

Senior Teacher Perceptions Towards Inclusion 1

Senior Teacher Perceptions Towards Inclusion

By

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ABSTRACT

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Research has been conducted on the perceptions that teachers have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom. The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of senior teachers towards inclusion before and after PL94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, came into effect. An experimenter-designed survey with 20 questions was distributed in Viola, WI to teachers in the Kickapoo School District in the spring of 2001.

Senior teachers have experienced many important education changes over the years and they are aware of how education has changed for students with disabilities. This study will look at the perceptions teachers have towards inclusion and identified

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the areas they feel have had a positive and negative effect on students with and without disabilities since the passage of PL94-142.

The researcher plans to use the findings from this study to show how current educators view inclusion and the changes that have occurred with inclusion. Results of this study will be used to help others become more aware of the perceptions that both regular and special education teachers have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The movement to mainstreaming/inclusion affected, and continues to affect, every institution of K-12 public education across the United States. Inclusion describes the process of integrating students with disabilities into the “least restrictive environment” as required by the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This law, Public Law 94-142, was the first federal law passed in the United States that gave all children the right to receive a “free, appropriate, public education”. Public Law 94-142 was revised in 1990 and the name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, also known as IDEA. In 1997 President Bill Clinton signed the new amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Education for students with disabilities continues to improve as a result of these amendments.

There are many teachers presently teaching who have experienced the effects of mainstreaming/inclusion as students themselves and are now practicing inclusion. These teachers were in the public school system as students after the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975. There are also many teachers who have only practiced inclusion, not experienced it personally. These teachers were through the public education system and teaching prior to 1975. The variation in personal experiences and the time that has passed may have a large effect on teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards inclusion. Although federal law requires that all teachers practice inclusion, the law is unable to force all teachers to believe in inclusion. By identifying the attitudes and perceptions of

senior teachers towards inclusion, the areas of inclusion that need further in-service training may be identified.

The present study focused on identifying views that teachers who have been teaching in the public school system prior to the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975, have towards inclusion. It identified the teachers' perceptions towards the inclusion of students with disabilities before and after PL 94-142. These teachers have experienced many important educational changes over the years and are aware of the positive changes in education for students with disabilities. "Senior teachers" may or may not agree with the practice of including students with disabilities and it is important to identify their perceptions towards it. This information will be valuable for future teacher training programs as well as necessary for in-service training for current educators. Research has found that teachers with more in-service experience on inclusion are slightly more likely than other teachers to feel positively about the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom (Jobe and Rust, 1996).

This study identified some of the stereotypes and bias that currently exist in the public school system towards students with disabilities. It may be beneficial for students with disabilities if senior teachers develop additional awareness of their perceptions and attitudes towards inclusion. These teachers may find that the attitudes they possess towards inclusion have been detrimental to the success of mainstreaming/inclusion within their classroom.

The inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom continues to be a struggle for many teachers. In the previous 25 years, education for students with disabilities in the public school system has drastically changed. In 1975 the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142) was passed, in 1990 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (PL101-476), and additional amendments were added to IDEA in 1997. An article titled IDEA '97 General Overview Questions and Answers was provided by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 1997) to assist parents and teachers with understanding the new amendments. The article stated that the law is designed to remove the financial incentives for provided services to children outside of the regular classroom when they could be served in the regular classroom. The amendments also state that regular teachers must be part of the team that develops each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). This amendment connects the regular education teacher to the students needs and the education they will receive in the inclusive classroom.

Presently, students with disabilities are guaranteed the opportunity to attend the public school district they regularly would have attended had the student not had a disability – their home school. The federal law states that students have the right to receive a free education from birth to the age of 21 in the least restrictive environment (LRE). However, it may be difficult for teachers to positively participate in the practice of mainstreaming/inclusion when they feel they are underqualified to teach students with disabilities. Identifying the number of teachers that feel underqualified to educate students with disabilities in the regular education classroom will be beneficial for

improvements in future teacher training. Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2000) stated that many general education teachers feel unprepared to teach students with disabilities in the general education classroom. These teachers feel they have not received adequate training on adapting instruction and modifying classes to accommodate students with disabilities.

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are important to identify because the attitudes may have an effect on the teaching strategies used within the classroom, which in turn will affect the students. Research has shown that teachers' attitudes may influence their expectations for their students as well as their behavior towards them. These attitudes, expectations, and behaviors may influence students' self-image and academic performance. Negative teacher attitudes towards students with disabilities may be detrimental to their success in the regular education classroom. Some possible explanations for variation in teacher attitude include knowledge about disabilities, experience with students with disabilities, and the amount of training provided for teaching students with disabilities. Assessing for changes in teacher attitude over time helps to evaluate the effectiveness of mainstreaming/inclusion and the need for changes in training and procedures. Some changes in training and procedures for educators may positively affect students with disabilities attending classes in the general education classroom.

Teachers act as role models and influence their students by demonstrating behaviors and acceptance of people, regardless of race, gender, or disability. Giangreco et al. (1995) states that inclusive classrooms allow teachers the opportunity to model

this behavior, as well as a chance to demonstrate ability to cope with the changes in education for students with disabilities.

Data from Bender and Vail (1995) has suggested that teachers with more years of teaching experience have taken fewer courses on the instruction of students with disabilities. Public education teachers educating in the public education system prior to 1975 experienced a much different teacher-training program than educators currently receiving training. During more recent years there has been an increased emphasis in teacher preparation on the instruction of students with disabilities for all teachers, not just teachers obtaining licensure to educate students with disabilities. Teacher training programs in Wisconsin currently require a minimum of one college course on educating students with disabilities.

All teachers have different views toward inclusion. Some feel it is appropriate for all students with disabilities to be educated in the regular education classroom, while others disagree, saying it is not beneficial for any of the students, regular or special education. Any student with an identified disability is legally eligible for services in the least restrictive environment. The law requires schools to enforce the practice of inclusion in the LRE. The students with disabilities also need to have appropriate services to assist them in the regular education classroom in order to promote success. So all teachers must participate in inclusion, even if they do not feel it is appropriate for a particular student. While the law states that inclusion must be practiced, the success of teachers as inclusionists may vary greatly as a result of their attitude towards inclusion. A teacher who does not agree with the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act is most likely unable to practice inclusion with the same success as a teacher who fully supports IDEA.

Schools districts are responsible for evaluating the needs of each individual student and determining appropriate placement. A student with a cognitive disability, Wisconsin's term for mental retardation, may receive services in both the regular classroom and in a separate resource room. The student may participate in a science class with modification and the assistance of a paraprofessional and then return to the resource room for language arts and math classes. Each student needs different modification and adaptations in order to be successful so it is necessary for teachers to work as a team to provide each student with the services they need.

The information gained from educators that have been teaching in the public school system since before the passage of PL 94-142 is valuable as it will allow future educators to become more aware of the struggles involved with the inclusion of students with disabilities. Not all teachers have received an appropriate level of training, nor are they comfortable educating students with disabilities in their regular education classroom. Identifying the presence of the existing stereotypes may assist in the future preparation and continuing education of educators.

A review of the literature shows that many educators feel that the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom is beneficial. Studies have also shown that general educators are often overwhelmed and without the necessary resources to educate students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Therefore, the research hypothesis for this study was that most senior

teachers would state they feel inclusion is an appropriate and positive experience for students with disabilities, even though it has been a difficult process for teachers who may not have much training or access to resources.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of senior teachers toward inclusion before and after PL94-142 came into effect.

Objectives

This study focused on the following objectives:

- to identify the attitudes of senior teachers towards inclusion
- to describe the difference in senior teachers perceptions towards inclusion, before and after the passage of PL 94-142
- to identify areas of inclusion that are in need of improvement
- to identify solutions to improve the success of inclusion for teachers and students

Definition of Terms

1. Regular education teacher – A teacher that teaches a majority of students without an identified disability in his or her classroom.
2. Special education teacher – A teacher who teaches students that have been identified as having a disability – this teaching may occur in a resource room or in the regular classroom.

3. Student with a disability – A student that has been tested and identified as having one or more disabilities qualifying him or her for special education services through the public education system.
4. Inclusion – Educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting, regardless of their disability. This involves providing support services to allow the student to benefit from placement in the class. Students may participate in different levels of inclusion –depending on the level of their needs.
5. Resource Room – A room for students with disabilities to receive specific special education services and additional support to enhance their learning.
6. Paraprofessional – A staff member used in both the special education classroom and within the entire school setting to provide educational and daily living support for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted on the attitudes teachers have towards the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular education classroom. The following literature has been reviewed in relation to this topic.

Attitudes and Perceptions

Studies have found differences in the perceptions that regular and special education teachers have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom. In 1996, Scruggs and Mastropieri reviewed twenty-eight investigations on the perception general education teachers have towards the inclusion of special needs students into their regular education classrooms. Scruggs and Mastropieri compared and analyzed the results and found that 65% of general education teachers supported the concept of inclusion.

Monahan and Marino (1996) also completed a study investigating the attitudes teachers have towards inclusion. This study found that 72% of the 342 respondents felt that the inclusion of students with special needs will not be successful because of too much resistance from regular education teachers. Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt that regular education teachers do not have the instructional skills and educational backgrounds to teach students with special needs. Many of the teachers, 67%, also stated that regular education teachers prefer to send students with special

needs to the special education classroom, rather than having the special education teacher provide services in the regular education classroom.

Studies have shown that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion vary, depending upon the severity of the students' disabilities. As reported by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), an investigation by Shotel, Iano, and McGettigan (1972) found that 71.9% of the surveyed teachers supported inclusion for students with learning disabilities. Only 28.9% of the teachers were in support of including students with emotional disturbance and 22.8% supported the inclusion of students with educable mental retardation. As the disabilities became more noticeable and severe the teachers were less supportive of inclusion.

Berryman and Berryman (1981), also reported by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), found that 86.9% of 2,549 teachers supported the inclusion of students with mild physical, sensory, and medical disabilities that require little or no teacher assistance, while only 31.2% supported the inclusion of students with more serious behavioral, intellectual, or physical disabilities. The responding teachers have supported inclusion for mild disabilities requiring minimal assistance, while the statistics drop drastically when more assistance from teachers is necessary.

In 1995, Bender and Vail found a positive correlation between teacher attitudes towards mainstreaming and the number of courses taken on teaching children with disabilities. Teachers who had completed more course work had more positive attitudes. This study found that negative attitudes towards inclusion are directly linked to less frequent use of effective instructional strategies to facilitate inclusion. Their data

indicated that teachers in favor of inclusion report more consistent utilization of effective inclusion strategies than do teachers with less positive attitudes.

Some of the findings seem contradictory of themselves. In 1994, Houck and Rogers found that more educators felt that regular/general educators did not have the skills to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities. Of the 788 respondents, only 42% agreed that regular/general educators are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities. However, fifty-seven percent of the respondents felt that to some extent, or to a great extent, regular/general educators are able to make needed instructional adaptations for students with specific learning disabilities. In this study the respondents felt that regular/general educators were both unwilling and without the necessary skills to make needed instructional adaptations, yet over half of the respondents felt that educators are able to make the necessary instructional adaptations.

Many obstacles in the implementation of the inclusion integration model for students with specific learning disabilities were cited by 546 of the 788 respondents in the Houck and Rogers study. The first ranking obstacle (24.7%) of 1,084 obstacles was negative attitude (e.g., non-supportive attitudes of regular teachers, resistance, lack of interest), and it was followed by administrative/resource barriers (e.g., inadequate funds or time constraints and insufficient personnel) (23.4%), instructional barriers (21.2%) and insufficient personnel preparation (16.3%). Often times teachers supportive of inclusion have barriers that make the process of including students with disabilities a difficult struggle.

A study completed by D'Alonzo and Giordano (1997) found that the attitudes many teachers have towards inclusion may be resolved with a few changes in the system. Eighty-three percent of 336 teachers in New Mexico agreed that personnel should be prepared by universities to handle inclusion and also that the funding procedures should be reorganized. Participants in the Heflin and Bullock (1999) investigation also found that general and special education teachers both believe that they need training related to inclusion. Many teachers report they are undereducated and need more preparation to work successfully with students with disabilities within the regular education classroom.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents from the D'Alonzo and Giordano (1997) study felt that classroom sizes would be problematic, 71% felt that the curriculum should be changed, and 70.2% felt that quality education for all students would be a problem. Responding teachers are concerned about how the changes they feel are necessary for inclusion will effect students without disabilities. Overall, D'Alonzo and Giordano found that there was a mixed perception of whether full inclusion would lead to improved general education teacher tolerance of students with disabilities. While 40% of the teachers feel full inclusion will lead to improved general education teacher tolerance of students with disabilities, another 40% disagreed. The responding teachers reported nearly identically

In 1998 Soodak and Podell, et al. completed an investigation that found that teachers were more anxious concerning the inclusion of students with mental retardation or a physical handicap than they were about students with learning

disabilities or behavior disorders. Teachers were found to be more hostile towards the inclusion of students with mental retardation, learning disabilities, and behavior disorders than those with hearing impairments or physical handicaps. Soodak and Podell (1998) also found that teachers are less likely to have had experience with students with mental retardation and physical disabilities so their anxiety towards these disabilities may reflect a general fear of the unknown. The fear the teachers have may also be related to the increased severity of the students' disabilities.

Swoboda evaluated comfort levels of regular education teachers in 2000. This study found that 48.1% of regular education teachers had less than an average comfort level understanding the education referral process and 51.8% had a less than average comfort level towards understanding their responsibility with developing IEP objectives. The study also found that the majority of the regular education teachers had an average comfort level working with students in their classroom that have learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and emotional disturbance. Teachers that struggle with understanding the process involved with special education and inclusion may in turn have varied perceptions towards inclusion

In 1998 an investigation was completed on teacher attitudes in Italy after twenty years of practicing inclusion. Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs, and Mastropieri surveyed general education teachers and found a difference in attitude between older and younger teachers. A possible reason for this difference is that participating teachers over the age of 40 had completed their schooling prior to the law requiring inclusion and had not experienced inclusion as students. Many of the younger teachers had experienced

inclusion in their own classrooms as students and may have felt more accepting of the policy on inclusion.

Benefits of Inclusion

The investigation by Monahan and Marino (1996) showed that 62% of the responding teachers felt that the inclusion of students with special needs would not negatively affect the performance of regular education students. They also found that 68% of the respondents felt that students with special needs improve their social skills when placed in a regular education classroom. While 62% felt that the students with disabilities would benefit from inclusion in the regular education classroom, 71% felt that the students with disabilities require more attention and assistance than the regular education teachers can provide. This statistic reveals an interesting perspective stating the importance of increased staff support for the students with disabilities within the regular education classroom.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reviewed 15 surveys asking teachers whether they believed that students with disabilities, and/or students without disabilities, may benefit from mainstreaming/inclusion. The 15 surveys included general and special education teachers from 10 states across the United States, and were published from 1975-1995. Fifty-four percent, 1,820 of 3,348 teachers, agreed with general statements saying that both students with disabilities and students without disabilities could benefit from mainstreaming/inclusion experiences.

More special education teachers than general education teachers agreed that the inclusion of students with disabilities could provide positive benefits. The results from 5 surveys showed that 269 of 404 surveyed special education teachers (66.6%) agreed that inclusion could provide positive benefits. Another 4 surveys showed that 1,100 of 2,167 of general education teachers (50.8%) agreed that inclusion could provide positive benefits. Teachers view inclusion as beneficial, yet they are not always willing to devote the necessary time and assistance the students need.

In 1995, an investigation by Bender and Vail found that 63% of 127 participating general education teachers supported mainstreaming students with disabilities. Of those 127 general education teachers, 70% agreed that mainstreaming “has been beneficial for handicapped students” and 56% agreed that mainstreaming had been beneficial for students without disabilities. Seventy-four percent of the teachers believed that mainstreaming has been successful in terms of improving the social skills and behaviors of students with disabilities and 61% believe that mainstreaming has been successful in terms of improving the academic skills of students with disabilities. Bender and Vail found that over 56% of the teachers agreed on the benefits of inclusion for all students as well as the success it has provide for students with disabilities.

The education of students with disabilities has changed greatly since the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. Teachers who were teaching prior to this date have received a very different education than the current teachers are receiving. In conclusion, the reviewed studies have supported the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities. The studies have also provided information

about current teacher perceptions towards educating students with disabilities. Overall, a majority of the teachers supported inclusion. More research needs to be done to identify the perceptions teachers have towards inclusion to identify areas for future teacher education and training as well as staff development for current teachers. Therefore, additional research in this area will offer a current explanation of the perceptions senior teachers have towards inclusion at this time.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Description of Subjects

The participants in this study consisted of five teachers in the Kickapoo Area School District, a rural district in southwestern Wisconsin. The subjects are currently employed in the school district and were teaching in the public school system prior to the passage of PL 94-142, which enforced inclusion.

Instrumentation

The instrument was developed in the spring of 2001 by the researcher to measure the perceptions of senior teachers towards inclusion. The questionnaire (Appendix A) was organized so that it would be easy to complete in a brief amount of time by asking the teachers to respond to specific statements relating to inclusion. The study asked the teachers to respond to some basic demographic information including sex, number of years teaching, year began teaching, grade levels taught, and type of teacher – elementary, secondary, or special education.

The questionnaire contained statements from a variety of sources. Faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, as well as statements created by the researcher and the advisor to the project. Several of the statements on the questionnaire were also similar to those used in surveys by Monahan and Marino (1996), Soodak and Podell (1998), Cornoldi and Terreni, et al. (1998), and Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997).

The purpose of the questionnaire used in this study was to identify the perceptions that senior teachers have towards inclusion. The questionnaire asked the teachers to think about the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom, as well as the changes that have occurred since 1975, and rate their perceptions. The teachers were to respond on a likert scale – much better before (1), better before (2), the same (3), better now (4), much better now (5) when considering the statements on the questionnaire. It also sought demographic information and common characteristics of these teachers, such as their educational position within the district and the grade levels they currently teach. There was only one open-ended question on the survey, which made the survey easy to complete and the results easy to compile.

Procedure

The questionnaires (Appendix A) were given to a teacher in the Kickapoo School District. The teacher distributed the questionnaires by placing them in the mailbox of each teacher on April 2, 2001. Each teacher received an introductory cover letter (Appendix B), the questionnaire (Appendix A), and a self-addressed envelope to be returned to the distributing teacher's mailbox. The respondents individually sealed the questionnaires in the provided envelopes and placed them in the mailbox of the distributing teacher. The sealed surveys were then sent to the researcher. All of the cover letter/consent forms were hand signed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

This study is a descriptive study on teacher perceptions. There is only one variable under investigation, therefore the objectives were addressed with nominal data showing frequencies and percentages.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the questionnaire was sent to one small school district – Kickapoo Area Schools – in the state of Wisconsin limiting the number of possible responses to senior teachers within that district.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of this study was to address the perceptions of senior teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The findings from this study will be used to show how current educators view inclusion. The results may help others become more aware of the perceptions that both regular and special education teachers have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

The teachers provided specific demographic information on the questionnaires. The respondents included one male teacher and four female teachers. The educators reported that they began teaching between 1971 and 1974, before the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Years taught varied greatly between the responding teachers, from 4 years, to 28 years. The responding teachers included 4 regular education teachers, as well as one special education teacher. The grade levels they reported teaching included 1 elementary teacher, 1 high school teacher, 2 K-12 teachers, and one educator that is currently not teaching. It is the assumption of the researcher that this teacher is employed in another educational role within the district, such as administration or the librarian.

The survey asked the teachers to rate their perception towards inclusion with nineteen statements. The questions addressed behavioral issues, benefits, support levels, resource rooms, etc. The following tables provide the responses of the teachers

for each individual statement. The number of people that responded (n) is provided as well as the percent of responses for each statement.

Statement 1: Inclusion helps students develop friendships with classmates without disabilities.

The teachers in the Kickapoo Area School district reported that when students with disabilities are included in the regular education classroom they are more likely to develop friendships with classmates without disabilities. Table 1 shows the overall responses from senior teachers at Kickapoo.

Table 1

Statement 1: Friendship Development

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0	0
Better before	0	0
No change	0	0
Better now	40%	2
Much Better Now	60%	3

Statement 2: All teachers have enough time to devote to inclusion.

Movement towards full inclusion increases the amount of time students with disabilities spend in the regular education classroom, with or without teacher assistance from a special education teacher. Inclusion takes time for teachers to make adaptations and modifications for the students in the classroom. Table 2 shows that some of the teachers feel that they had more time before practicing inclusion, while others reported no change in the amount of time they have to devote to inclusion.

Table 2**Statement 2: Time for Inclusion**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	20%	1
Better before	20%	1
No change	40%	2
Better now	20%	1
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 3: Behavior problems are an issue with inclusion.

Four out of five teachers reported that behavior problems have not changed since the passage of PL 94-142. They feel there has been no change and that behavior problems may have been less of an issue before they practiced inclusion.

Table 3**Statement 3: Behavior Problems**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	80%	4
Better now	0%	0
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 4: Regular education teachers receive enough support from other teachers to be successful with inclusion.

When teachers work as a team providing support for one another, inclusion becomes more successful. Regular education teachers rely on additional support from special education teachers and paraprofessionals to assist with the necessary modifications provided to the students in the inclusive classroom. Overall, the teachers feel the support is better now than before inclusion.

Table 4

Statement 4: Support for Regular Educators

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	20%	1
Better now	80%	4
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 5: Children with disabilities benefit from inclusion.

Four of the responding teachers reported that children with disabilities benefit from inclusion since the passage of PL94-142 in 1975. Only 1 teacher reported that students with disabilities benefit more before Inclusion became a requirement in the public school system. Table 5 shows these results.

Table 5**Statement 5: Benefits for Children with Disabilities**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	0%	0
Better now	40%	2
Much Better Now	40%	2

Statement 6: Students with and without disabilities have equal learning opportunities with inclusion.

Inclusion provides students with disabilities the opportunity to receive free public education in the least restrictive environment, the same opportunity they would have without having a disability. The education the students receive depends on teachers willingness and ability to work with both groups of children. Sixty percent of senior teachers in the Kickapoo district report they feel students with and without disabilities have equal opportunities with inclusion.

Table 6

Statement 6: Equal Learning Opportunities

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	20%	1
Better now	60%	3
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 7: Regular education teachers have the skills necessary to provide instructional adaptations for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities rely on instructional adaptations in the regular education classroom to be successful. Regular education teachers as well as special education teachers provide the adaptations these students need. Forty percent feel there has been no change in the regular education teachers ability to provide services, while another 40% feel that regular education teachers had the skills necessary before inclusion, showing they feel regular education teachers do not have the necessary skills to provide the adaptations better now, with inclusion.

Table 7

Statement 7: Skills to Provide Instructional Adaptations

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	40%	2
No change	40%	2
Better now	20%	1
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 8: Special education teachers need to assist regular education teachers more with modifications and adaptations.

Special education teachers work with regular education teachers to provide services for students with disabilities. Eighty percent of senior teachers at Kickapoo reported that assistance to regular education teachers is better now, or much better now than before PL 94-142.

Table 8

Statement 8: More Support for Regular Education

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	20%	1
Better now	60%	3
Much Better Now	20%	1

Statement 9: Regular educators are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with disabilities.

Many instructional adaptations need to be made for students with disabilities by regular educators when the students are included in their classroom. All of the respondents reported that regular educators are 100% more willing to made the needed adaptations than they were prior to inclusion.

Table 9

Statement 9: Regular Educators Willing to Make Adaptations

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	0%	0
Better now	100%	5
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 10: Students with disabilities learn no differently than their peers without disabilities.

Students with disabilities may learn differently from their peers without disabilities. However, their ability to learn can be affected by their environment, which is created by their teachers. Sixty percent of the teachers feel there is no change and 40% percent feel this is better with inclusion.

Table 10

Statement 10: No Differences in Learning

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	60%	3
Better now	40%	2
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 11: “Pull-out” programs help students with disabilities.

“Pull-out” programs, or resource rooms provide additional support for students with disabilities. Eighty percent of the senior teachers feel this is better now with inclusion.

Table 11**Statement 11: Pull Out Programs Help**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	0%	0
Better now	80%	4
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 12: Parents of students with disabilities provide adequate support and assistance to the teachers of their children.

Parents and guardians may provide additional support and assistance to the teachers of their children. Many teachers welcome the support to assist with providing services to the students. Information on the students abilities and behaviors at home are often very beneficial when considering the services to provide to students. Sixty percent of the responding senior teachers at Kickapoo report that the support received from parents is better now than it was before inclusion. The other 40% of the teachers feel there has been no change.

Table 12

Statement 12: Parents Provide Adequate Support

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	40%	2
Better now	60%	3
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 13: All teachers receive adequate training related to inclusion.

Teachers have received various amounts of training for working with students with disabilities. Current training for new teachers varies from the training the senior teachers received when they earned their teaching certificates. Forty percent of the teachers feel all teachers receive adequate training for inclusion, while another 40% stated that there has not been a change in training related to inclusion.

Table 13**Statement 13: Teachers Receive Adequate Training**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	40%	2
Better now	40%	2
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 14: Inclusion meets the educational needs of all students.

Forty percent of the senior teachers feel that inclusion meets the needs of all students, and another 40% feel that there is no change from before or after inclusion when considering meeting the educational needs of all students. Twenty percent of the teachers felt that the educational needs of all students were better met before practicing inclusion.

Table 14**Statement 14: Educational Needs**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	40%	2
Better now	40%	2
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 15: Inclusion has improved the academic skills of the students with disabilities included in regular education.

Students participating in inclusion receive more advanced academic opportunities than they would receive in a resource room. Table 15 shows that 60% of the teachers at Kickapoo feel students with disabilities have improved their academic skills through their participation in the regular education classroom.

Table 15

Statement 15: Improved Academic Skills

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	20%	1
Better now	60%	3
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 16: Inclusion is beneficial to all students involved.

Including students with disabilities into the regular education classroom ensures that there will be interaction between students with and without disabilities. Eighty percent of the senior teachers report they feel inclusion is better now.

Table 16**Statement 16: Beneficial to all Students**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	0%	0
Better now	80%	4
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 17: A special education teacher should provide students with disabilities services in the regular classroom.

Both the regular education teacher and the special education teacher support students receiving services in the regular education classroom. Sixty percent of the senior teachers feel this it is better now with inclusion than before.

Table 17

Statement 17: Provide Services in Regular Education Classroom

Perception Levels	Percent	N
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	20%	1
No change	20%	1
Better now	60%	3
Much Better Now	0%	0

Statement 18: The resource room is of benefit to students with disabilities as a support for their Inclusive classes.

Students participating in the regular education classroom may also receive additional support for their classes in a resource room. Sixty percent of the senior teachers reported this is better now, or much better now, than it was before inclusion. Forty percent report no change.

Table 18

Statement 18: Resource Room Support

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	40%	2
Better now	20%	1
Much Better Now	40%	2

Statement 19: Inclusion has increased the social skills of students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities receiving services in the regular education classroom setting are allowed increased opportunities to interact with their peers. As a result, the students are able to develop friendships with students without disabilities which increases the social skills of students with disabilities. Table 19 shows that teachers feel inclusion has a positive effect on the social skills of students with disabilities.

Table 19**Statement 19: Increased Social Skills**

Perception Levels	Percent	n
Much better before	0%	0
Better before	0%	0
No change	20%	1
Better now	20%	1
Much Better Now	60%	3

Statement 20: In your own words write any additional comments you have about inclusion.

The senior teachers were provided with an opportunity to add any additional comments they had related to inclusion. Three of the five respondents left the question blank, however two teachers chose to add additional comments. One of the teachers stated that because “there are so many levels of disability the degree of inclusion needs to be determined on a case to case basis.” The other teacher reported that she feels inclusion is positive for students and that it should be determined on an individual basis. She says, “some students function well in the regular classroom, while others require one on one to complete given tasks.”

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the questionnaire completed by 5 senior teachers from the Kickapoo Area School District. The data was recorded in table format, displaying the rated responses of the teachers to each of the twenty questions. Conclusions based on the results of the study are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of completing this descriptive study was to identify the various perceptions senior teachers have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. This information will provide the current field of educators and other interested parties with current trends, thoughts and feelings on the education of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Conclusions

The information obtained in this study compares to the studies reviewed in chapter two. The teachers from the Kickapoo Area School District reported responses about the benefits of inclusion that were similar to those in the studies completed by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) and Bender and Vail (1995). The teachers perceptions were similar to those reported by D'Alonzo and Giordano (1997) and Heflin and Bullock (1999).

The majority of senior teachers responding in this study reported that: inclusion helps students develop friendships, inclusion is beneficial to all students, regular education teachers are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with disabilities, the resource room is beneficial for students with disabilities and that inclusion has increased the social skills of students with disabilities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions from the data received from the questionnaire Teacher Perceptions Toward Inclusion that was completed in April of 2001.

1. The researcher recommends that the teachers participate in further training on educating students with disabilities – both in and out of the regular classroom setting. This further training may focus on the responsibilities involved with the special education process and the services provided in the inclusive setting. Forty percent of the teachers responding to statement 7 reported that there has been no change in the regular education teacher's ability to provide services to students with disabilities. Another 40% reported that the regular education teachers were more qualified before inclusion. With only 20% of the teachers reporting that regular educators are more qualified to teach students with disabilities now than before inclusion, the researcher has determined the senior teachers in this district may benefit from further instruction on educating students with disabilities.
2. It is recommended that teachers continue to communicate and consult with one another while providing services to students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Special education teachers and regular education teachers may provide great support for each other in the process of serving students with disabilities.
3. Teachers struggling with the process of inclusion are encouraged to seek additional support from the special education director within the district and the school

administration. It may also be beneficial to discuss specific concerns about a student with the parent to receive additional insight and information.

Appendix A

Teacher Perceptions Toward Inclusion

Demographics

Please circle or fill in responses

1. Male _____ Female _____
2. Number of years teaching _____ Year began teaching _____
3. Your position within the school district
A) Regular education B) Special education C) Administration
4. Grade levels you currently teach
A) Elementary B) Middle C) Senior High D) Not teaching

Inclusion describes the process of integrating students with disabilities into the “least restrictive environment” as required by the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Think about the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom and the changes that have occurred since the introduction of inclusion in 1975. **Rate the following items on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 = Much better before, 2 = Better before, 3 = No change, 4 = Better now, 5 = Much better now**

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Inclusion helps students develop friendships with classmates without disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. All teachers have enough time to devote to inclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Behavior problems are an issue with inclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Regular education teachers receive enough support from other teachers to be successful with inclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Children with disabilities benefit from inclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Students with and without disabilities have equal learning opportunities with inclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Regular education teachers have the skills necessary to provide instructional adaptations for students with disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Special education teachers need to assist regular education teachers more with modifications and adaptations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**1 = Much better before, 2 = Better before, 3 = No change,
4 = Better now, 5 = Much better now**

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Regular educators are willing to make needed instructional adaptations for students with disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Students with disabilities learn no differently than their peers without disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. "Pull-out" programs help students with disabilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Parents of students with disabilities provide adequate support and assistance to the teachers of their children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. All teachers receive adequate training related to inclusion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Inclusion meets the educational needs of all students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Inclusion has improved the academic skills of the students with disabilities included in regular education | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Inclusion is beneficial to all students involved | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. A special education teacher should provide students with disabilities services in the regular classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. The resource room is of benefit to students with disabilities as a support for their Inclusive classes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Inclusion has increased the social skills of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. In your own words write any additional comments you have about inclusion. | | | | | |

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix B

Senior Teacher Perceptions Towards Inclusion 55

Dear Kickapoo Teachers:

Shawna Larson, a graduate student in Education, College of Human Development, University of Wisconsin-Stout, under the advisement of Lynn LaVenture, is investigating the perception senior teachers have towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom.

The purpose of this study will be to describe the perceptions of senior teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom before and after PL94-142 came into effect. This study is designed to research the perceptions of teachers that were teaching in the public school system prior to the year 1975. If you were not teaching prior to 1975 and would like to complete the questionnaire, please make sure to write the year you began teaching in the demographic portion of the instrument.

All responses will be completely anonymous, please do not write your name on the questionnaire. Please seal your completed questionnaire in the attached envelope and place it in Shari VonRuden's mailbox within 5 days. The sealed questionnaires will be collected from Shari.

You understand that by returning the questionnaire, you are giving informed consent as a participating volunteer in the study. You understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. You also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. You are aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and confidentiality is guaranteed. You also realize that you have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from participation at any time.

You may direct any questions to Shawna Larson (715) 232-9214, Lynn LaVenture, (715) 232-2679, or David Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI, 54751, (715) 232-2490.

Thank you,

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