The literature review showed there are specific factors that affect teacher attitudes. Scruggs & Mastropieri (1996) found more preparation time, teacher training geared toward inclusion and personnel resources would assist in fostering a positive attitude toward inclusion. Many of the factors that affect attitudes will be addressed in this survey. An assumption is made that general education teachers in Native American Schools could have a more positive attitude toward inclusion due to having a higher percentage of special education students and more experience dealing with inclusion. Sedbrook (2002) concluded that teachers who had more experience with students with disabilities expressed a more positive attitude toward inclusion. This chapter will describe the design, participants, instrumentation, procedure and analysis. Finally, the results of this study will be shared with the participants that took part in the survey.

#### **Design**

A qualitative causal comparative design is being implemented for this study. The survey method is the most efficient qualitative method to collect the data for this study. Survey research is useful to learn about attitudes and to be able to gain insight of a certain population (Leedy and Ormond, 2013). A five point Lickert scale will be used with the survey, which

consists of 21 questions with space provided for participants to add additional comments to provide insight on how their attitude has been built. The attitude survey was originally developed as a way to measure teacher attitudes of mainstreaming. The survey had been used on multiple studies and has changed to meet the needs of each individual study. It started out as a mainstream study and evolved into an inclusion study (see Appendix C).

### **Participants**

All of the general education teachers in grades K-5 were invited to participate due to the size of the school. Participants included 11 general education elementary teachers K-5 at a Native American School. Nine were female and two were male and their teaching experience ranged from 2-22 years. There would have been 12 teachers, but one didn't return the survey. This school was selected because it met the needed criteria and the researcher was employed there. The school was located in a rural northwest school district that serves approximately 170 students, K-12 students at the time of the study. The school where the study was performed retained all data collected from this study.

### **Instrumentation**

An invitation letter (see Appendix A) briefly explained the purpose of the study being conducted and placed in each teacher's mailbox. Two days later a consent form (see Appendix B) was distributed to participants in person. An existing survey (see Appendix C) was used to measure teacher attitudes in a Native American School and be able to compare the attitudes of teachers in a public school setting. The survey being used was called the Attitudes Survey and was originally developed by Winzer. Over the years, the survey designed by McHatton & McCray has been modified by eliminating questions that had a low correlation to teacher

attitudes. The last modification was made in 2011 by McHatton & McCray. The survey used for this research includes all of the Likert scale questions, which addresses attitudes toward inclusion. The five open ended questions in the previous survey will not be included, as they were designed for pre-service teachers. The Likert scale used in the survey consists of ratings from 1-5. (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree). The existing survey did not have additional space for comments. The additional space provided in this survey will allow the researcher to get more in-depth answers about how negative or positive attitudes could have been formed.

### **Procedure**

Prior to the research project, permission was granted from University Wisconsin Institutional Review Board and the School Board at the Native American School, authorizing this project. Next an invitation letter, consent form and surveys were distributed in person to each teacher. Teachers were encouraged to answer every question. The surveys were coded in the order that they were turned in. The purpose of coding the surveys was to prevent bias from the researcher and to provide anonymity in the study for the teachers. Once the surveys were distributed, the expectation was that the teachers would return the survey to the researcher's school mailbox within one week. A follow up email was sent the day before the week was up, to remind participants of the due date. One survey was not returned, so the researcher sent a follow up email stating the importance of teacher input and requesting their participation.

### **Analysis**

Data from the returned surveys was categorized and recorded using Excel, a spreadsheet program. Data was first taken from the Likert rating scale statements and organized using frequency. Percentages were calculated and reported using tables. Additional information from the comments section was also added and recorded.

Results from this study were organized and analyzed, so that it may be compared to existing research of teacher's attitudes in a public school setting. As stated in the introduction and literature review, there were specific variables such as: extra adult support, experience, teacher preparation, in-service training, severity of the disability and differences between disabilities, which may affect teacher attitudes. The data collected from the current survey displayed differences and similarities between a Native American School and public schools using data in Appendix D for comparison. The results were shared with building administrators and teachers of the Native American school; and offered to local public schools in the same geographical area that provide special education services to Native American students.

## **Chapter 4. Results**

### **Introduction**

Inclusion is viewed as the best practice in today's current education system to meet the unique needs of special education students (Sun, 2007). Inclusion provides opportunities for both social and academic needs to be met. The purpose of inclusion is to educate students with special needs with their peers in the general education classroom. There are many factors that can contribute to a successful inclusive classroom. Collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers, differentiated instruction and support from administration, are a few examples. However, one vital aspect is the general education teacher's attitude/perception of inclusion. The general education teacher's attitudes/perceptions are built based on many factors. A teacher's experience, training, preparation, and support they receive, all play a role in building their attitudes/perceptions about inclusion. The purpose of this study was to gauge the importance of attitudes for a successful inclusive classroom. The researcher also wanted to see if attitudes changed with different categories of special education at the Native American school where the research was performed. The second process of the study was to compare the results of the survey with existing data from pre-service teachers. The researcher examined the differences and similarities between the two groups.

## **Analysis of the Data**

### Modified Survey of Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs

The study consisted of 21 survey questions and an area for the participants to expand or explain their responses (See Appendix C). The survey participants answered questions using an A –E scale with A meaning teachers *strongly disagree* and E meaning they *strongly agree*. All of the questions were to gauge when, where, and how inclusive services would be appropriate for all categories of special education students. The responses were categorized at three different levels. *Strongly* and *slightly agree* were measured together, *undecided* was another group, and the last grouping was *strongly* and *slightly disagree*. A *strongly* or *slightly agree* response was interpreted as a teacher agreeing that inclusion was the best practice. An *undecided* response was an indication that the teacher wasn't sure if the practice was or wasn't appropriate. A *strongly* or *slightly disagree* response indicated that the teacher felt that inclusion wasn't the appropriate or ideal education setting for a student with special needs. The last question was provided for teachers to expand on their answers or add viable information pertaining to their views of inclusion.

The first twelve questions of the survey dealt with teachers' attitudes in how willing teachers were to make adjustments to their general education classroom. The questions also included how teachers view student independence, peer acceptance of special needs students, teacher willingness and making adjustments to meet the needs of all students. The next nine questions involved categories of special education and how the teacher viewed teaching the students in an inclusive educational setting (See Table 4.1).

In addition, all participants had an opportunity to respond or make a statement about inclusion. Specifically, this part of the survey gave the participants a chance to explain their views of inclusion instead of categorizing their answers into a group. It should be noted that only four of eleven participants responded to this question. The responses have been transcribed and stated below.

Teacher Number 4 stated that, "I believe there are times in which special education students would gain more from 1-1 instruction." "However, I feel that they gain more socially in the classroom." Teacher Number 5 responded with, "It is my belief that all students are entitled to an education in mainstream classes." "However, I also believe that to give each child the education they deserve, pull out sessions are needed to meet individual needs." Teacher Number 7 believes that, "Most students can be educated in regular classrooms with support in the classroom." Lastly, teacher Number 10 disclosed that, "I think additional training is essential, and I would be excited to receive additional training at our school." "More is definitely needed."

In table 4.2, the cumulative percentage of the teachers in the study group is presented. Table 4.3 provides the comparison of the study group (in-service teachers) cumulative percentages to the comparison group (pre-service teachers) cumulative percentages of McHatton & McCray. Tables 4.4 - 4.15 display this comparison by each survey question. And lastly, Table 4.16 displays a visual comparison of the study group vs. the comparison group ratings on their opinions about what categories of special education students can be educated in the general education classroom.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

Questions (1-22)	T.1	T.2	T.3	T.4	T.5	T.6	T.7	T.8	T.9	T.10	T.11
1	E	D	E	D	E	E	D	D	D	E	E
2	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	D	E	D
3	E	D	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	E	E
4	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	E
5	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	E	E
6	E	E	E	D	E	D	E	D	D	E	E
7	E	D	E	E	D	D	D	C	D	E	E
8	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	E	E
9	E	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
10	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	E
11	E	D	E	D	E	E	E	B	D	E	E
12	E	D	D	D	D	D	D	B	B	E	D
13	E	E	D	D	E	E	E	D	D	E	E
14	E	D	D	E	E	E	D	D	B	E	D
15	E	E	D	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	E
16	E	E	D	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	D
17	E	E	D	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	D
18	E	E	C	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	D
19	E	E	D	E	E	E	E	D	D	E	D
20	E	D	C	D	D	E	E	B	B	E	E
21	E	D	C	D	D	E	E	B	B	E	E
22	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

Table 4.1

*Teacher Responses to Modified Survey of Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs.*

**Legend for Table**

- A. Strongly Disagree**
- B. Slightly Disagree**
- C. Undecided**
- D. Slightly Agree**
- E. Strongly Agree**

For question number 22, a *No* response means the participant did not respond.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

Questions	E. Strongly Agree	D. Slightly Agree	C. Undecided	B. Slightly Disagree	A. Strongly Disagree
1	54.5%	45.5%			
2	54.5%	45.5%			
3	63.6%	36.4%			
4	81.8%	18.2%			
5	81.8%	18.2%			
6	63.6%	36.4%			
7	45.5%	45.5%	9.0%		
8	72.7%	27.3%			
9	91.0%	9.0%			
10	81.8%	18.2%			
11	63.6%	27.4%		9.0%	
12	18.2%	63.6%		18.2%	
13	63.6%	36.4%			
14	45.5%	45.5%		9.0%	
15	72.7%	27.3%			
16	63.6%	34.6%			
17	63.6%	34.6%			
18	63.6%	27.3%	9.0%		
19	63.6%	36.4%			
20	45.5%	27.2%	9.0%	18.2%	
21	45.5%	27.2%	9.0%	18.2%	

Cumulative Percentages of Study Group

Table 4.2

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

	Study Group N=11	Comparison Group N=128
1	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	89.8% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9.4% Undecided .8% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
2	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	85.9% Strongly/Slightly Agree 12.5% Undecided 1.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree
3	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	82.1% Strongly/Slightly Agree 11.7% Undecided 6.2% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
4	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	90.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree 8.6% Undecided 6.2% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
5	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	82.0% Strongly/Slightly Agree 16.4% Undecided 1.6% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
6	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	90.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree 6.3% Undecided 3.1% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
7	91.0% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9.0% Undecided	
8	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	91.4% Strongly/Slightly Agree 6.3% Undecided 2.3% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
9	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	91.4% Strongly/Slightly Agree 6.2% Undecided 2.4% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
10	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	98.4% Strongly/Slightly Agree 1.6% Undecided
11	91% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9% Strongly/Slightly Disagree	82.8% Strongly/Slightly Agree 15.6% Undecided 1.6% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
12	81.8% Strongly/Slightly Agree 18.2% Strongly/Slightly Disagree	62.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree 24.2% Undecided 13.2% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
13	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	93.0% Strongly/Slightly Agree 4.6% Undecided 2.4% Strongly/Slightly Disagree

Percentages of Group Responses

Table 4.3a

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

	Study Group N=11	Comparison Group N=128
14	91.0% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9.0% Strongly/Slightly Disagree	73.4% Strongly/Slightly Agree 18.8% Undecided 7.9% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
15	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	87.5% Strongly/Slightly Agree 8.6% Undecided 3.9% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
16	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	75.8% Strongly/Slightly Agree 17.2% Undecided 7.0% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
17	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	76.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree 15.6% Undecided 7.8% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
18	91% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9% Undecided	76.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree 20.3% Undecided 3.1% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
19	100% Strongly/Slightly Agree	80.5% Strongly/Slightly Agree 17.2% Undecided 2.3% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
20	72.7% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9.1% Undecided 18.2% Strongly/Slightly Disagree	43.8% Strongly/Slightly Agree 36.7% Undecided 19.5% Strongly/Slightly Disagree
21	72.7% Strongly/Slightly Agree 9.1% Undecided 18.2% Strongly/Slightly Disagree	47.6% Strongly/Slightly Agree 37.5% Undecided 14.9% Strongly/Slightly Disagree

Percentages of Group Responses

Table 4.3b

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

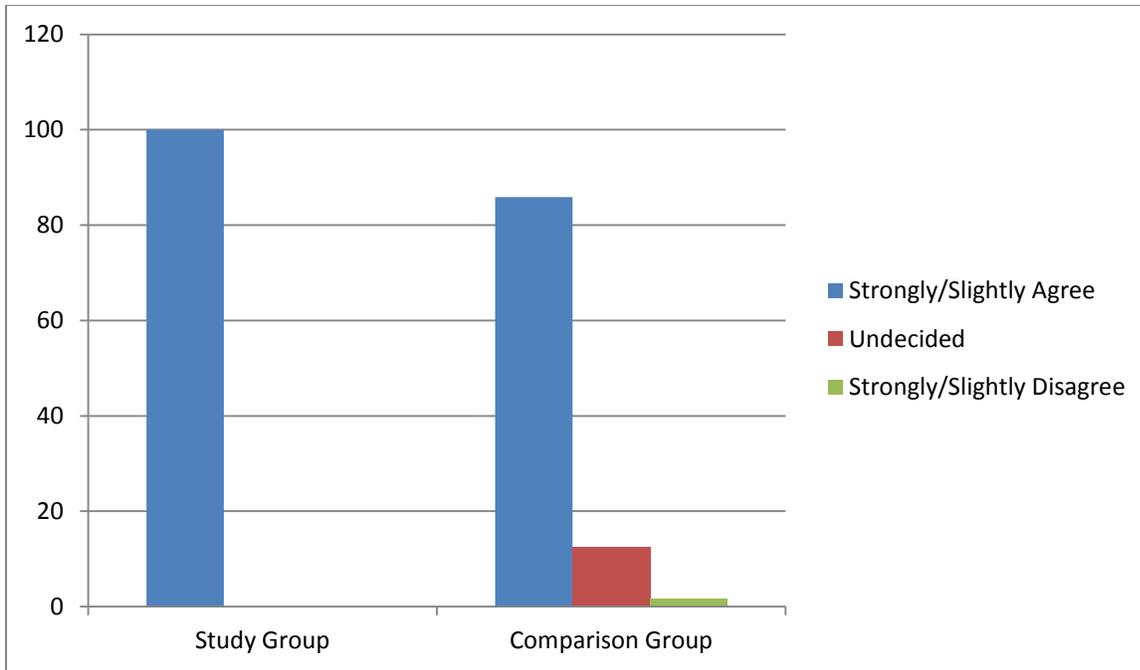


Table 4.4

Question 1: Including the exceptional child will promote his/her independence.

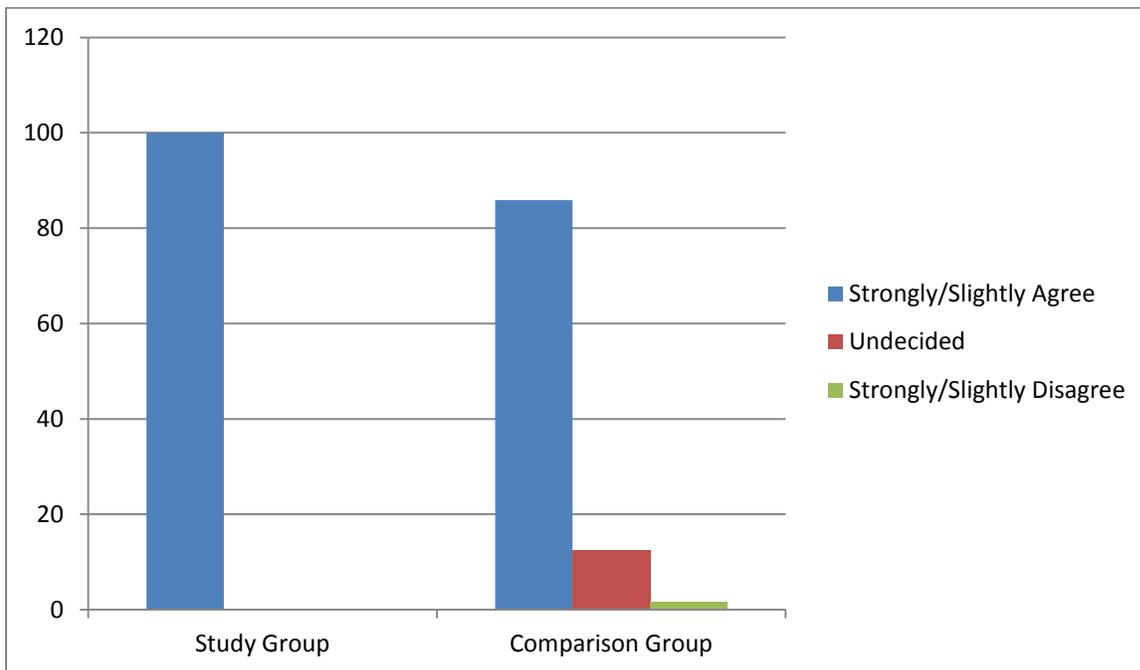


Table 4.5

Question 2: Students with special needs will find it much easier to mix with their peers after leaving school if they have been taught together in regular classrooms.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

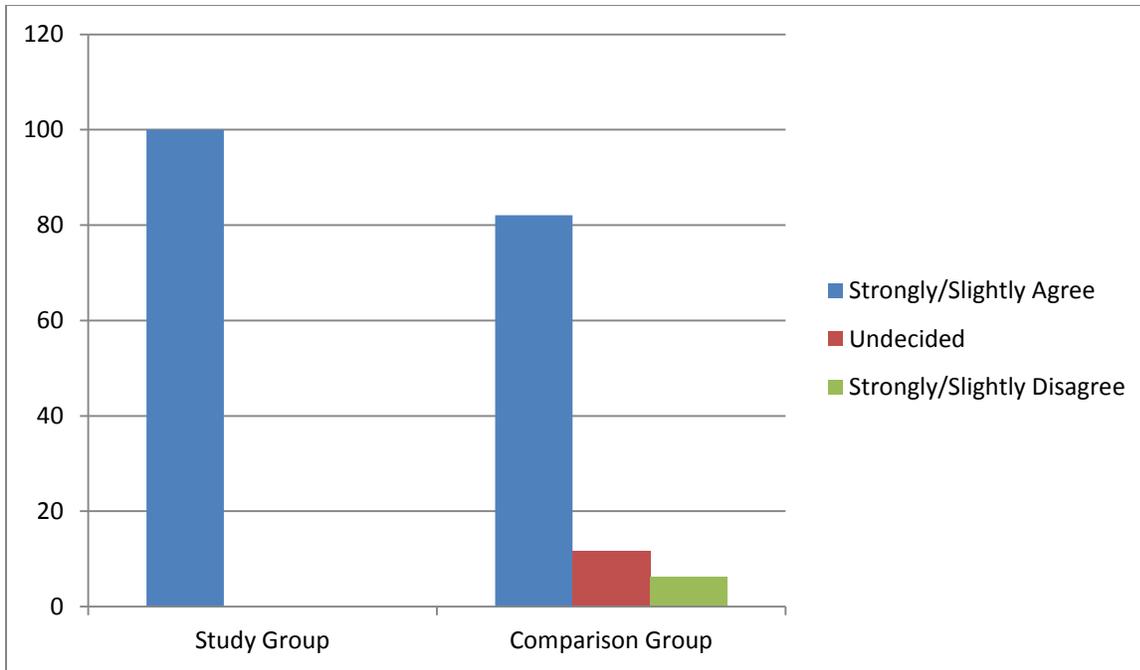


Table 4.6

Question 3: The integration of general students with special needs into classes is beneficial to all pupils.

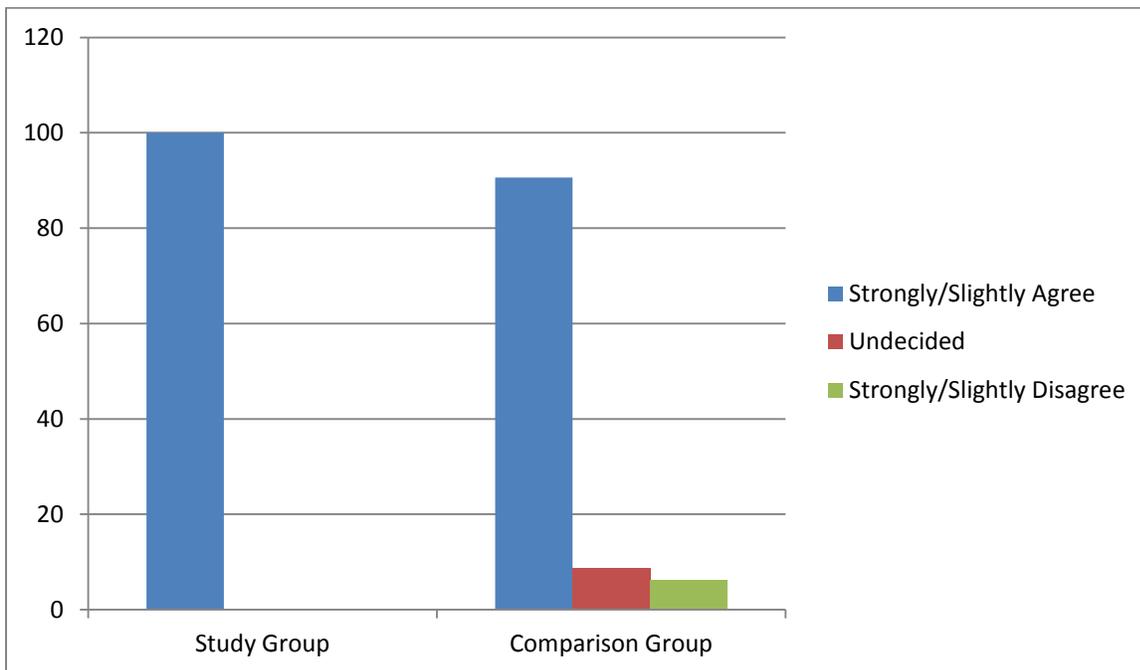


Table 4.7

Question 4: Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which fosters understanding and acceptance of differences.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

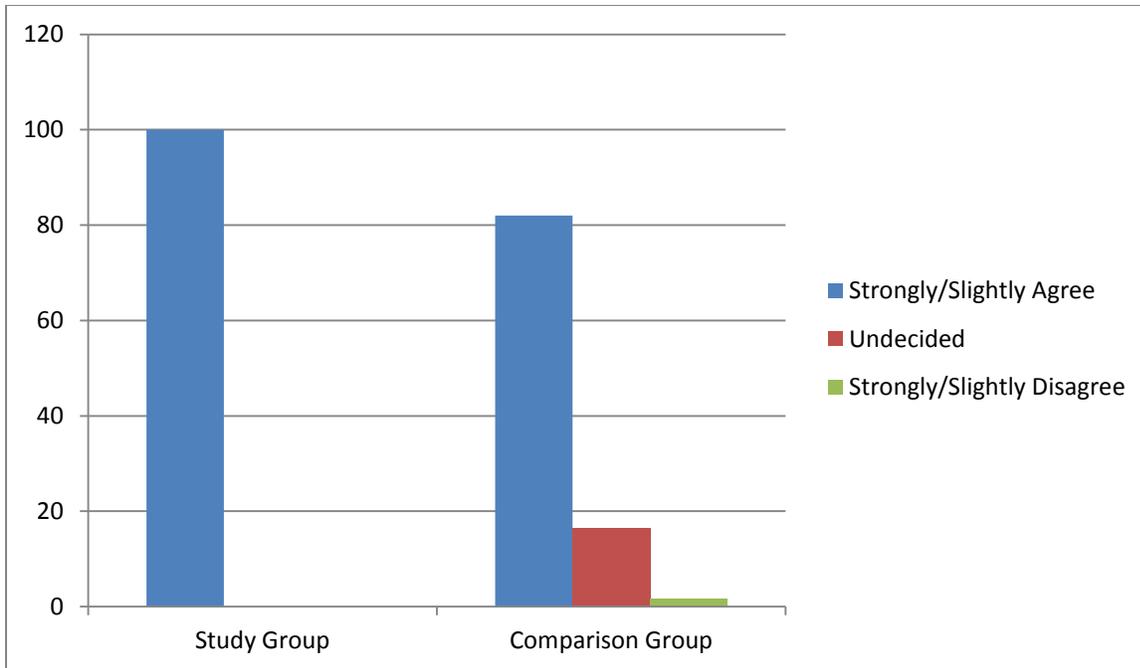


Table 4.8

Question 5: As a teacher, I would be willing to have a child with special needs in my classroom.

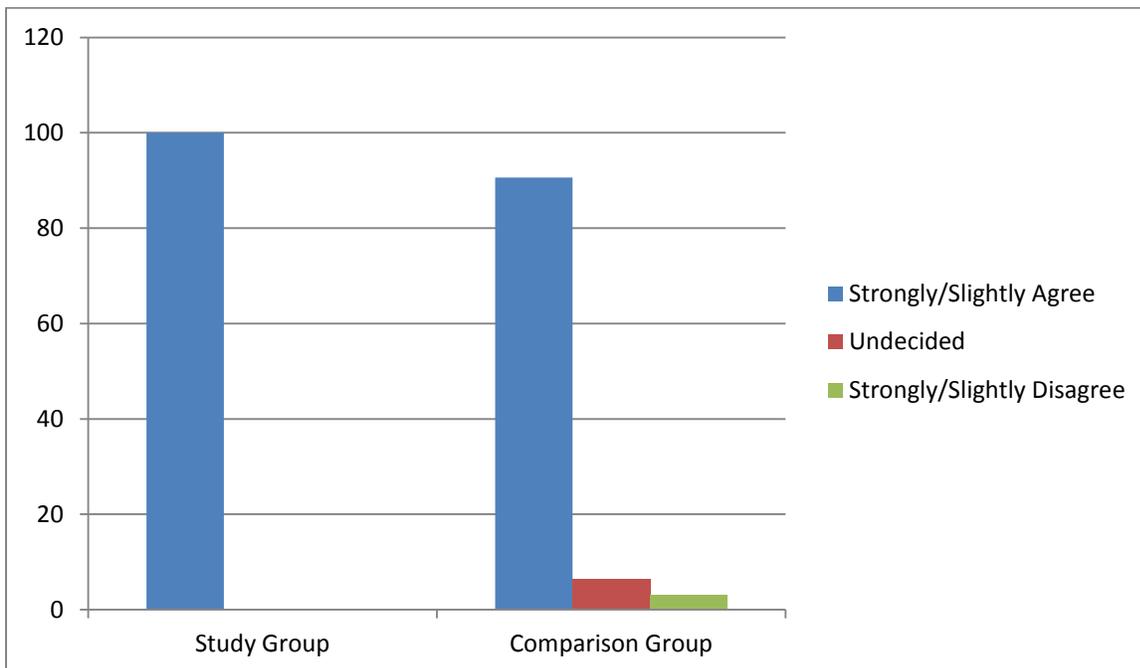
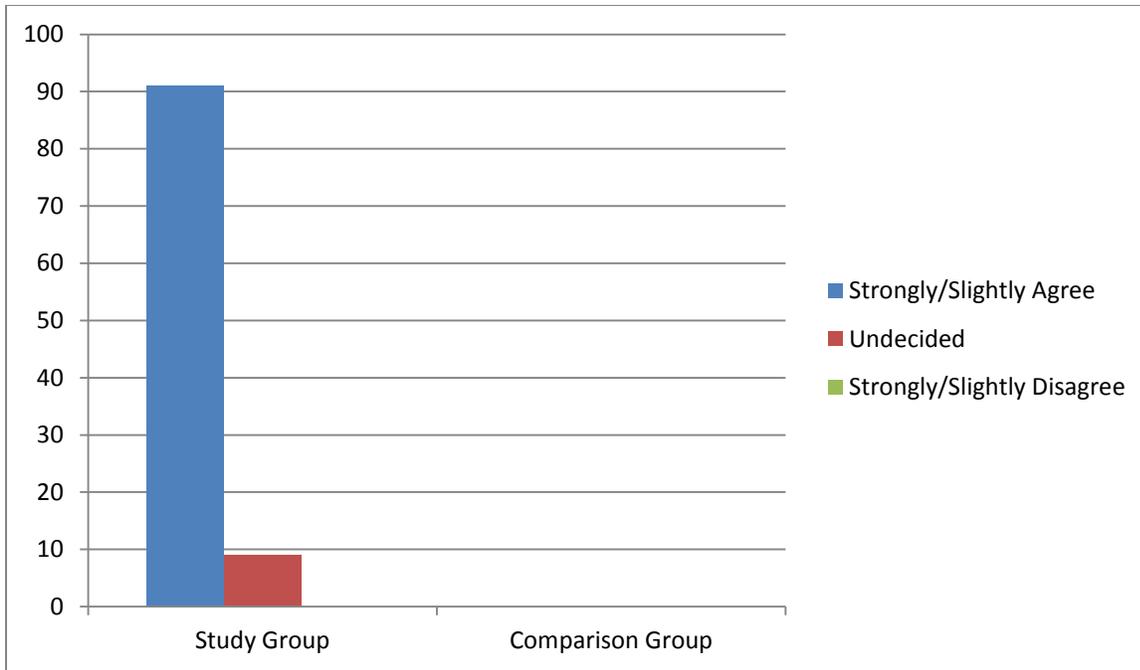


Table 4.9

Question 6: Inclusion will give students with special needs a better chance to readily fit into their community.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL



\*\*\*No Comparison group; question wasn't used in previous study.

Table 4.10

Question 7: With the help of experienced teachers, support services and special equipment, students who are exceptional can do well in a general classroom environment.

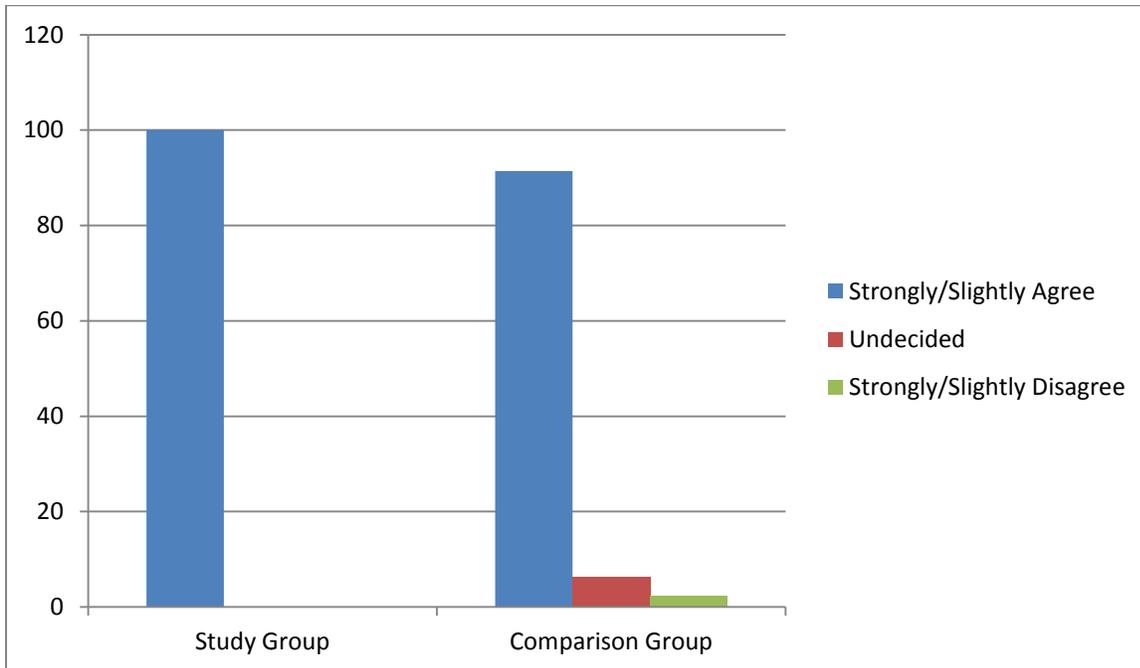


Table 4.11

Question 8: The presence of students with special needs in the general classroom helps the regular child understand and accept them in an empathetic and realistic manner.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

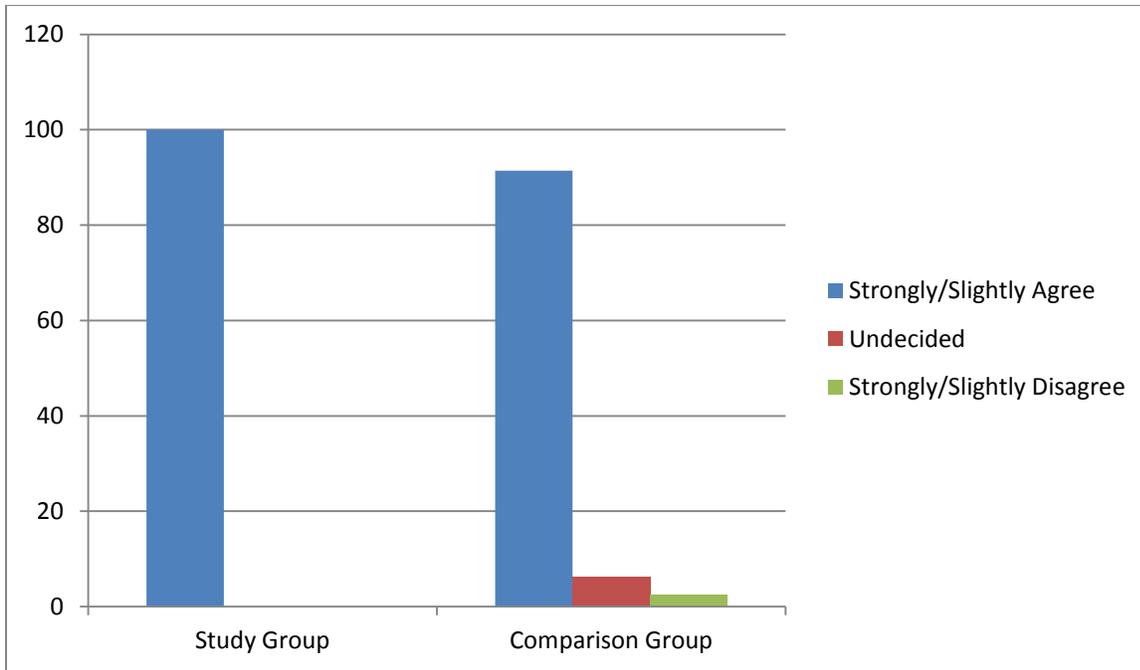


Table 4.12

Question 9: As a teacher I would be willing to take extra training so as to be better able to handle exceptional children in my classroom.

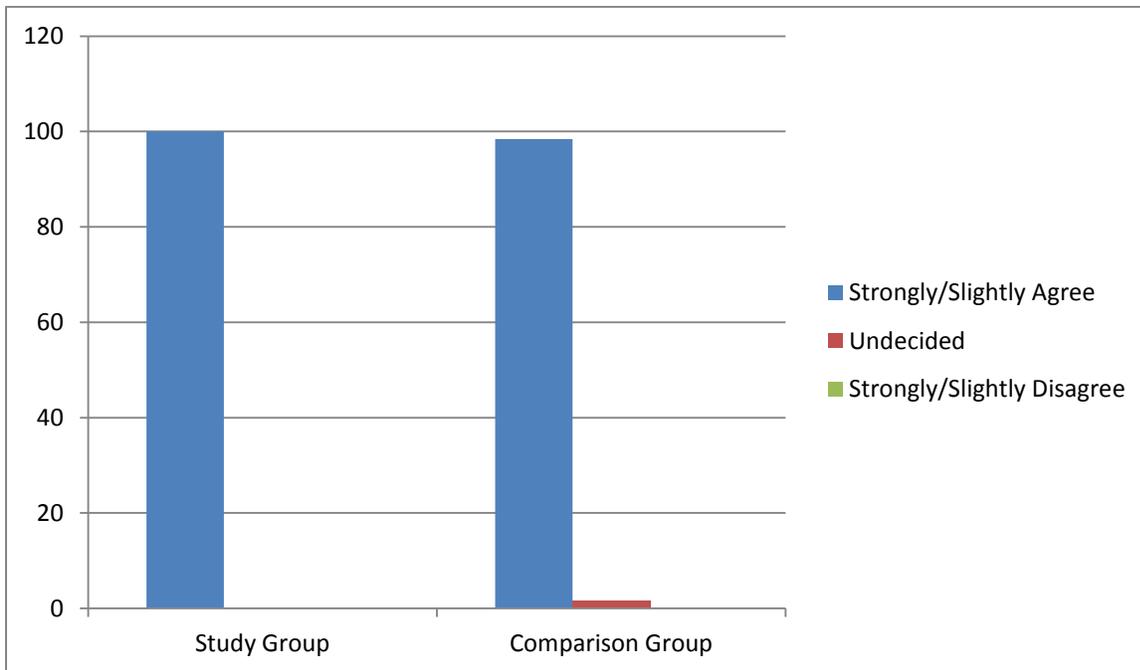


Table 4.13

Question 10: I am willing to make needed instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

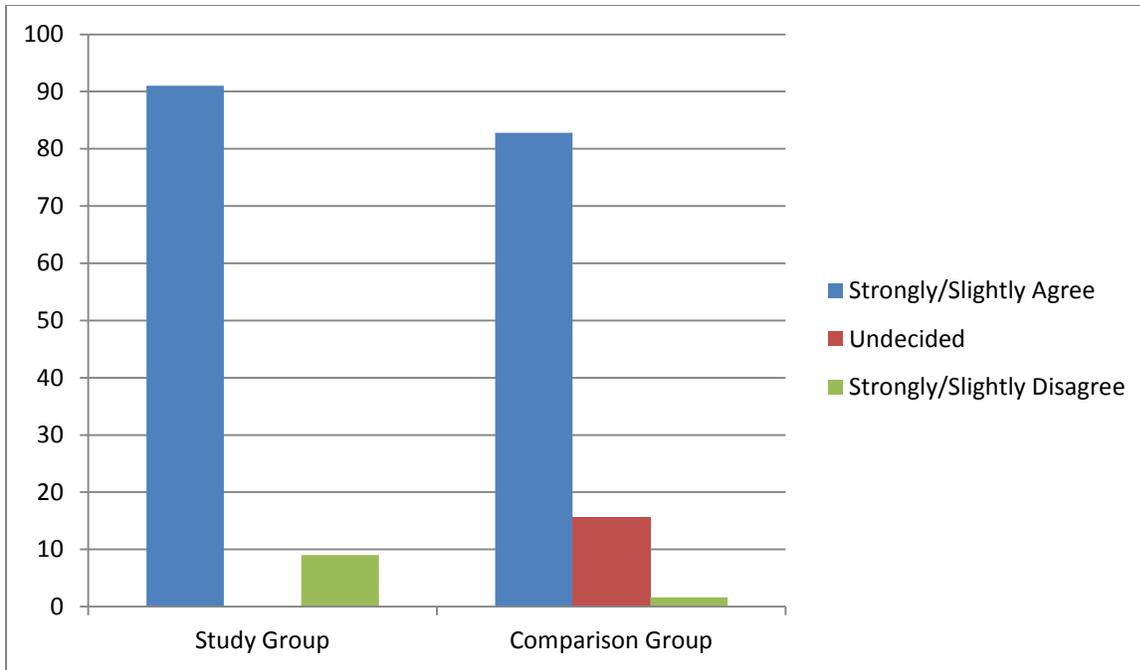


Table 4.14

Question 11: I believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice.

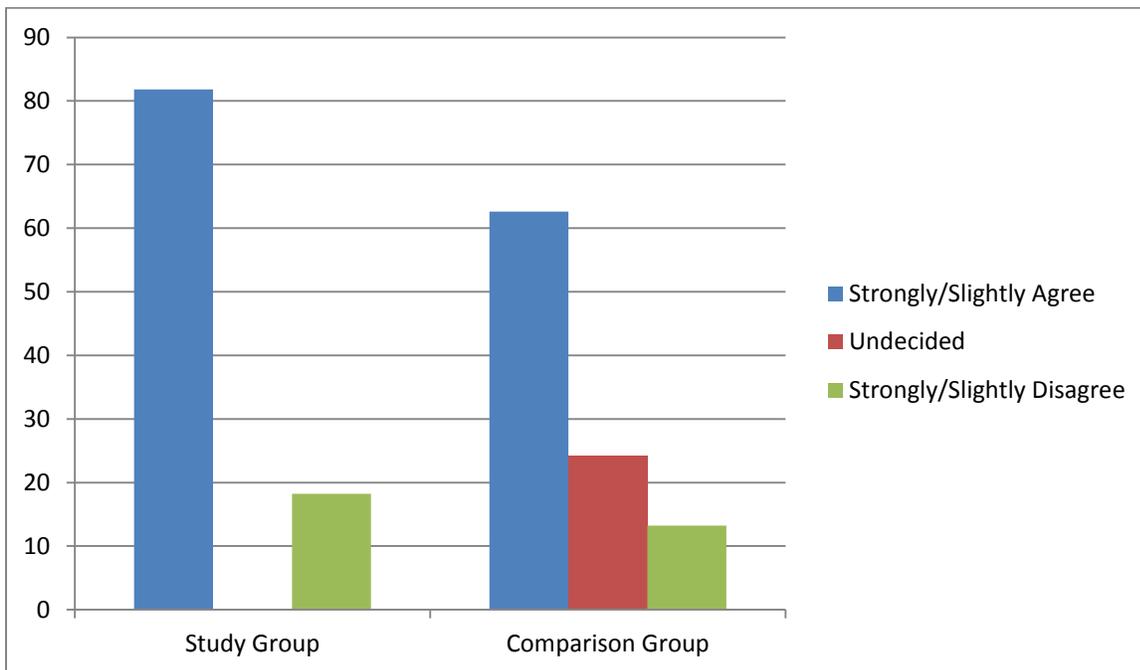
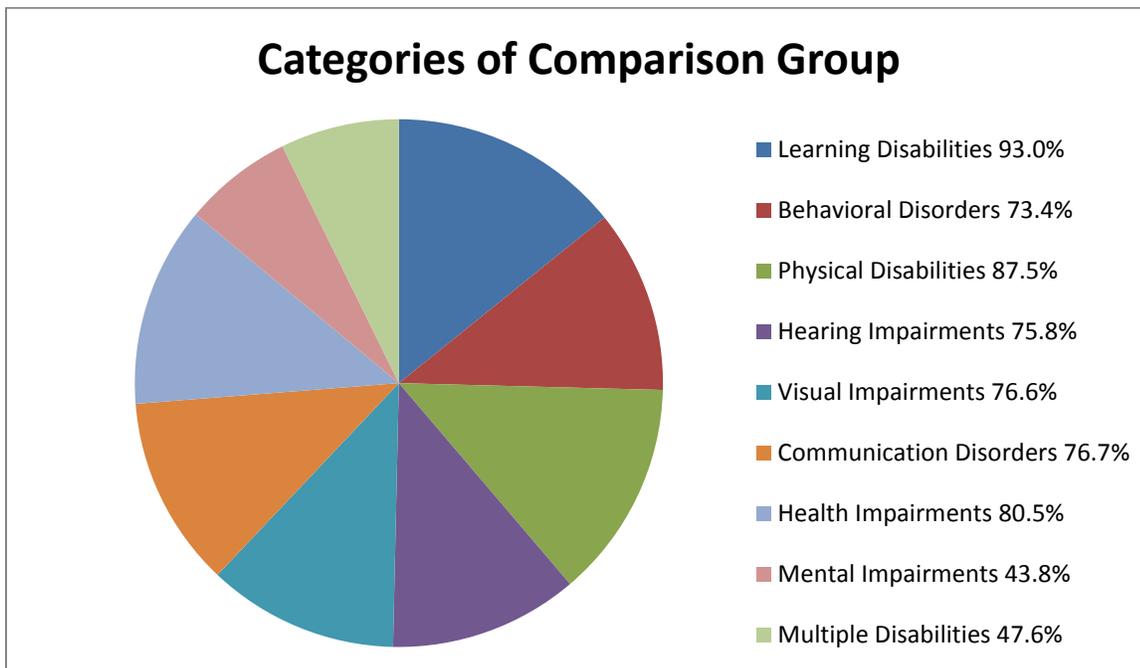
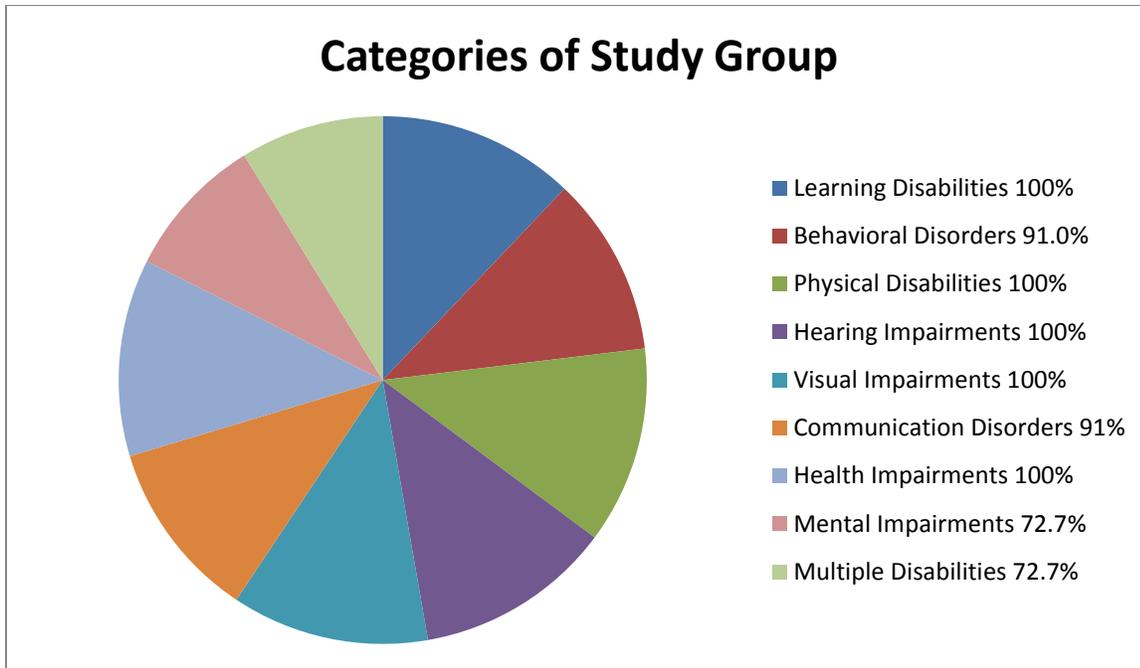


Table 4.15

Question 12: I believe most students with disabilities (regardless of the level of their disability) can be educated in the regular classroom.



Comparing Special Education Categories with strongly & slightly agree viewpoints Table 4.16

The question posed in 13-21 is: In my view, most students with the following disabilities can be educated in regular classrooms.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### Findings

According to Sokal (2012), a teacher's attitude plays a large role in the environment that can make an inclusive classroom successful for students with special needs. Much of the research in the literature review focused on how the negative attitudes of teachers were developed as opposed to how attitudes can be changed to represent a positive outcome. The results of the current study gave insight of teacher's attitudes of inclusion at a Native American school. Inclusion is previously defined in this paper as a special education student in the general education classroom for 80% or more of his/her day. The research for this study was performed at a Native American school in the upper midwest area of the United States. The study involved teachers completing a survey about their attitudes toward inclusion of special education students. The teacher attitudes were then compared to a study of participants who were college students in preparation to become general education elementary teachers (McHatton & McCray, 2007).

### Analysis of Patterns

In looking back at the initial hypotheses that were made, the data from the current study supports the 1<sup>st</sup> hypothesis. Teachers in the Native American school where the current survey was generated had a more positive attitude toward providing education in an inclusive setting than the non-native comparison group in most of the questions. The questions used in the study involved both instructional and affective concepts that are essential to a successful inclusion environment. The Native American study group rated themselves in the *strongly and slightly agree* area for 94% of the questions. This fact displays that the study group is in favor of the use

of inclusion for students with disabilities. The 2<sup>nd</sup> hypothesis couldn't be supported with the results of the current study. The researcher hoped to gain a greater insight from the open-ended questions into whether a teacher's positive or negative experiences affected their attitudes toward inclusion. It can only be assumed that our attitudes are shaped by our experiences.

The study group had a *significantly agreeing* attitude for the first twelve questions. However, for questions eleven and twelve, the study group rated the *strongly and slightly disagree* higher than the comparison group (see table 4.14 & 4.15). Teachers eight and nine did not take the opportunity to expand upon their responses and they recorded with *slightly disagree* answers. There could be multiple reasons for their responses. Possibly bad experiences with special education students or lack of support could contribute to their responses.

In regards to the last nine questions, which dealt with inclusion of the different types of special education categories (see table 4.3 and 4.16) there was strong support by the study group in all nine areas as compared to the comparison group. A surprise in the findings was that the study group also displayed an *agreeing* attitude with mental impairment and multiple disabilities. From the literature reviews, there have been debates whether or not inclusion is the best practice for students with mental impairments or multiple disabilities. Another area of a conflict that deviates from the pattern is the disagreement of inclusion of students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders. The study groups rating were higher than the comparison group, which possibly could be due to a negative experience.

The study group's comments to question 22 were a valuable tool, however the researcher had wished more respondents would have taken part. The comments portrayed

information that is supportive of inclusion, but also factors that could assist students to be successful. The teachers also felt that one-on-one instruction could assist in making inclusion more successful. A memorable comment of the teacher requesting additional training is a poignant comment that is also key to an inclusive classroom.

In general, when comparing the current study with the previous one, the results of the current study would support that teachers displayed a more accepting attitude towards inclusion from the Native American teacher group. The Native American teachers rated themselves higher or *in agreement* with the previous study in all questions. Although there were large differences in the number participating in each study, this could possibly be explained by many factors, such as: teaching experience, experience with students with special needs, support provided, collaboration and in-service training. All of these factors can only be met once a teacher has had teaching experience or is working in a classroom. This may account for the undecided responses with the comparison group ratings on all questions. It should be noted that there was one question that was used in the previous study, but was not used in the current study. The two questions were worded differently and were removed from the updated survey by the investigator.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

If the researcher was going to pursue additional research on this topic, a more in depth survey with an emphasis on past and present experiences and how this shaped teacher attitudes about inclusion would be added. An important question to pose would be whether the participant has had more positive experiences or negative experiences with inclusion of special education students. It may be beneficial to have teachers take a survey at the beginning of the

school year and then compare it to the end of the year. If given an opportunity to discuss the survey results in an open forum, specific questions could be asked to get a greater understanding of how their attitudes developed over time.

A greater understanding of teacher's attitudes could also be obtained if pre-service teachers were surveyed before teaching and then again five years later. Insight could be obtained as to what changed their perceptions/attitudes. Due to the lack of research of teacher attitudes in Native American schools, it would be beneficial to have this occur in at least one Native American school, as well.

Another area to consider would be the impact of inclusion on general education students. This would enable teachers and students to gain a different perspective. If the general education students aren't accepting of special education students, it could be difficult for students to gain social acceptance, as well as academic gains.

On a positive note, the direct impact of the positive attitudes of Native American teachers on special needs' students could be investigated. It could be difficult to gauge academic and behavioral success, but the results would be beneficial to both teachers and all students' not just special education students.

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Appendix A. Invitation Letter

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, I am working towards my master's degree in special education at the University of Wisconsin . As part of the requirement for my thesis, I need to conduct a research project. During the semester, I am requesting your assistance for this research project.

The topic for my thesis is examining teacher attitudes about inclusion of special education students in a Native American School. After the project is completed, the results will be compared to existing research of teacher attitudes in a public school setting. Your participation is anonymous and would include completing a short survey about your perceptions/attitudes of the inclusion process and a space for additional comments. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your consideration and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or in person. Your input is truly appreciated and could very beneficial to our school!

Sincerely,

Brian Stolarzyk

Appendix B. Teacher Consent Form

PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS SURVEY. There is no need to identify yourself.

You are being asked to complete this survey to help the researcher better understand teacher attitudes of inclusion. The information gathered will be recorded in an anonymous form. Data or summarized results will not be released in any way that could identify you. During the survey, you will be asked be questions about socialization, acceptance, training and attitudes of different disability areas. Please be as honest as possible and answer all questions. You should be able to complete the questionnaire in about 15 minutes. It is not anticipated that this study will present any risk to you other than the inconvenience of the time taken to participate.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. By completing this survey you are giving your consent to be involved in the research. If at any point you decide that you do not want to complete the survey, please return it to me in a sealed envelope that is attached.

The results of each individual's participation will be strictly confidential. The results of your participation will be recorded by group only. No names or individual identifying information will be maintained. Also, once the study is completed, you may request a summary of the results.

Thank you for your cooperation and the time that you have put into the project. If you should have questions or concerns, please call or write:

Brian Stolarzyk  
Telephone: (218) 591-0268  
Email: ✉ stolarzykb@aol.com

This research project has been approved by the UW-Superior Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, protocol #\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you,

Brian Stolarzyk

Authorization: I have read the above and understand the nature of this study and agree to participate. I understand that by agreeing to participate in this study I have not waived any legal or human rights. I also understand that I have the **right to refuse to participate** and that **my**

**right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.**

---

Subject signature

Date

Again, **please do not put your name anywhere on the survey.**

Appendix C. Attitudes Survey

[Section I: Demographics](#)

Gender: -----Male-----Female Age: -----18-25-----26+ Major:

[Modified Survey of Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs, originally developed by M.A Winzer](#)

Please respond to the following questions:

[Section 2: In this section, check the category which most clearly describes your attitude to the statement. Please answer all questions:](#)

Legend for Chart:

- A - Strongly Disagree
- B - Slightly Disagree
- C - Undecided
- D - Slightly Agree
- E - Strongly Agree

Please use the following definition of inclusion for this survey. Inclusion is the practice of educating children with disabilities into the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day.

A B C D E

1. Including the exceptional child will promote his/her independence.
2. Students with special needs will find it much easier to mix with their peers after leaving school if they have been taught together in regular classrooms.
3. The integration of general students with special needs into classes

is beneficial to all pupils.

4. Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which fosters understanding and acceptance of differences.

5. As a teacher, I would be willing to have a child with special needs in my classroom.

6. Inclusion will give students with special needs a better chance to readily fit into their community.

7. With the help of experienced teachers, support services and special equipment, students who are exceptional can do well in a general classroom environment.

8. The presence of students with special needs in the general classroom helps the regular child understand and accept them in an empathetic and realistic manner.

9. As a teacher I would be willing to take extra training so as to be better able to handle exceptional children in my classroom.

10. I am willing to make needed instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.

11. I believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice.

12. I believe most students with disabilities (regardless of the level of their disability) can be educated in the regular classroom.

In my view, most students with the following disabilities can be educated in regular classrooms:

13. Learning disabilities

14. Behavioral disorders

15. Physical disabilities

16. Hearing impairments

17. Visual impairments

18. Communication disorders

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19. Health impairments

20. Mental impairment (cognitive disabilities/developmental delay)

21. Multi-disabilities

22. Additional Comments: Please feel free to expand on any answers.

Appendix D

Percentages of Responses by

Elementary Education Majors (EEM)

	Strongly Disagree <u>or Disagree</u>	<u>Undecided</u>	Strongly Agree <u>or Agree</u>
1. Including the exceptional child will promote his/her independence.	.8	9.4	89.8
2. Students with special needs will find it much easier to mix with their peers after leaving school if they have been taught together in regular classrooms.	1.6	12.5	85.9
3. It is hypocritical to talk about the school representing a microcosm of society if it excludes those with special needs.	5.4	30.5	64.1
4. The integration of general students with special needs into classes is beneficial to all pupils.	6.2	11.7	82.1
5. Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which fosters understanding and acceptance of differences.	.8	8.6	90.6
6. As a teacher, I would be willing to have a child with special needs in my classroom.	1.6	16.4	82.0
7. Inclusion will give students with special needs a better chance to readily fit into their community.	3.1	6.3	90.6
8. I am willing to make needed instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.		3.1	96.9

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	2.3	6.3	91.4
9. The presence of students with special needs in the general education classroom helps the students without disabilities understand and accept students with disabilities in an empathetic and realistic manner.			
	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree or Agree
10. As a teacher, I would be willing to take extra training so as to be better able to handle children with disabilities in my classroom.	2.4	15.2	91.4
11. I am willing to make needed instructional adaptations for my students with disabilities.		1.6	98.4
12. I believe inclusion is a desirable educational practice.	1.6	15.6	82.8
13. I believe most students with disabilities (regardless of the level of their disability) can be educated in the regular classroom).	13.2	24.2	62.6
In my view, most students with the following disabilities can be educated in regular classrooms:			
14. Learning disabilities	2.4	4.6	93.0
15. Behavioral disorders	7.9	18.8	73.4
16. Physical disabilities	3.9	8.6	87.5
17. Hearing impairments	7.0	17.2	75.8
18. Visual impairments	7.8	15.6	76.6
19. Communication disorders	3.1	20.3	76.6
20. Health impairments	2.3	17.2	80.5
21. Mental impairment (cognitive disabilities /developmental delay).	19.5	36.7	43.8

TEACHER ATTITUDES OF INCLUSION IN A NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOL

22. Multiple disabilities	14.9	37.5	47.6
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McCray, E. D., & McHatton, P. (2007).