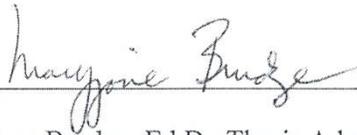


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GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

University of Wisconsin- Superior

May 2015

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Abstract

Knowing general education teachers attitudes towards inclusion is crucial to a successful inclusion program. Factors that influence positive and negative attitudes must be identified so changes can be made. This study examined the general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in the general education classes. Sixty elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers from one suburban school district participated in the study. The findings from the study show the majority of general education teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion. The teachers believe students with disabilities actively participate in learning activities and achieve academic, social and behavioral growth. Although teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, the majority of general education teachers identify not having enough materials, preparation time, support in the classrooms, appropriate ongoing training and in-service, or sufficient pre-service education and training as barriers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years there have been significant changes in the education of students with disabilities. The educational services evolved from teaching students with disabilities in separate schools to teaching them in the same schools as students without disabilities. Since the 1970's, many laws have been passed to make these educational opportunities possible for students with disabilities. Although there is no federal definition of inclusion, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) requires:

to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. IDEA (2004)

Inclusion has brought new student dynamics into the classroom which has made a significant impact on the roles and expectations of teachers.

Problem Statement

It is unknown what the teachers' attitudes are towards inclusion in a suburban school district. Teachers' attitudes are important to the success of inclusion in the general education classes. There are many factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion such as: appropriate education and training, classroom support, access to curriculum and materials, appropriate collaboration time, and category of disability. It is important to know what

teachers' attitudes are in order to offer them the appropriate training, curriculum, and support needed to insure inclusion is properly implemented across all school settings.

Rationale for the Study

Knowing teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities is essential. This study examined elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. This study also examined the different factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion.

Research Question(s)

Is there a difference in the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers towards inclusion in general education classes? The null hypothesis was there are no differences in the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers towards inclusion in general education classes. The alternative hypothesis was elementary teachers have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than middle and high school teachers.

Nature of the Study

This research study used a quantitative approach. The data collected was used to measure the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. The survey questions were developed to incorporate the different factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities such as appropriate education and training, classroom support, access to curriculum and materials, appropriate collaboration time, and category of disability.

A total of 105 general education teachers were asked to participate in the study, 30 elementary school teachers, 39 middle school teachers, and 36 high school teachers.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms that need to be defined for clarity of understanding.

These are:

Cognitive Disabilities (CD): The Digest of Education Statistics (2012) defines cognitive disability as “having significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with defects in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, which adversely affects the child’s educational performance” (p. 757).

Collaboration: Collaboration takes place when members of an inclusive learning community work together as equals to assist students to succeed in the classroom. This may be in the form of lesson planning with the special needs child in mind, or co-teaching a group or class. According to Friend and Cook (2000) the defining characteristics of successful collaboration are as follows:

1. Collaboration is voluntary;
2. Collaboration requires parity among participants;
3. Collaboration is based on mutual goals;
4. Collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making;
5. Individuals who collaborate share their resources; and
6. Individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes (p. 6-28).

Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD): According to Nelson and Kauffman (2009) emotional or behavioral disorder is:

a disability that is characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school programs so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms that the responses adversely affect educational performance, including academic, social,

vocational or personal skills; more than a temporary, expected response to stressful events in the environment; consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of which is schoolrelated; and unresponsive to direct intervention applied in general education, or the condition of a child is such that general education interventions would be insufficient. The term includes such a disability that co-exists with other disabilities. The term includes a schizophrenic disorder, affective disorder, anxiety disorder, or other sustained disorder of conduct or adjustment, affecting a child if the disorder affects educational performance. (p. 39)

General Education Teacher: For the purposes of this paper it is defined as a teacher who is licensed to teach one or more subjects in the general education setting and is currently employed at the identified suburban school district.

Inclusion: Foreman (2005) defines inclusion as “the philosophy that schools should, without question, provide for the needs of all children in their communities, whatever the level of their ability or disability” (p. 12).

Inclusive Education: Florida State University (FSU) Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy (2002) defines inclusive education as “providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society” (p. 1).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): The Pacer Center (2012) defines Individualized Education Program as a “written plan that guides a child’s special education services. The plan must:

- allow the child to advance appropriately toward meeting annual IEP goals
- allow the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum as much as is appropriate for the child
- guide the staff in providing services
- record the services the school district has committed to provide” (p. 34).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA): The Digest of Education Statistics (2012) defines Individuals with Disabilities Act 2004 as “a federal law requiring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth–age 2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA, Part C. Children and youth (ages 3–21) receive special education and related services under IDEA, Part B” (p. 763).

Learning Disability (LD): The Digest of Education Statistics (2012) defines learning disability as “having a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage” (p. 757).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The Pacer Center (2012) defines least restrictive environment as “an educational setting for a child with disabilities that provides an appropriate program, including any necessary special supports, in as typical a school environment as possible” (p. 34).

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that all elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers had access to the survey in Google Forms. It was assumed that all participants answered truthfully and accurately based on their personal and professional experiences. It was assumed that approximately 50% of the participants completed the survey in the one week timeframe.

A limitation was the sample size was small. A total of 105 general education teachers were asked to participate in the study, but only 57% completed the survey.

One delimitation was that only general education teachers from one suburban school district took part in this research study. Second, the research study examined factors that influence attitudes to show if teachers have positive or negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities. This research study was not intended to determine the extent of a relationship between the factors and teachers’ attitudes.

Summary

Knowing teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities is essential. It was unknown what the teachers’ attitudes are towards inclusion in an identified suburban school district. This study examined elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. The research question for this study stated, Is there a difference in the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers towards inclusion in general education classes? This

research study used a quantitative approach and used the data collected to measure the attitudes of general education teachers towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. The survey questions were developed to incorporate the different factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities such as: appropriate education and training, classroom support, access to curriculum and materials, appropriate collaboration time, and category of disability. It is important to know the teachers' attitudes in order to offer appropriate training, curriculum, and support needed to insure inclusion is implemented to its full potential.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Defining Inclusion

Many people believe that inclusion means the placement of students with disabilities in general education classes, but inclusion does not occur by placement in the general education classes alone. Inclusion extends beyond the physical placement of the students and focuses on educating students with disabilities within the same classroom setting as students without disabilities, while meeting the individual needs of all the students. The misunderstandings and misperceptions people have regarding inclusion stems from the fact that there is no universal definition for the term. Since a federal definition for the term inclusion has not yet been established, many researchers, organizations, and advocacy groups have developed their own definitions. Foreman (2005) defined inclusion as “the philosophy that schools should, without question, provide for the needs of all children in their communities, whatever the level of their ability or disability” (p. 12). Tomko (1996) defined inclusion as “the act of attending regular education classes, with the supports and services needed to successfully achieve the individual's IEP goals, while actively participating in activities as a member of the class who belongs” (p. 15).

Salend (2008) highlighted four principles of Effective Inclusion:

1. All learners have equal access to general education programs.
2. Individual strengths and challenges and diversity are accepted, appreciated and accommodated.
3. Reflective practices and differentiated instruction engage all students.
4. Community and collaboration are linked to provide quality programs and services for all students. (p. 8)

There are also several alternative terms such as "inclusive education" and "inclusive practices" that are often used by researchers to define inclusion. York and Tundidor (1995) define inclusive education as:

attendance by students with disabilities in the same schools as peers without disabilities, a natural proportion of students with disabilities, zero reject philosophy, age-appropriate grade and class placement with no classes designated as self-contained for special education students, and special education support provided in general education and other integrated learning environments. (p. 31)

In this definition, York and Tundidor (1995) included a "zero reject philosophy" which holds that all students, regardless of ability, would be educated in general education settings with educational support. The FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy (2002) defined inclusive education as:

Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. (p. 1)

The United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993) proclaimed five principles for inclusive education:

1. every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning;
2. every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs;

3. educational systems should be designed, and educational programmes implemented, to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs;
4. those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs;
5. regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children, and improve the efficiency and, ultimately, the cost effectiveness of the entire educational system. (UNESCO, 1994, par. 2)

Friend and Bursuck (2009) explained their use of the phrase inclusive practices in place of the term inclusion. According to the authors, the concept of inclusive practices implies that all educators have the responsibility to welcome and teach all students in the classroom regardless of their abilities or disabilities. They defined inclusive practices as a variety of strategies and options designed and applied by education professionals to meet the needs of all students.

According to Friend and Bursuck (2009), there are three dimensions of inclusive practices. First, students with disabilities must be placed in the same classroom as their nondisabled peers and removed only when it is necessary. Second, peer and teacher relationships should be nurtured and promoted within the classroom setting. Finally, students with disabilities should be taught using the same evidence-based curriculum used for students without disabilities and adjusted to meet the need of the exceptional learner.

Several concerns arise due to the varying definitions of inclusion and the use of interchanging terms to define inclusion. First, if the researchers do not explicitly define the term or terms they are using as the basis of their data collection in their research study, the results obtained in the study can be misleading and misrepresentative of the participants' attitudes and beliefs. Second, teachers and administrators may all hold different beliefs of what inclusion means which can hamper the process of implementing a successful inclusion program. In order for inclusion to be successful, the teachers and administrators must adopt a mutually accepted definition of inclusion.

Education for students with disabilities has vastly changed since the 1970's. There have been many laws passed that mandated students with disabilities be educated in the same classrooms as their non-disabled peers. The problem was the wording in IDEA was very vague and used terms such as "least restrictive environment", "to the maximum extent appropriate" and the "greatest extent possible". Professionals in the field of education have spent years conducting research to develop a working definition of inclusion and effective principles to make inclusion successful. Inclusion started as a vague concept and is now the best practice for educating all students.

Factors of Successful Inclusion

Inclusion is successful when all staff members in a school system accept the challenge to work together and to do their fair share of educating all children whether they are students with or without a disability.

The decision to move toward inclusive practices demands a commitment not only to inclusive education but also to an ongoing process of evaluation and change. If we are to achieve successful examples of inclusion, we need to recognize that

deep structural and curricular change is incremental-we need to be tolerant of that process (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cacello & Spagna, 2004 para. 65).

Both research and practice have shown that inclusion can work but it takes tremendous effort and considerable resources. According to Bishop (1995) “Practices in many schools are demonstrating that teaching all students together in general education classes can be done successfully if appropriate practices and methods are used” (p. 28). There are many emerging factors that are critical in establishing a successful inclusion program such as leadership, collaboration, positive teacher attitudes, and appropriate teacher resources. These four factors are not a comprehensive list of what is needed for successful inclusion but were factors that were recurring in the literature. They are just a few of the factors that contribute to effective and beneficial inclusion.

Leadership is the first step to successful inclusion. The leadership team must establish a philosophy that supports appropriate inclusionary practice. The philosophy will serve as both the foundation and stepping stone to achieving inclusion. A leadership team must include administrators, teachers, related service professionals, and may include parents and members of the community. Leadership must be collaborative, and it must involve all of those individuals who will have a part in the inclusion effort.

Collaboration between stakeholders and participants is seen as “the key to successful inclusion of all students in a regular class and involves a nonhierarchical relationship in which team members are seen as equal contributors, each adding his or her own expertise or experience to the problem-solving process” (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p.96). Collaboration needs to occur all along the path of inclusion: during the initial planning stage, during implementation, between home and school, between general and special education teachers, and between teachers

and administrators. According to Friend and Cook (2000) collaboration has five defining characteristics:

1. Collaboration requires parity among participants. Each person collaborating has a contribution to make and that contribution is valued. Each person has equal power in decision making.
2. Collaboration is based on mutual goals. There must be at least one common, shared goal. A goal might be designing appropriate programs for a participant, or supporting a participant to remain in a program.
3. Collaboration depends on shared responsibility. Shared participation in task completion does not imply that the individuals must divide tasks equally or participate fully in each task required to achieve their goal. In fact, participation in the activity often involves a convenient division of labor.
4. Collaboration includes sharing. Pooling resources insures that the best resources are available to meet the goals.
5. Collaboration implies shared accountability for outcomes. Whether the results of collaboration are positive or negative, all the participating individuals are accountable for the outcome. (p. 24)

Collaboration between team members is essential; each member brings to the table expertise and creativity. The most positive outcomes of inclusion result when team members collaborate to effectively meet the needs of all students.

Many studies revealed that the attitudes of teachers are one of the most important predictors of successful inclusion. Positive teacher attitudes are an essential factor of successful inclusion for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. According to Stafford

and Green (1996), the attitudes of educators are critical to planning and implementing a successful inclusion program. Positive teacher attitudes are instrumental in promoting a positive and diverse learning environment where all students can learn and grow.

Having appropriate resources is another factor of successful inclusion that was found in many research articles. There are many resources that are essential for teachers to effectively meet the needs of all students. Teachers need more time for preparation and collaboration, access to curriculum and materials, and adequate support in the classroom. No stone should be left unturned in collecting and using all these resources. As Burstein et al. (2004) states “inclusion is not something that simply happens, but something that requires careful thought and preparation...implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations in place” (para. 10).

Benefits of Inclusion

There are many benefits of inclusion for students with and without disabilities. Some of the most prominent benefits of inclusion found in many of the research articles are increased social interactions, social skills and friendships, increased academic and functional skills, and increased understanding and acceptance of diversity.

Inclusion is the most effective way for students with disabilities to develop relationships with peers that are non-disabled. Students with disabilities have increased social interactions with their peers which help them develop social and communication skills. Learning social skills and increasing social interactions can help the students build meaningful friendships and widen their circle of friends.

Inclusion provides student with disabilities the opportunity to be educated with their same-age peers. When inclusion in the classroom is implemented, students with disabilities are

able to learn in many different ways which enhances their academic achievement and helps them improve their functional skills. Higher expectations are in place in the inclusive classroom, which gives student with disabilities a greater chance at learning and developing the skills they need throughout their lives. Students with and without disabilities learn with and from each other in inclusive classes.

Inclusion provides a diverse environment in which all students can learn and grow. Inclusion gives students with disabilities a feeling of being a member of a diverse community. Inclusion gives student without disabilities opportunities to experience diversity in the classroom and helps them learn and accept individual differences. Inclusion teaches all students team work and how to function together with others of different abilities. Inclusion helps students develop respect for people of all backgrounds and abilities.

The fundamental principle of inclusive education is the valuing of diversity within the human community...When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become “normal” in order to contribute to the world... We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community, and in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging. (Kunc 1992, p. 38-39)

Factors that Affect Teacher Attitudes

There have been numerous research projects conducted to identify teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. The focus on teachers' attitudes is crucial because positive teacher attitudes are essential for successful inclusion. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities are shaped by many factors. The factors that were found as recurring themes in many of

the studies were appropriate education and training, appropriate resources and support services, and category of students' disability.

In many research studies, teachers expressed concerns that they lacked the training included in teacher preparations programs to effectively meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. The results of many studies showed that teachers believed they were insufficiently prepared to teach students with disabilities. Research suggests that disability education is one of the most influential variables in changing teacher attitudes toward inclusion (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). Teachers also expressed concerns that they did not receive the appropriate training needed to differentiate instruction, modify curriculum, and make appropriate accommodations depending of the students' individual needs. Teachers reported that their teacher preparation and instruction skills did not adequately prepare them to facilitate an inclusive classroom adapting for students with disabilities (Cook, 2002).

Research has found that the category of the disability can influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities. According to Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden (2000) "the nature and severity of the disabilities and the perceived stress that would be put on the teacher significantly influenced the educators' opinions towards including students with disabilities in the classroom" (p. 289). There were many studies completed regarding different disabilities and teachers' attitudes towards their inclusion in general education classes. According to Abrams (2005) "many teachers may be unprepared to work with students who have emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) as well as being unaware of effective instructional or classroom management skills" (p. 41). Avramidis et al. (2000) discovered that teachers identified students with EBD as

being the most difficult to serve and cause the most stress in the mainstream classroom” (p. 279). In several studies, teachers express concerns teaching students with learning disabilities due to time it takes to modify the assignments and adapt the curriculum to meet their educational needs. In a study conducted by Houck and Rogers (1994) only 37% of the teachers surveyed agreed that total integration is a realistic goal for all students with specific learning disabilities.

Having access to appropriate resources and support services is another factor that affects teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. Resources in the studies are identified as adequate time, appropriate curriculum, and appropriate instructional materials and equipment. In many studies teachers expressed their concerns about not being allotted enough time to collaborate with other teachers and prepare modifications and adaptations to the curriculum. Many teachers stated they did not have access to appropriate curriculum and instructional materials to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities. Teachers also expressed concerns regarding not having appropriate support services from consultants, therapists, paraprofessionals, and other teachers. A study conducted by Gallagher (1985) concluded that of the 466 teachers surveyed only 119 (25.5%) acknowledged having adequate resources to effectively educate students with disabilities. In a second study conducted by Gallagher (1985) concluded that of the 2,498 teachers surveyed only 276 (11%) agreed they had satisfactory personnel support to successfully meet the individual needs of students with disabilities in the general education classes. The results of the literature reviewed showed that teachers agreed with the general concept of inclusion but

stated they need more time, resources, education and training, and support services to successfully educate students with disabilities in the general education classes.

The factors that affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusion that were described in this review were incorporated into the survey questions of my study. I used these factors to determine what the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes are in the specified suburban school district.

Summary

Through the work of many researchers, inclusion has evolved from a vague concept to the best practice for educating all students. Researchers have developed a working definition of inclusion along with effective principles to help guide teachers in implementing a successful inclusion program. The factors of successful inclusion identified in the research are leadership, collaboration, positive teacher attitudes, and appropriate teacher resources. This is not a comprehensive list of the factors of successful inclusion, but factors that were found recurring in many of the research articles. These factors are essential in implementing a successful inclusion program in which students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers in the general education classes. The research provided many benefits for all students in a successful inclusion program. The benefits for students with disabilities are increased social interaction, social skills and friendships, increased academic achievement and functional skills and a sense of belonging to a diverse community. The main benefit for students without disabilities is the increased understanding and acceptance of diversity. They learn to understand and accept individual differences in a diverse learning environment. Inclusion helps students develop respect for people of all backgrounds and abilities. In a successful inclusion program, students learn with and from each other. The literature identified factors that affect teachers'

attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes. The prominent factors that affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are appropriate education and training, appropriate resources and support services, and category of students' disability. It is important to know what teachers' attitudes are towards inclusion of students with disabilities in order to make the needed changes necessary to implement a successful inclusion program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study examined the general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. This study compared the attitudes of teachers to determine whether different attitudes exist between elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers. This study also examined the different factors that influence the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The null hypothesis was there are no differences in the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school general education teachers towards inclusion in general education classes. The alternative hypothesis was elementary teachers have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than middle and high school teachers.

There are many factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion such as: appropriate education and training, classroom support, access to curriculum and materials, appropriate collaboration time, and category of disability. It is important to know what teachers' attitudes are in order to offer them the appropriate training, curriculum, and support needed to insure inclusion is properly implemented across all school settings.

Research Design

The research design used for this study was quantitative research in the form of descriptive survey research. The data was collected through a survey which contained 16 Likert scale statements regarding general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The statements were developed from the literature reviewed that identified factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion. The statements focused on education and training, resources and support services, and category of student's disability. The scale used was a four point Likert scale and ranged from; Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Quantitative research was chosen for this study because many

of the research studies reviewed in the literature previously used surveys to examine teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Comparing local research data to historical data sets will assist in interpreting the level of need in teachers for support, training, and time. Quantitative research was used because the researcher wanted to collect quantifiable data from participants and analyze these numbers using statistics to identify and compare teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes.

Participants

A total of 105 general education teachers employed in one suburban school district were asked to participate in this study. The population included all general education teachers employed by the school district in some capacity, 100 full-time teachers and 5 part-time teachers. The population consisted of 30 elementary school teachers, 39 middle school teachers, and 36 high school teachers. The survey did not include special education teachers because their view of inclusion may be different from the general education teachers. This study was designed to examine only the general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes.

Instrumentation

The research instrument selected for this study was a survey composed of a series of 16 Likert scale statements used to identify the general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. The scale ranged from; Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The statements were developed from the literature reviewed that identified common factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion. The instrument was designed specifically for this study, so the special education team reviewed the survey statements to test the content

validity. The special education team determined the statements were valid to collect data on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Procedure

Approval of the study was given to the researcher by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Wisconsin-Superior on February 23, 2015, IRB protocol #1122. A formal request was made to the school district administration to distribute the survey to the general education teachers employed by the district and written permission was received on February 17, 2015. The participants received an email with a brief introduction of the researcher and purpose of the study. The participants were asked to participate in the research study and encouraged to answer the items honestly and accurately. The email explained that the survey results were anonymous and would only be categorized by elementary, middle, and high school teachers' attitudes of inclusion. The email included contact information of the researcher in case the general education teachers had questions during the research or wanted results after the study was completed. The email contained a link to the survey located in Google Forms. Once the general education teachers clicked on the link they were consenting to participate in this study. The participants were given one week to complete the survey and submit it to Google Forms.

Analysis

The surveys were tallied after one week and the data was analyzed. The results of each statement were tabulated and a final percentage was reported using figures to further describe the results. Comparisons of the final percentages were made to identify if there were any differences between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' responses. The results from all the general education teachers were totaled to determine what factors influenced positive and

negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes. The results from the study were given to the administration of the school district so they could view the general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. This information could be used by the school district to make any needed changes to insure a successful inclusion program across all school settings.

Summary

This research study was conducted to examine general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. This study used quantitative research in the form of descriptive survey research. Data was collected through a 16 statement Likert scale survey. Statistical analysis of the data was conducted to identify the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes. Final percentages from each statement were compared to identify if there were any differences between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' responses. The results from all the general education teachers were totaled to determine what factors influenced positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. In the next chapter the data was analyzed and results were presented in the form of figures for each of the 16 statements from the survey. The results were compared to identify if any differences exist between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Final results from all general education teachers' attitudes were analyzed to identify what factors influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion.

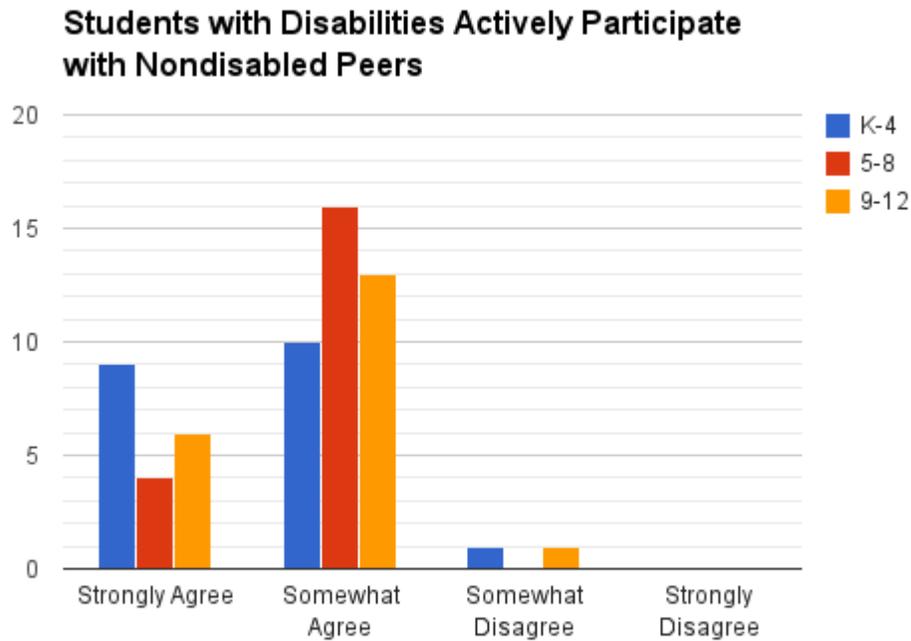
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to determine what the general education teachers' attitudes are towards inclusion in general education classes. The population consisted of 105 general education teachers in one suburban school district. Of the 105 general education teachers, 60 participated in the survey. The participants consisted of 20 elementary school teachers, 20 middle school teachers, and 20 high school teachers.

Results

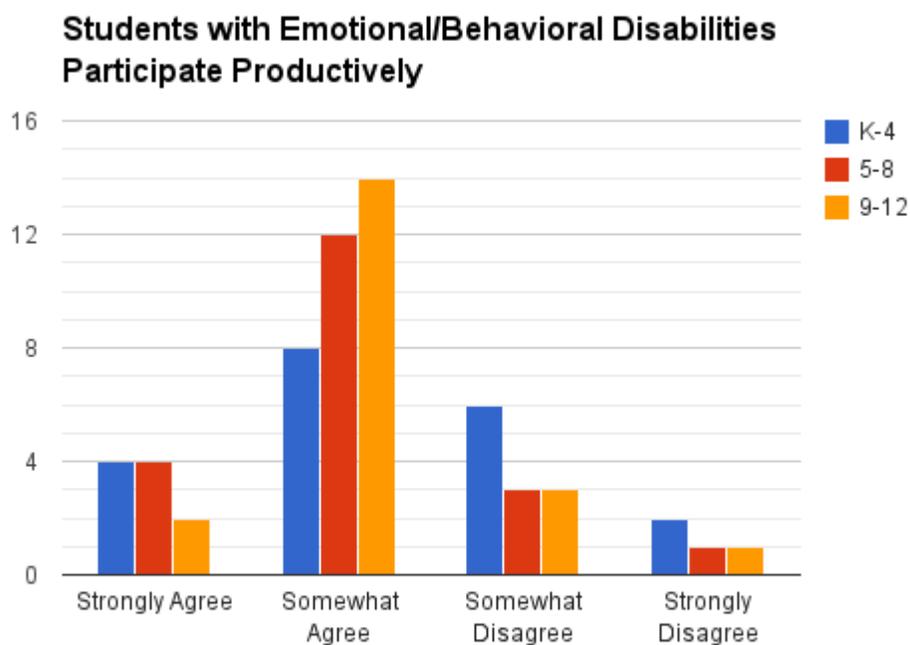
The survey asked the teachers to rate 16 statements to indicate their attitudes toward inclusion in the general education classrooms. The scale used was a four point Likert scale and ranged from; Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The results are displayed to indicate the responses of the elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, and high school teachers. The responses are displayed separately to identify if there are significant differences between the teaching levels. The following figures indicate the responses of the teachers for each of the 16 statements.

Figure 1



The results show that 95% of the elementary school teachers, 95% of the middle school teachers, and 100% of the high school teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with their peers without disabilities in general education classrooms.

Figure 2



The results show that 60% of the elementary school teachers, 80% of the middle school teachers, and 80% of the high school teachers strong agree or somewhat agree that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are able to participate productively in general education classroom learning activities. The results indicate that middle school and high school teachers' attitudes are more positive towards students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities participating in the general education classrooms.

Figure 3

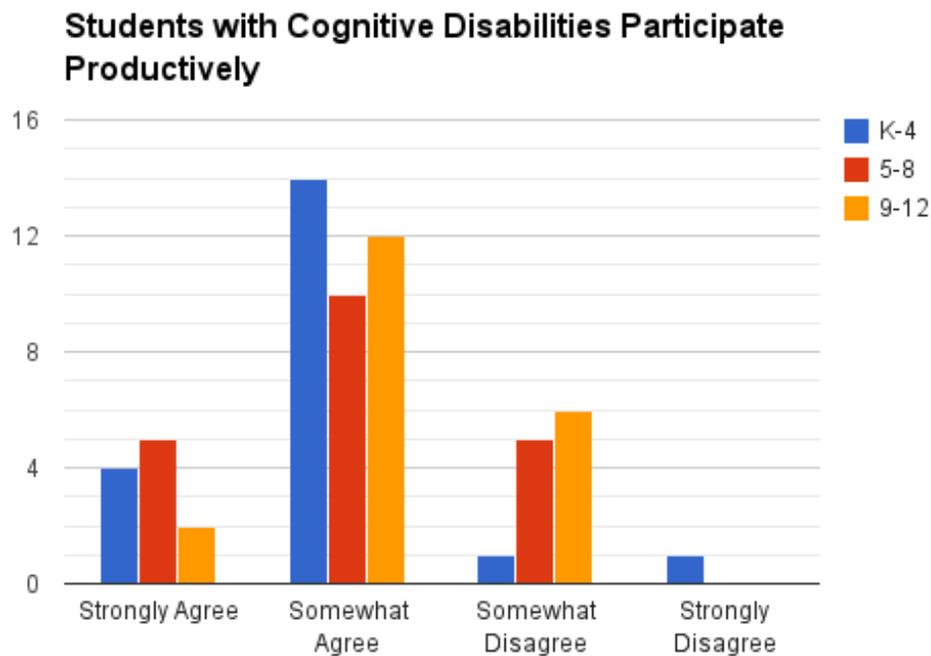


Figure 3 shows that 90% of the elementary school teachers, 75% of the middle school teachers, and 70% of the high school teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that students with cognitive disabilities are able to participate productively in general education classroom learning activities. Compared to the middle and high school teachers, the elementary school teachers' attitudes are more positive towards students with cognitive disabilities participating in the general education classrooms.

Figure 4

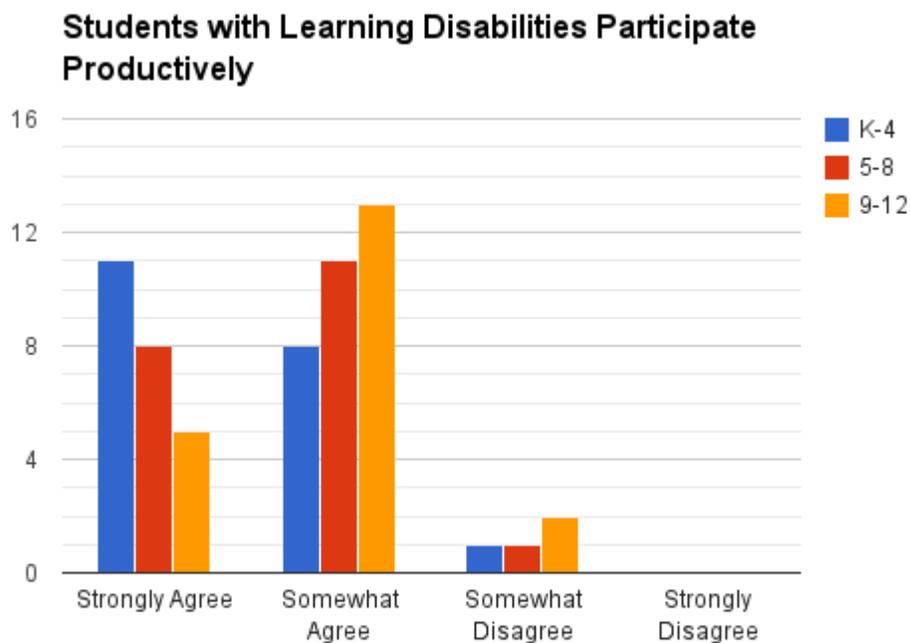
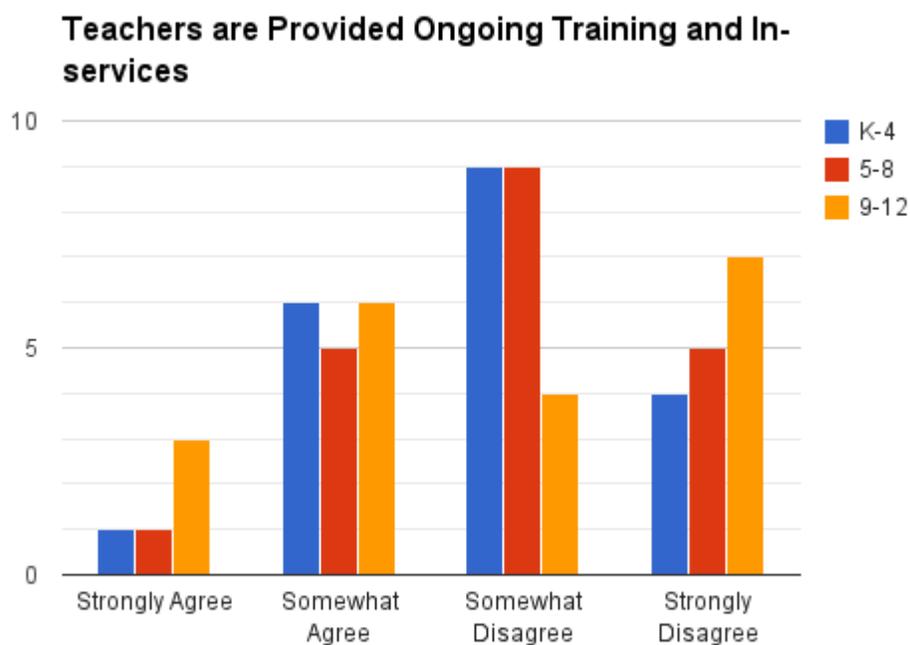


Figure 4 shows that 95% of elementary school teachers, 95% of middle school teachers, and 90% of high school teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree students with learning disabilities are able to participate productively in general education classroom learning activities.

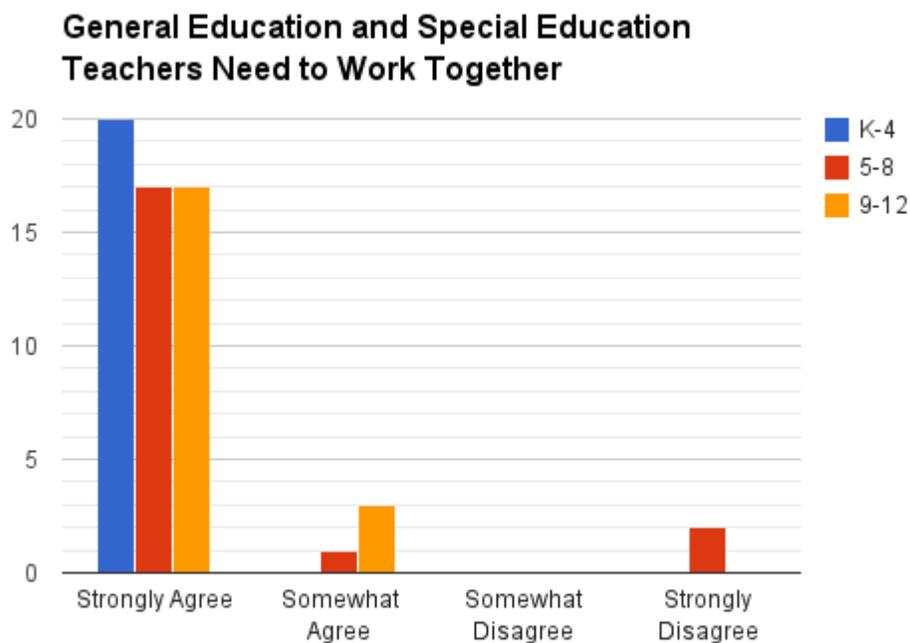
The results show that 93% of all general education teachers have positive attitudes regarding students with learning disabilities participating in the general education classrooms with their nondisabled peers.

Figure 5



The results show that 65% of the elementary school teachers, 70% of the middle school teachers, and 55% of the high school teachers strongly disagree or somewhat disagree with the statement that general education teachers are provided with ongoing training so they can effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Figure 5 indicates that 63% of all the general education teachers do not believe they are provided with in-services to effectively teach students with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

Figure 6



The results show that 100% of elementary school teachers strongly agree that general education teachers and special education teachers need to work together and share resources in order for inclusion to be successful. 90% of middle school teachers and 100% of high school teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that that general education teachers and special education teachers need to work together and share resources in order for inclusion to be successful. 10% of middle school teachers strongly disagree that general education teachers and special education teachers should work together and share resources. A total of 97% of all teachers agree in order for inclusion to be successful that general education teachers and special education teachers need to work together.

Figure 7

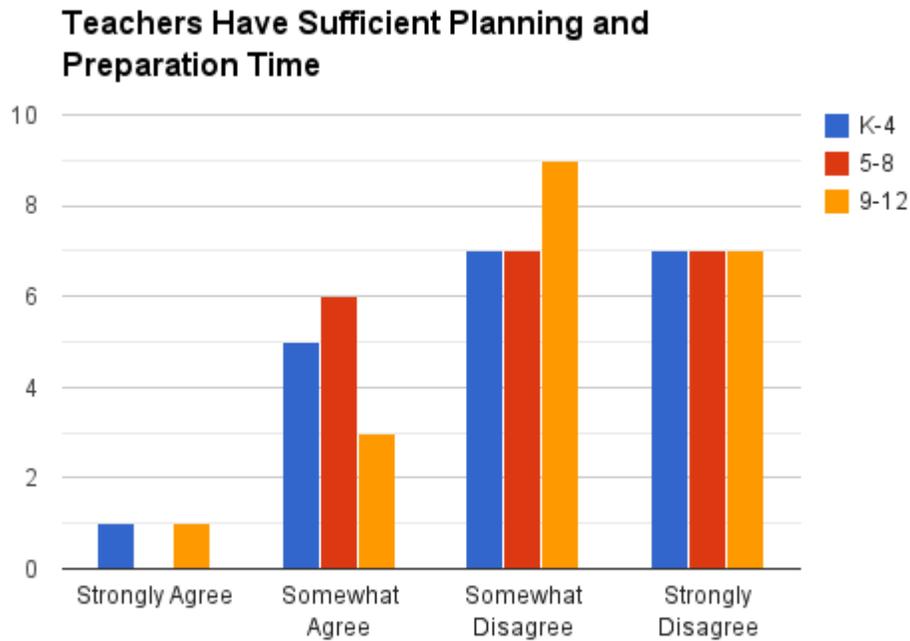
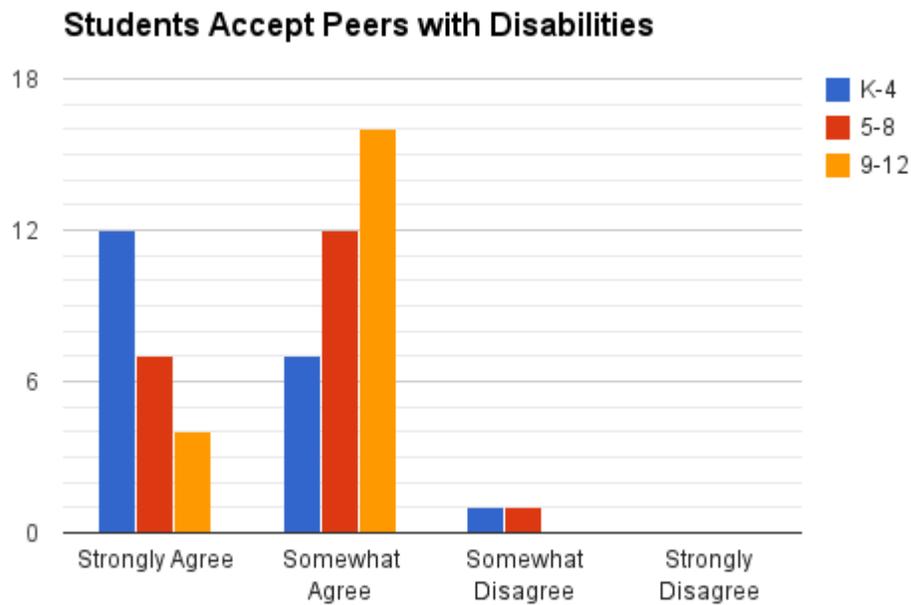


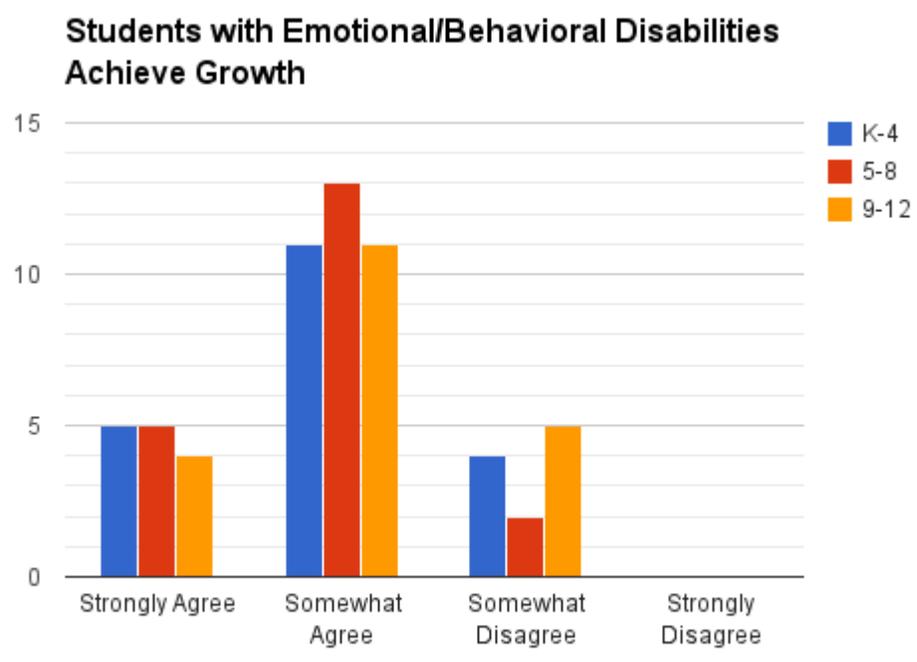
Figure 7 shows that 70% of elementary school teachers, 70% of middle school teachers, and 80% of high school teachers strongly disagree or somewhat disagree that general education teachers have sufficient planning and preparation time to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. A small percentage of elementary and high school teachers, totaling 3%, strongly agree that general education teachers have sufficient planning and preparation time.

Figure 8



The results show that 95% of elementary school teachers, 95% of middle school teachers, and 100% of high school teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that students with disabilities are accepted by their nondisabled peers in the general education classrooms. Only 3% of the teachers stated that they somewhat disagree with the statement that student with disabilities are accepted by their peers in the general education classrooms.

Figure 9



As shown in figure 9, the majority of teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. The middle school teachers had 90% agreement which was the highest out of the three groups.

Figure 10

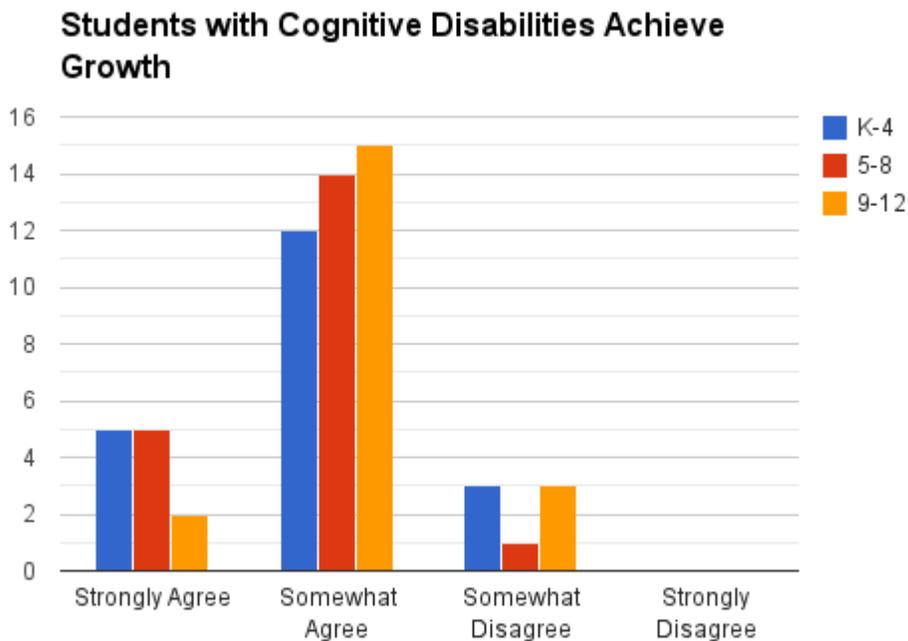
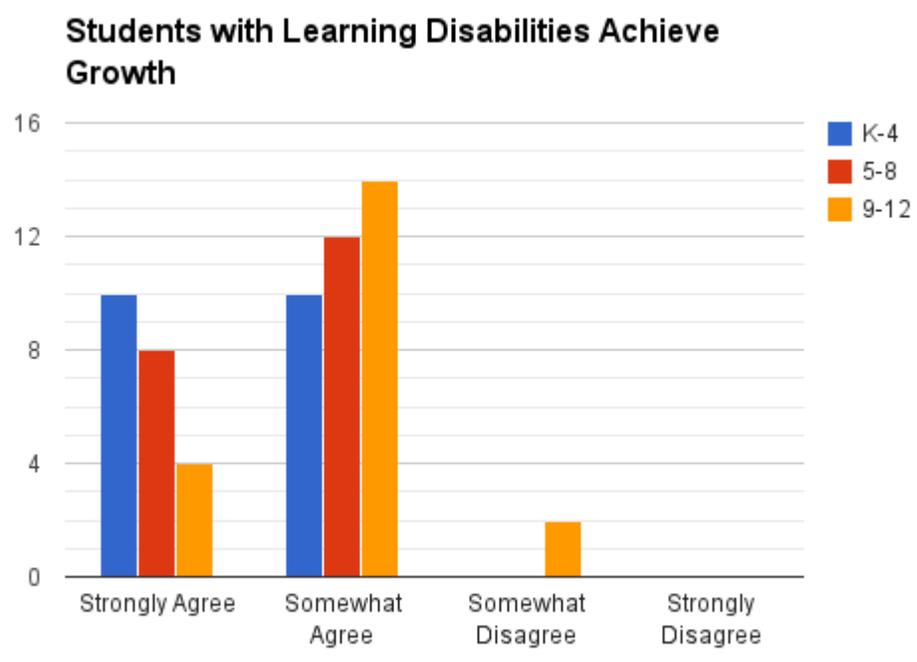


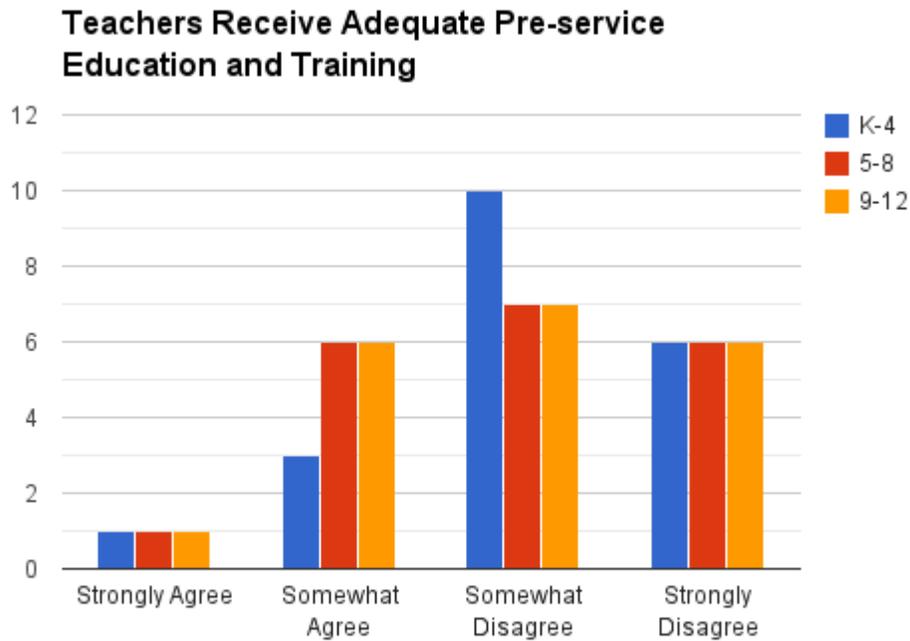
Figure 10 shows that a significant percentage of teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that students with cognitive disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. The results show that 85% of the elementary school teachers, 95% of the middle school teachers, and 85% of the high school teachers were in agreement, with the middle school teachers having the highest percentage of teachers agreeing with the statement.

Figure 11



The majority of general education teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that students with learning disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. As shown in figure 11, 100% of the elementary and middle school teachers and 90% of the high school teachers are in agreement with the statement.

Figure 12



As shown in figure 12, 80% of the elementary school teachers and 65% of the middle and high school teachers strongly disagree or somewhat disagree that general education teachers receive adequate pre-service education and training to effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Out of the three groups, the elementary teachers have the highest percentage of teachers that are in disagreement with this statement.

Figure 13

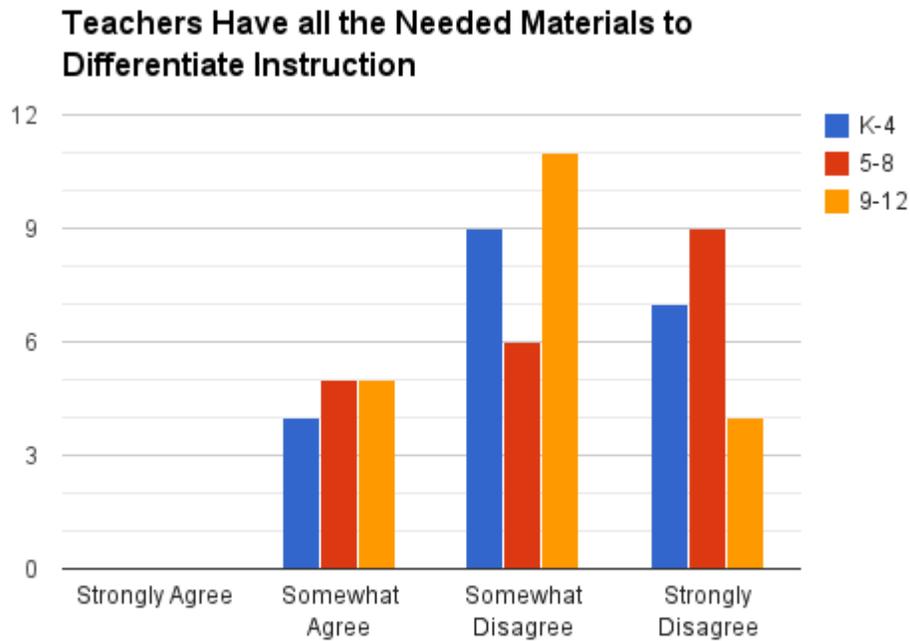


Figure 13 shows that the majority of all general education teachers strongly disagree or somewhat disagree with the statement that general education teachers have all the needed materials to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. 80% of the elementary school teachers and 75% of the middle and high school teachers are in disagreement with this statement.

Figure14

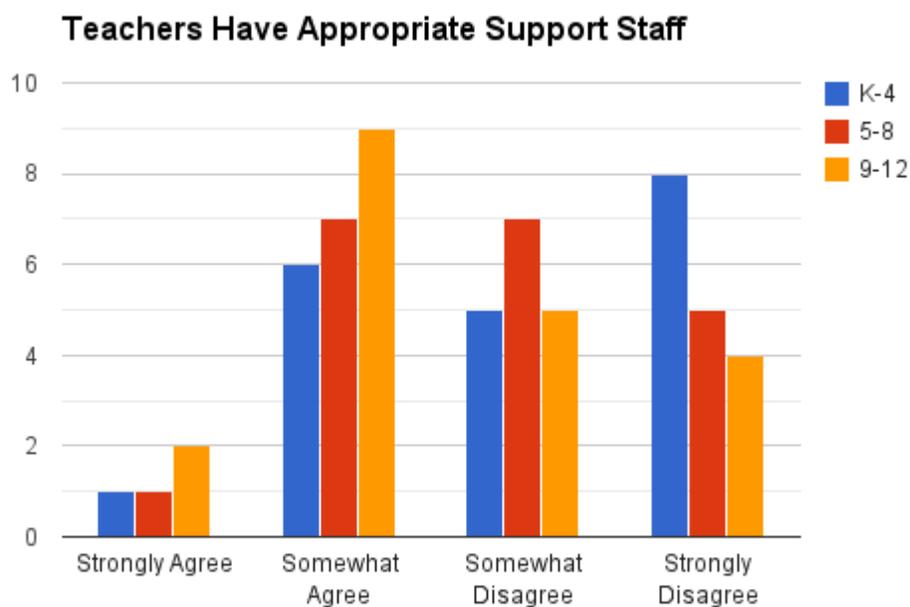
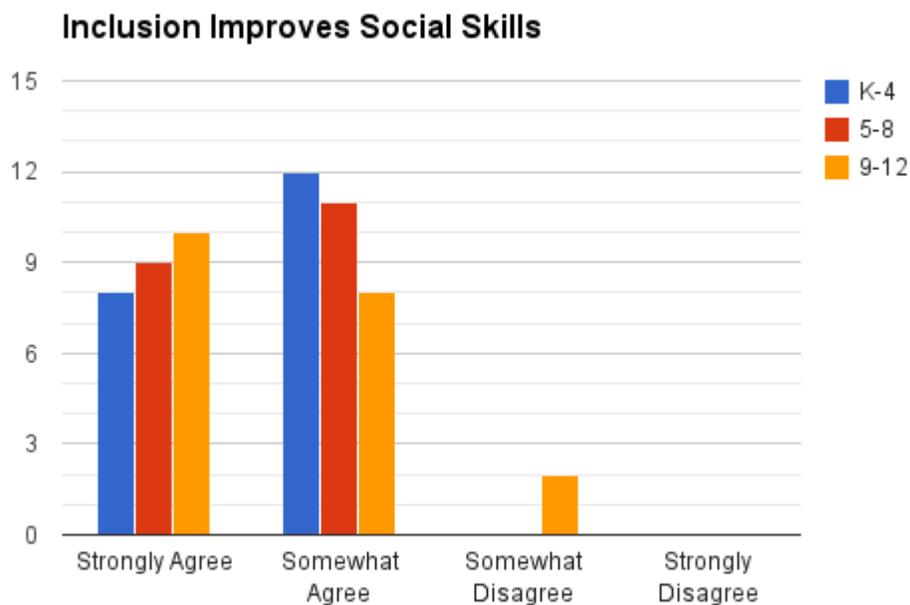


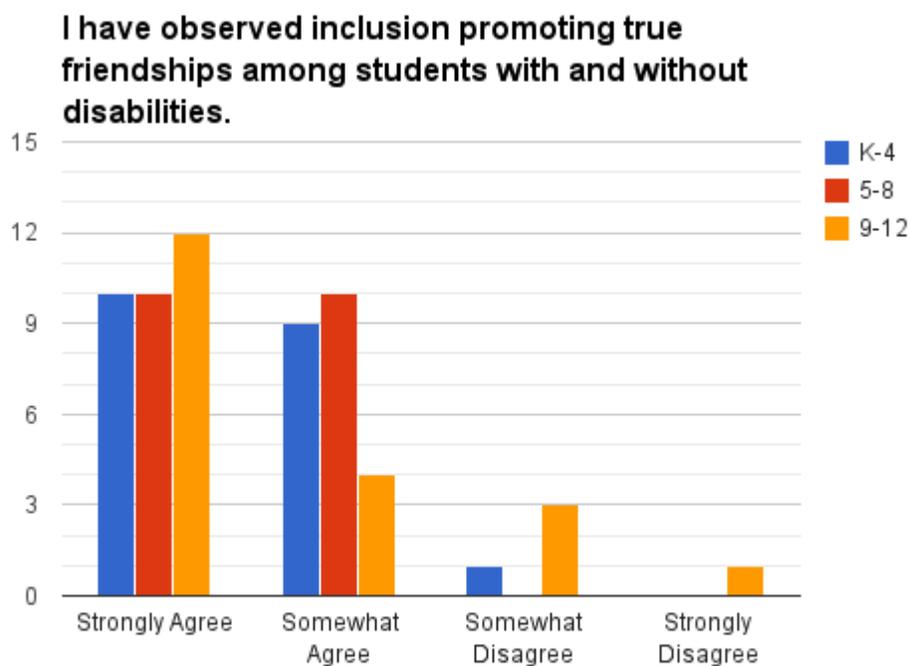
Figure 14 indicates that 65% of elementary school teachers, 60% of middle school teachers and 45% of high school teachers strongly disagree or somewhat disagree that general education teachers have appropriate support staff in their classrooms to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Out of the three groups, the elementary teachers have the highest percentage of teachers that are in disagreement with this statement. The high school teachers have the highest percentage in agreement that general education teachers have appropriate support staff in their classrooms.

Figure 15



The results show that the majority of teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that inclusion improves the social skills of students with disabilities. 100% of the elementary and middle school teachers and 90% of the high school teachers are in agreement that inclusion improves the social skills of students with disabilities. 97% of all teachers are in agreement with this statement.

Figure 16



As shown in figure 16, the majority of teachers strongly agree or somewhat agree that they have observed inclusion promoting true friendships among students with and without disabilities. 100% of the middle school teachers are in agreement that they have observed inclusion promoting true friends. 95% of the elementary school teachers and 80% of the high school teachers are in agreement with this statement. The results show that 92% of all general education teachers are in agreement.

Analysis of Data

The data shows there is not a significant difference among the results of all three groups. The majority of general education teachers have positive attitudes regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. The results show that 97% of all the general education teachers agree that students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with their peers without disabilities in general education classes.

According to the data, the disability of the students influenced the teachers' attitudes regarding inclusion. 93% of all teachers were in agreement that students with learning disabilities participate productively in the general education classes. The results were lower regarding students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities and cognitive disabilities. 78% of all the teachers were in agreement that students with cognitive disabilities actively participate and 73% were in agreement that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities actively participate.

The data shows that the disability of the students also influenced the teachers' attitudes regarding the growth the students make in the general education classes. 97% of all the teachers were in agreement that students with learning disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. 88% of all teachers were in agreement that students with cognitive disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth and 82% were in agreement that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth.

According to the data, 97% of all teachers agree that students with disabilities are accepted by their nondisabled peers in the general education classrooms. 90% of the teachers agree that inclusion increases social skills in students with disabilities. The results collected

shows 92% of all the general education teachers have observed inclusion promoting true friendships among students with and without disabilities. The majority of the teachers are in agreement that students in all three disability categories achieve social growth in the general education classes.

According to the data, 97% of all the teachers agree that general education and special education teachers must work together and share resources in order for inclusion to be successful. Even though the teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion, there were many statements the majority of teachers strongly or somewhat disagreed with. 77% of all teachers were in disagreement that general education teachers have all the needed materials to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. The data shows that 57% of the teachers disagree that education teachers have appropriate support staff in their classrooms to meet the needs of students with disabilities. 70% of the teachers disagree that general education teachers receive adequate pre-service education and training to effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. A total of 73% of all teachers disagree with the statement that general education teachers have sufficient planning and preparation time to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. 63% of the teachers disagreed with the statement that general education teachers are provided with ongoing training and in-services so they can effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Summary

A 16-statement survey was used to collect data regarding general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in general education classes. Of the 105 general education teachers in one suburban school district, 60 participated in the survey. The data shows there is not a

significant difference among the results of the three groups. The results show that the majority of teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes. The majority of teachers believe that students in all three disability categories productively participate and achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. Teachers' attitudes were influenced by the disability categories of the students, and the teachers had more positive attitudes regarding students with learning disabilities compared to students with cognitive disabilities and emotional and/or behavioral disabilities. Although teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, the majority feel general education teachers do not have enough materials, preparation time, support in the classrooms, appropriate ongoing training and in-service, or sufficient pre-service education and training.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study examined general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of special education students in general education classes. The data collected shows that the majority of general education teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion. The majority of teachers agreed that students with disabilities actively participate in learning activities. They also agree that students with disabilities achieve academic, social and behavioral growth when they are included in the general education classes with their nondisabled peers. They agreed that students with disabilities are accepted by their peers and true friendships develop when they learn and work together. Although the teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, the category of the student's disability does affect the teachers' attitudes. The teachers have more positive attitudes towards including students with learning disabilities than they do including students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities or cognitive disabilities. The teachers agreed that general education teachers and special education teachers must work together in order for inclusion to be successful. The majority of general education teachers believe there are many factors that should be changed to improve inclusive practices. The factors include increasing the amount of ongoing trainings, access to materials to differentiate instruction, classroom support, preparation time, and pre-service education.

Strengths of Study

The 16 statements included in the survey were the main strength of the study. The statements incorporated factors found in the literature that influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The statements were found to influence positive and negative attitudes. The main focuses included education and training, resources and support services, and category of

student's disability. The data collected from the survey shows the factors elicited negative attitudes from the majority of teachers. Overall, the teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities but had negative attitudes toward the factors that support inclusion.

Limitations of Study

One limitation of the study was a small sample size. 105 general education teachers were asked to participate in the survey and 57% of the sample participated in the survey. Future studies should use a larger sample size and should collect data from several different school districts. A larger sample size may provide data to support the hypothesis that there are differences between elementary, middle and high school teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

Change Needed

As a result of this survey, conclusions may be drawn about the changes that need to be made to make inclusion more successful. First, teachers desire a better understanding of the different disability categories within special education. The data shows the disability category of the students affects teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Research suggests that disability education is one of the most influential variables in changing teacher attitudes toward inclusion (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). Second, teachers should receive adequate education and ongoing trainings on topics related to special education services. General education teachers need training on accommodations, modifications, behavior management, and social emotional learning. According to Burstein et al. (2004), "inclusion is not something that simply happens, but something that requires careful thought and preparation...implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations in place" (para. 10). Knowledge obtained will help

teachers make inclusion more successful for students with disabilities. A study conducted by Cook (2002) concluded that the majority of teachers reported that their teacher preparation and instruction skills did not adequately prepare them to facilitate an inclusive classroom adapting for students with disabilities. Next, teachers should receive more materials and resources so they can effectively differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities. General education teachers need additional support staff in the classrooms to address the academic and behavioral needs of students with disabilities. General education teachers need additional time to prepare lessons, adapt materials and collaborate with special education teachers.

Significance of the Study

When evaluating the results of this study, the data gathered supports the null hypothesis which states there is no difference between the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school teachers towards inclusion. Overall, the majority of teachers have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classes. The study shows that even though the teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, there are mitigating factors that need to be changed to make inclusion more successful. The factors needing change include disability education, materials and resources, preparation and collaboration time, ongoing trainings, and classroom support.

Self-Reflection

This study helped me understand the general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities. I learned that the majority of teachers have positive attitudes regarding inclusion. The teachers support students with disabilities and believe they actively participate in learning activities. I learned that the teachers believe students with

disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth when they are learning with their nondisabled peers. I understand that there are factors of inclusion that influence the teachers' attitudes, and with certain changes inclusive practices may be more successful.

Future Research

Many studies have been conducted to find out what teachers' attitudes are towards inclusion of students with disabilities. Studies have also investigated what factors influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion. Future research should focus on how to change the factors that influence negative attitudes towards inclusion. Studies should focus on how to incorporate more special education content into education so teachers are more prepared to teach students with disabilities. A future research study could use a pre/post test survey and in between, offer training and support to see if attitudes change. Future research should investigate strategies and resources to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. All curriculums should be developed with different ability levels so all students can learn the content. Giving students with disabilities access to classroom materials promotes positive learning opportunities, which is essential in a successful inclusive environment.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine what general education teachers' attitudes are towards inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes. The survey incorporated factors found in the literature that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion. Overall, the teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion. The teachers believe students with disabilities actively participate in learning activities and achieve academic, social and behavioral growth. However, the teachers had negative attitudes towards the factors that support inclusion. They felt changes need to be made to make inclusion more successful. The

factors that need to be changed are disability education, materials and resources, preparation and collaboration time, ongoing trainings, and classroom support. The results support the null hypothesis that there are no differences between elementary, middle and high school teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Knowing the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion is the first step of developing a successful inclusion program. Next, changes need to be made to the factors that elicited negative attitudes. Future research should focus on including more special education content in teacher educational programs. Studies should also examine effective strategies and resources to assist teachers in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of the students. Making these changes may increase teachers' positive attitudes and could make inclusion practices more successful.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent and Inclusion Survey

Inclusion Survey

Informed Consent

1. Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to find out what the general education teachers' attitudes are towards inclusion in general education classes. The results are intended to provide insight into ways to improve the inclusion program.

2. Procedure: You received an email with a link to the survey in Google Drive. You are asked to click on the link and complete the 16 item survey.

3. Time required: Your participation will involve one survey which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

4. Risks: It is not anticipated that this study will present any risk to you other than the inconvenience of the time taken to participate.

5. Your rights as a subject: (i) The information gathered will be recorded in anonymous form. Data or summarized results will not be released in any way that could identify you. (ii) If you want to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so without penalty. The information collected from you up to that point would be destroyed if you so desire. (iii) If you have questions after completing the survey, please contact: Natalie Brendon (218)-626-6336 or Dr. Maryjane Burdge, Dept of Educational Leadership, UW-SUPERIOR, (715) 394-8048. Also, once the study is completed, you may request a summary of the results.

6. If you have any concerns about your treatment as a subject in this study, please call or write: IRB Chair, Telephone: (715) 394-8433, Email: irb@uwsuper.edu

This research project has been approved by the UW-Superior Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, protocol # 1122

Submitting this survey means you have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this survey. This counts as your legally binding signature.

* Required

Educational level you teach *

Please check the educational level you teach

- K-4
- 5-8
- 9-12

Students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with their peers without disabilities in general education classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are able to participate productively in general education classroom learning activities. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students with cognitive disabilities are able to participate productively in general education classroom learning activities. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students with learning disabilities are able to participate productively in general education classroom learning activities. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General education teachers are provided with ongoing training and in-services so they can effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General education teachers and special education teachers need to work together and share resources in order for inclusion to be successful. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General education teachers have sufficient planning and preparation time to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students without disabilities accept their peers with disabilities in the general education classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities achieve academic, social, and behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students with cognitive disabilities achieve academic, social, behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Students with learning disabilities achieve academic, social, behavioral growth in the general education classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General education teachers receive adequate pre-service education and training to effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General education teachers have all the needed materials to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General education teachers have appropriate support staff in their classrooms to meet the needs of students with disabilities. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Inclusion improves social skills of students with disabilities. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I have observed inclusion promoting true friendships among students with and without disabilities. *

Please rate the statement that indicates your attitude.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree