TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH INCLUDING

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE

GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM SETTING THROUGHOUT

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

A Dissertation

by

JANE ELIZABETH FINEGAN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2004

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

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December 2004

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

ABSTRACT

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Experiences

with Including Students with Special Needs

in the General Education Classroom Setting Throughout

Public and Private Schools in Texas. (December 2004)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda H. Parrish
               Dr. Jerome T. Kapes

 The purpose of this study was to identify teacher perceptions about educating

students with special needs in the general education setting, to examine relationships

between teacher perceptions and years of teaching experience, grade level, and type of

institution in which the teachers were employed, and to identify beliefs about the critical

issues involved in implementing inclusion. A total of 1341 general and career and

technology educators in grade levels PreKindergarten through grade 12 were surveyed

regarding (a) the extent of previous training received in working with students with

disabilities and perceived needs for additional training, (b) the frequency of

communication between special and general education teachers, (c) the perceived

helpfulness of suggestions given to general educators by special educators, (d) teacher

participation in IEP team meetings and parent involvement in such meetings, (e) the

provision of related services, and (f) teacher perceptions of their personal experiences

with including students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with an additional 25 teachers selected from the entire sample as well. Results indicated that teachers in Texas public schools generally favor traditional special education service delivery models over full inclusive practices. However, results also indicated that teachers perceive additional training, support from special education personnel and administrators, teacher communication and collaboration, and access to related services are necessary in order to meet the needs of their students with disabilities in the general education setting.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my son, David Anthony, for his patience in being a trooper

while I finished this research, for his gift of enthusiasm for life, and for his future…

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to first thank the original chair of my committee, Dr. Jerome Kapes, for standing by me until this research was complete, even though it meant coming out of retirement to do so! I would also like to thank him for his steady words of wisdom throughout my years at Texas A&M, and for his guidance in helping me persevere through graduate academia.

Also, I extend my deepest thanks to Dr. Linda Parrish, who came on my committee as co-chair even though she was mentor to her own group of students. I would like to thank her for being a great educator, a person of integrity, a mentor, and most of all, a friend.

I would like to thank Dr. Laura Stough as well, who I will always remember was there when I first considered this degree as part of my "personal futures" plan.

I also thank my fourth committee member, Professor Hall, who agreed to come on to my committee even though he didn't know me well.

Finally, to the Big Finegans (CeCe and Pops who first taught me to believe in myself), and to all of the (not so little anymore) Finlettes, to my brothers Jim, John, and Joe; Alice my beautiful sister and best friend; MaryAnn my confidante; for all of their support and encouragement at times when I felt like giving up, and for their caring hearts and open arms in looking after David while I finished this research - I extend my love and gratitude.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the inception of P.L. 94-142 and the federal mandate that all children with

disabilities be educated in the least restricted environment, the movement to include

students with disabilities in the educational system has generated considerable

discussion. While the underlying precepts of the inclusion model originated within the

social justice movement (Dunn, 1968; Edmonds, 1979; Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Villa,

Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996), the actual implementation of educating students

with disabilities in the least restrictive environment has received much of the criticism

(Coates, 1989; Kauffman, 1989; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Lieberman, 1985;

Manset & Semmel, 1997; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). Proponents of

inclusion have argued that children with disabilities can and should be educated in the

general education classroom with the provision of supplementary aids and services

(Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). However, despite

acknowledgment regarding the validity of many of the inclusion movement's basic

assumptions, critics (Coates, 1989; Kauffman, 1989; Kauffman et al., 1988; Semmel et

al., 1991) have contended that the shift in responsibility of the special educator

instructing students in separate classrooms to the general educator instructing all

students in the general education classroom has occurred

_____

This dissertation follows the style of *Exceptional Children.*

with little evidence showing that general educators support these changes, that they are willing to accept children with disabilities in their classrooms, or that they are able to provide them with effective instruction (Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996).

It is generally agreed that in order for inclusion to be effective, the school personnel who are most responsible for its success must be responsive to the demands of educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989). As a result, the inclusion movement has gained momentum and has evolved into an impetus for restructuring traditional service delivery systems in schools (Stainback & Stainback, 1991; Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Villa et al., 1996). Although much of the debate surrounding alternative service delivery models has been based on opinion (Villa et al., 1996), these opinions have been considered important as they have "provided an indication of what is thought to be required of those individuals implementing the new service delivery models, namely general and special education teachers" (p. 30). Although teacher surveys of perceptions about including children with disabilities in their classrooms have existed since the late 1950's, there is little evidence that educators have had input into the implementation of inclusive programs in the last 15 years (Kauffman et al., 1988; Minke et al., 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Semmel et al., 1991). Results of previous research have indicated that the majority of general and special education teachers have favored inclusive classrooms (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Minke et al., 1996; Villa et al., 1996). However, these attitudes seemed to be related to overlapping themes involving teachers' perceptions of (a) available resources, (b) the nature and severity of the disability of the student, (c)

adequate skills and training, (d) opportunity for collaboration, and (e) administrative support. These themes appear to reflect the controversy that inclusion has generated from its beginning.

Purpose of the Study

The enactment of legislation addressing the petition for inclusive practices in schools has initiated research into the perceptions that teachers hold in providing instruction for children with special needs. Research, as well as practical experience, has demonstrated that teacher perceptions are important in determining the effectiveness of inclusion, as teachers are the school personnel most responsible for implementing inclusive service delivery models. The purpose of this study was to identify teacher perceptions about educating students with special needs in the general education classroom in Texas schools, to examine relationships among teacher perceptions and years of teaching experience, grade level, and type of institution in which the teachers were employed, to identify beliefs about the critical issues involved in implementing inclusion, and to present implications for further research and practice.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the focus of this study:

1. What are the perceptions of Texas general and career and technology education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?

2. To what extent are these perceptions related to grade level, years of teaching experience, and type (public or private) of institution in which these teachers are employed?

3. To what extent are these perceptions related to each other?

4. What additional insights were gained from the follow-up telephone interviews regarding teacher perceptions of inclusion?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used for the purpose of this study:

1. **Children with special needs** are all students in Texas public and private schools, ages 3 – 22, who qualify for special education services under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), or who qualify for instructional accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

2. **Special education** is "specially designed instruction, at no charge to the parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability" (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1404(a)(16)).

3. **Related services** are any developmental, corrective, or supportive services that "may be required to assist a child with disabilities to benefit from special education" (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1404(a)(17)).

4. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** is the setting in which students with disabilities are educated with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate (IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.550(b)(1)).

5. **Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee** is a term that is unique to Texas. This committee is a collaborative team responsible for developing a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and consists of at least one general education and one special education teacher, a school administrator, and the student's parents.

6. **Full Inclusion** is placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom for the full school day, and providing them with instruction along with their non-disabled peers with the necessary related services and supports to enable students to be successful.

7. **Partial Inclusion** is placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom for part of the school day, while providing them with instruction in pull-out special education classrooms in order to meet specific goals and objectives as stated in the IEP.

8. **Curriculum modifications** are any changes in the general education curriculum that enable students with disabilities to meet age-appropriate goals and objectives.

9. **Classroom adaptations** are applied strategies used in the general education classroom to help students with disabilities reach their goals and objectives within the general education setting.

10. **Teacher Collaboration** involves both special education and general education teachers coming together to communicate about students' needs and to develop appropriate educational programs for students with disabilities.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were considered in this study:

1. The undergraduate students who collected the data from the survey were able to appropriately communicate the questions and to obtain accurate, truthful responses.

2. Teachers in public and private schools in Texas are or have been involved in implementing inclusive practices to some extent.

3. Responses to the interviews were recorded and transcribed in a reliable manner.

4. The respondents were representative of the total population of teachers in Texas schools.

Limitations

The following are six limitations to the study:

1. Both survey and interview respondents were volunteers who may have characteristics that separate themselves from other teachers, thereby limiting generalizability.

2. Generalizations from this study are limited to general and career and technology education teachers currently practicing in Texas schools.

3. Most survey responses to question #10 are not recorded in the teachers' original wording. Therefore, many of the open-ended survey questions involve the interpretation of the undergraduate students who initially collected the data.

4. The gender and ethnic representation of the entire sample was not known, thereby decreasing generalizability to all groups.

5. Telephone interviews were semi-structured and taken at one time, thereby limiting interpretation to comparable data across subjects only.

6. Although participants in the telephone interviews were sent the results of the study if they wished to receive them, no member checks for interpretive accuracy were given as a follow-up to assure confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) Interpretations were based on the constructions of the researcher.

Significance of the Study

During the past 25 years, educators have experienced a steady flow of change in the composition of their classrooms and in the responsibilities required to meet the needs of their students. Shifts in sociopolitical ideology and subsequent legislation have generated ongoing debate about the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom. While parents and social justice advocacy organizations have influenced Congress to make public education accessible to students with disabilities, paradigm shifts regarding the roles of both special and general education teachers in providing a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment have evolved as a result.

Although much success in providing access to public education for students with mild disabilities was achieved by the mid 1990's, the IDEA amendments of 1997 called for further involvement of general education teachers in the educational planning and evaluation of progress of students with disabilities who were being instructed in the

general education curriculum. Since the critical issue involved in the 1997

reauthorization of IDEA was to improve educational performance and achievement for

students with disabilities in both special and general education settings (Yell, 1998),

general education teachers were required to become a part of the student's IEP

committee. As such members, general educators were expected to assist other IEP team

members in developing and evaluating progress toward annual goals related to the

general education curriculum, and to assist the IEP team in determining if modifications

or accommodations were needed to allow students with disabilities to participate in

state-wide assessments.

As a result of this legislation and the continued movement toward the full

inclusion of students with disabilities into general education settings, educators

throughout the nation are involved in teaching students with special needs in their

classrooms everyday, and are being held accountable for their students' success. This

research will help provide information about how teachers currently perceive the

practice of inclusion by identifying perceptions from a large sample of teachers, and by

providing additional data describing how teachers view "the world of inclusion" from

their own experiences.

Design of the Dissertation

This research is described in six chapters. Chapter I presents an introduction and

a purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations,

and the significance of the study. Chapter II provides a review of the literature

pertaining to the philosophical foundations of inclusion, the debate surrounding

implementing inclusion in schools, and previous studies that have focused on teacher perceptions about inclusion. Chapter III describes the methodology of the study. The results of the survey phase are presented in Chapter IV, while the interview phase of the study is discussed in Chapter V. Chapter VI summarizes the findings and discusses implications for teacher involvement in inclusive practices, as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Several areas of literature were reviewed prior to conducting the research to determine teacher perceptions regarding inclusion in Texas schools. First, the philosophical foundations of inclusion and the sociopolitical factors that have contributed to its development were reviewed. Then, the issues involved in the debate surrounding the implementation of inclusion were investigated, as these issues seemed to be critical in understanding the nature of teacher perceptions about its practice. Finally, results of studies conducted about teacher perceptions followed by the methodology involved in these types of studies were examined.

Inclusion Movement

Background. A number of societal factors provided the impetus for legislative efforts to recognize the individual rights of people with disabilities, and contributed to the movement to implement inclusive practices in schools. The societal factors that affected the history, condition, and subsequent legislation in the area of disabilities included (a) compulsory education, (b) the civil rights movement, (c) parent advocacy, and (d) the equal opportunity movement (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). These factors, coupled with often life-threatening self-advocacy efforts of people with disabilities themselves (Corrigan, 1999), resulted in the move toward empowering individuals in acquiring access to community, employment and educational resources.

Compulsory education was implemented in the United States by the early 1900's. However, children with disabilities continued to be excluded from schools and educational opportunities. This exclusion of children with disabilities from school is evidenced by the Cuyahoga County Court of Appeals decision in Ohio in 1934, in which the state ruled that educational opportunities need not be provided for students who would receive no benefit from these services. In addition, even up until 1969, states such as North Carolina allowed that children could be classified as "uneducable", thereby excluding them from school, and ruled that it was a crime for parents to insist that their children be included in the educational system.

Although the 10th amendment to the constitution makes education the business of the states, the 14th amendment guarantees equal opportunity and equal protection under the law. In the landmark case, Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the Supreme Court held that exclusion of minority populations from public education was a violation of the 14th amendment. This civil rights legislation laid the foundation for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), but despite the passage of the ESEA, children continued to be excluded from public school systems while their parents advocated for equal access to education (Yell et al., 1998). The 1972 Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of PA, and the 1972 Mills v. Board of Education - District of Columbia were two landmark cases in which the civil rights movement influenced educational policy. In the Pennsylvania decision, the court ruled that students with mental retardation could not be excluded from being educated in the public schools. In the Mills decision, the court ruled that this non-exclusion of children with mental

retardation should be extended to include all children with disabilities. Legislation for equal opportunity in education continued to be proposed and enacted as a result of the decisions made by federal courts and the continued advocacy of parents and civil rights activists. In 1974, amendments to the ESEA required that states receiving federal funding for special education programs establish goals for ensuring equal educational opportunities for all children with disabilities. These amendments also furthered efforts to ensure equal access to education for gifted and talented children and for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Yell et al., 1998).

In 1975, P. L. 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHCA), was enacted and finally provided the funding for equal access to education for children with disabilities. The basic tenets of the act included parent involvement in their child's education, a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and development of the individual education program (IEP). The litigious history of special education following the enactment of P.L. 94-142 was "essentially the evolution of the federal courts' answers to two questions: What constitutes an appropriate education, and to what lengths must schools go to place disabled students in regular classrooms?" (Palmaffy, 2001, p. 8). Early court cases such as Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson School District v. Rowley (1982), and Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education (1989) illustrated the federal courts' attempts to answer these questions in defining appropriate education and least restrictive environment.

Ten years after the EHCA was enacted, Madeleine Will (1986) asserted that the fragmented system under EHCA was not meeting the needs of many of the students receiving special education services. She contended that the categorical nature of special education classes and pull-out programs stigmatized students and resulted in low expectations for students with special needs. Therefore, she proposed that alternative models for services delivery be examined to meet the needs of these students. Will's challenges for implementing reform in traditional approaches to providing services to students with disabilities furthered the efforts made by parents and activists to include children with disabilities in the educational system, and laid the foundation for alternative delivery services models such as the Regular Education Initiative (REI).

In 1990, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act was renamed the Individual's with Disabilities Education Act. This act incorporated the movement toward using people first language, and contained provisions for access of students with disabilities to the general education curriculum. The act also mandated that a plan be devised to assist the smooth transition from school to employment or additional post-secondary training, and that this Individual Transition Plan (ITP) be in place for every student with a disability by age 16.

Subsequent legislation, the amendments of 1997 to IDEA, provided for more local control over discipline, access to national and statewide assessments or alternative assessments, and mediation before legal action. In addition, the 1997 amendments mandated further involvement of the general education teacher both as a member of the IEP committee, and as a participant in the development and evaluation of IEP goals. In

an effort to reduce "fragmentation" and align federal special education policy with the standards based reform movement (Palmaffy, 2001), the 1997 amendments incorporated both the application of higher academic standards and increased accountability for achievement of children with disabilities through the expanded role of the general education teacher and through mandates to provide access to the general education curriculum and state-wide assessments. "Coming on the heels of the 1994 Title I cycle, the 1997 IDEA reauthorization sought to fold disabled students into the broader standards and accountability movement" (Palmaffy, 2001, p. 18). Although the 1997 amendments have been considered the most significant changes to the IDEA since its passage in 1975, and the movement to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom has continued to evolve, the structure of the IDEA has not been without its criticisms. Many still view the existing structure as a "fragmented system" and contend that reforms should be attended to as the IDEA moves through its 2002 reauthorization cycle. Horn and Tynan (2001) suggested that special education must include reforms that are more cost-efficient and better targeted toward improving the educational outcomes for students with disabilities. They asserted that special education should be recommitted to "helping students overcome their disabilities and to teaching coping and compensatory mechanisms, whenever possible, rather than teaching such students to expect a lifetime of special accommodations and services" (p. 39). This goal for the reauthorization of the IDEA appears to support long-term commitments that people have been embracing since the early 1900's, and parallels the underlying assumptions of the full inclusion movement.

Contradictory Findings. As the movement to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms continued on an evolutionary path following the enactment of P.L. 94-142 (1975), the Regular Education Initiative (REI) movement (Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986; Will, 1986), and the surge toward full inclusion (Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1984), much of the debate regarding the appropriateness of general education placement for all students remained theoretical and speculative (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993). Trends continued to emerge in the direction of positive support for inclusive practices (Nisbet, 1992; Nisbet, Jorgensen, & Powers, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1984), yet little evidence existed that showed general education teachers supported the changes in instructional delivery models, that they were willing to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms, or that they were able to provide them with effective instruction (Coates, 1989; Kauffman, 1989; Kauffman et al., 1988; Salend, 1994; Vaughn & Schumm, 1994). Subsequent research results continued to indicate varied and contradictory findings regarding teacher perspectives on the effects of inclusion, from results showing that general educators did not agree with the basic tenets of inclusion (Coates, 1989; Minke et al., 1996; Semmel et al., 1991), to research indicating an increase in self-efficacy, professional growth, and satisfaction from general education teachers working in inclusive settings (Bennett, Deluca, & Bruns, 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993; Villa et al., 1996). As the body of literature continued to grow into the 21st century, the focus of the debate shifted away from teacher perceptions of whether all students with disabilities should be included in general education classrooms to the

beliefs that teachers hold about how best to serve all students effectively (Wilson, 1999).

Despite the 1997 amendments to IDEA and the growing trend to include more students

with disabilities into general education classrooms, many of the same concerns that were

associated with the earlier concept of mainstreaming have continued to persist within

current inclusion paradigms.

Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion

   Key Issues of Inclusion Practices. In an effort to examine the status of the field

of education and the progression toward inclusive practices, Scruggs and Mastropieri

(1996) conducted a synthesis of the research pertaining to teacher perceptions of

mainstreaming/ inclusion spanning the years from 1958 – 1995. This review organized

the findings of 28 studies around key questions that appeared to be most relevant to the

issues involved in inclusion, and evaluated the prospective impact of geographical

region, year of publication, and teacher characteristics on teacher perceptions.   These

issues included (a) teacher support of the philosophy of inclusion and their willingness to

include students in their classrooms, (b) the benefits of inclusion to students and the

barriers to its effectiveness, (c) the perceived effects of inclusion on the general

education classroom environment, and (d) perceptions about the needed resources in

order to implement inclusion effectively.

   Overall, the findings from this study indicated that about two-thirds of general

education teachers held positive perceptions regarding mainstreaming or inclusion at a

conceptual level, with slightly over half of the teachers across studies indicating a

willingness to include students in their classrooms. Systematic variability in support of

inclusion tended to be related to the severity level of the disability and the degree of intensity of implementation. Variability in willingness to include students with disabilities was also related to severity level of the disability, but was additionally related to degree of perceived added responsibilities on the part of the general educator as a result of the inclusion. About one-half of the general education teachers across surveys agreed that students could receive at least some benefits from inclusion, although less than one-half believed that the best environment for placement was the general education classroom. The studies reviewed also indicated that a considerable number of teachers perceived that mainstreaming or including students in the general education classroom would present significant classroom problems, and believed that major changes in instructional delivery would have to be made to accommodate the students' needs. Three factors relating to the implementation of mainstreaming /inclusion were also considered across studies. Overall, teachers reported that sufficient time, training, and additional resources were necessary but generally not available to implement mainstreaming /inclusion effectively.

Scott, Vitale, and Masten (1998) conducted a synthesis of the literature from 1986 through 1996 regarding teacher perceptions and use of instructional adaptations for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Findings from three major categories of research involving teacher acceptability, implementation, and levels of use of instructional adaptations were summarized, and common factors that appeared to affect levels of implementation of adaptive strategies were evaluated. Two dimensions affecting teacher acceptability of using adaptive strategies were identified as having been

investigated. These included the desirability/effectiveness of the intervention and the

perceived reasonability/feasibility of the strategies. The findings indicated that general

education teachers primarily accepted the strategies that special education teachers

recommended as being effective, with teachers' ratings of effectiveness being positively

correlated with their ratings for willingness to implement the strategies. Within the

dimension of reasonability/feasibility, the study found that teachers generally rated

instructional adaptations positively; however, actual implementation of the strategies

appeared to be limited to those that benefited the whole class and those that addressed

only the social and emotional needs of students.

Teacher Philosophy. Teacher attitudes regarding their support of inclusion

philosophy have consistently been explored as a result of the notion that successful

inclusion is dependent primarily upon the teachers responsible for its implementation

(Larivee, 1982; Semmel, Gottlieb, & Robinson, 1979; Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982),

and that negative attitudes and perceptions toward inclusion could be a substantial

barrier to its practice (Downing, Eichinger, & Williams, 1997; Garvar-Pinhas &

Schmelkin, 1989; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998). Although several studies have

indicated that most general education teachers have supported the idea of inclusion,

especially if they have had experience with it (Bennett et al., 1997; Downing et al., 1997;

Giangreco et al., 1993; Scruggs & Mastopieri, 1996; Villa et al., 1996), others have

found that teachers preferred the options within the more traditional models of service

delivery (Coates, 1989; Kauffman et al., 1988; Lombard, Miller, & Hazelkorn, 1998;

Minke et al., 1996; Semmel et al., 1991).

Overall, the findings from the Scruggs and Mastopieri (1996) review of the literature indicated that about two-thirds of general education teachers held positive perceptions regarding mainstreaming or inclusion at a conceptual level. Studies included within this review suggested that this support of inclusion philosophy tended to be related to the degree of intensity of inclusion, as support for the philosophy declined considerably when survey wording indicated more intensive views. The severity level of the disabilities of the students appeared to be related to teacher philosophy as well, as many teachers qualified inclusion support for students with mild disabilities but not for students with more severe involvement.

Subsequent studies that involved positive teacher attitudes and support for inclusion indicated that these perceptions appeared to be related to amount of experience that general education teachers had with the practice itself. Those educators teaching in inclusive settings held more positive attitudes toward the inclusion philosophy than teachers who had little or no inclusion experience and minimal involvement with children with disabilities (Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1998; Downing et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993; Minke et al., 1996; Soodak et al., 1998; Villa et al., 1996). As a result of experience in working in inclusive settings, general education teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study described a professional and personal "transformation" (p. 364) in their attitudes and expectations of students with severe disabilities. In addition, Villa et al. (1996) suggested that the low level of support for inclusion reported in previous studies could be due to the lack of experience in working in inclusive settings, thereby concluding that negative attitudes toward inclusion could possibly be

related more to the resistance to change rather than actual philosophy toward children with disabilities. Although only less than one-third of the teachers in the Semmel et al. (1991) study believed that the full inclusion model created the most effective learning environment, the researchers contended that the level of experience with this model was not known. Therefore, the Villa et al. (1996) conjecture seemed to be supported by the alternative interpretation proposed about teacher perceptions of the REI in the Semmel et al. (1991) study, in that "results could be alternatively interpreted to mean that service providers generally tend to resist change when roles and functions are altered, and that it is the lack of their positive experience with REI models that perpetuates barriers to diffusion and adoptions of such models" (p. 20). In addition, Bennett et al. (1997) concluded that repeated unsuccessful experiences with inclusion could contribute to negative perspectives about implementing it. Across the studies, variables such as (a) collaborative teaming, (b) time for planning, (c) high level of training, (d) information and support in providing individualized instruction, (e) a high degree of self-efficacy, and (f) support by administration were found to be contributing factors to successful experiences with inclusion, and were thereby associated with positive attitudes toward its practice.

Alternatively, other studies reported primarily negative attitudes toward inclusion by general education teachers. According to the Coates (1989) study, responses to open-ended questions about the practice of inclusion tended to be "in the opposite direction of the REI philosophy" (p. 536). Teachers indicated that they believed that pull-out programs were necessary and effective, and that they should not be downsized in order

to move children with disabilities into the general education classroom. Similarly,
results from the Semmel et al. (1991) study indicated that both special education and
general education teachers were "not generally dissatisfied" (p. 18) with traditional
special education service delivery models, and tended to prefer pull-out programs to any
alternative methods. Although many teachers supported the increase in classroom
resources available in the special education teacher consultant model, they did not
support the model if these methods altered their teaching practices or job definitions, or
if they decreased the instructional time allocation for their students without disabilities.
Garvar-Pinhas and Schmelkin (1989) found that general education teachers indicated
primarily negative views toward the practice of mainstreaming, especially with regard to
meeting the academic needs of "their" students, a concern that is commonly cited as a
primary barrier to inclusion (e.g., Downing et al., 1997). Minke et al. (1996) also
reported that "teachers do not perceive the current resources provided, which are
substantial (including two teachers and at least a part-time aide), as sufficient for
meeting the needs of all children with even mild disabilities" (p. 181). In addition, the
relatively small percentage of teachers who had positive attitudes toward the philosophy
of inclusion was reflected in a later study involving the inclusion of secondary students
with disabilities in school-to-work programs. Lombard, Miller, and Hazelkorn (1998)
found that only 39% of the teachers surveyed in their study rated their colleagues'
perceptions of inclusion as positive, while only slightly over one-half characterized their
own attitudes as being positive.

Teacher Willingness to Include Students. Teacher willingness to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom has been explored by several research studies. Although the conclusions have been fairly consistent in terms of the factors that affect this inclination, results continue to traverse a wide range of perspectives dependent upon the extent of implementation. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reported that overall, 53.4% of teachers across nine investigations expressed that they would be willing to accept children with varying disabilities into their classrooms. This willingness to mainstream/include students with disabilities into the general education setting tended to be related to the perceived additional responsibilities that the teacher would incur as a result, and the severity level of the disabilities of the students who were included. Consistent with these findings, Soodak et al. (1998) found that general education teachers across grade levels were more willing to include students with physical disabilities or hearing impairments than those students with cognitive disabilities or emotional/behavior disorders. With respect to added teacher responsibilities, additional studies suggested that general education teachers in classrooms without access to specific protected resources tended to be less receptive to inclusion than those teachers who were provided such resources (Kaufman et al., 1988; Minke et al., 1996).

On the other hand, additional studies involving teacher attitudes and receptivity to inclusion have indicated that teacher attitudes toward inclusion are strongly associated with successful experiences in working in inclusive settings (Bennett et al., 1997; Villa et al., 1996), and that teachers working in inclusive settings generally held more positive

views of inclusion (Downing et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993; York, Vandercook, Macdonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992). These findings suggest that experiences working in inclusive settings, coupled with the provision of necessary supports involved in implementing inclusion, are primary factors that affect teacher willingness to implement alternative service delivery models.

Teacher Willingness to Implement Adaptations. In an early study involving teacher perceptions of the Regular Education Initiative (REI), Gerber (1988) asserted that teachers could either work toward increasing mean achievement or decreasing achievement variance in their students, but could not accomplish both at the same time. He defined this concept as "instructional tolerance" (p. 309), and suggested that placing students with mild disabilities into the general education classroom would not increase teachers' tolerance level for either of the two goals. This assertion led Kaufman et al. (1988) to question one of the primary assumptions of the REI model, in that teachers would increasingly be more comfortable with providing instruction to students with special needs as they gained more practice in using effective instructional strategies. Just a few years later, Semmel et al. (1991) found that teachers' perceptions had not changed much. Teachers still perceived they lacked the skills necessary for implementing instructional adaptations in the classroom, and that they believed such adaptations were not sufficient for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Teachers were not supportive of classroom adaptations that would require changes in classroom practices or significant differences in how they allocated their time.

Following this and other studies addressing the REI philosophy, Scott, Vitale, and Masten (1998) conducted an extensive research synthesis involving teachers' perceptions of the desirability and reasonability of implementing classroom adaptations for their students with disabilities. Similar to the Semmel et al. (1991) study, teachers reported classroom adaptations as being more desirable than feasible, with those adaptations taking less time to implement and those requiring little assistance or change to regular teaching practices considered most feasible. The results of one study included in the Scott et al. (1998) review indicated that teachers perceived classroom adaptations, such as adapting new materials, changing curriculum, and providing differential instruction to be less feasible than classroom adaptations focusing on the social and emotional development of students (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991). These findings resulted in a subsequent study conducted using a much larger sample, in which Schumm and Vaughn (1992) found that teachers engaged in very little planning for individualized instruction, other than applying modifications and utilizing extra help in modifying assignments and tests in order to meet the needs of their students with disabilities.

Findings from the Scott et al. (1998) review "revealed an important gap between classroom teachers' perceived acceptability of instructional adaptations and their actual practices in implementing them" (p. 114). Although teachers were generally positive in their attitudes toward desirability in making classroom adaptations, the studies revealed that they actually implemented very few adaptations when encountering the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms. The researchers identified the undifferentiated nature of whole group classroom instruction, availability and provision

of necessary resources, and extent of training as primary factors associated with the implementation of classroom adaptations. Although little or no relationships between teacher demographics and implementation of inclusive practices were found, other teacher characteristics such as attitude toward inclusion and perceived teaching effectiveness were found to be positively correlated with implementation.

Other studies that involved both teachers in inclusive settings and teachers in non-inclusive settings yielded similar findings. Minke et al. (1996) concluded, "Access to protected resources, in the context of a skilled and compatible co-teaching team, appeared to allow for greater instructional adaptations in the inclusive setting than in traditional settings. In the absence of such resources and conditions, teachers saw adaptations as desirable but not particularly feasible" (p. 182). With respect to non-inclusive settings, about one-half of the career and technology teachers in the Lombard et al. (1998) study indicated that they did not perceive they could modify the curriculum sufficiently for students with disabilities, even if they were given effective methods, materials, and techniques to do so. Similarly, Downing et al. (1997) found that teachers who were not practicing in inclusive settings were much less likely to support the philosophy of full inclusion even if given the necessary resources to implement it. For inclusive teachers however, a variety of classroom adaptations, including multi-level instruction and substitute curriculum, were identified in the Coots et al. (1998) study as being already in use. Nevertheless, the teachers did express some frustration at the appropriateness of the adaptations in meeting individual student needs and in reflecting the objectives in the core curriculum.

Perceived Benefits of Inclusion. About one-half of the general education teachers across the surveys reviewed by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) agreed that students could receive at least some benefits from inclusion, but "only a minority of teachers agreed that the general classroom was the best environment for students with special needs, or that full-time mainstreaming/inclusion would produce social or academic benefits relative to resource or special class placement" (p. 65). However, the variability in responses regarding the benefits of inclusion appeared to be associated with the wording on the surveys used in each investigation. For example, general item wording that suggested students with special needs could receive some benefits overall from inclusion resulted in higher agreement rates than items that suggested the general education classroom could provide the same benefits as resource or special classrooms. For example, teachers tended to agree (96.4%) with statements such as, "Contact with children having special needs would not be harmful to other classroom members" (Horne, 1983, p. 94), but they agreed much less frequently (37%) with statements such as, "'Pull-out' programs do students with learning disabilities more harm than good" (Houck & Rogers, 1994, p. 442). In addition, a more strongly worded item in the Horne (1983) study, "Children with special needs could best be served by integration in the regular classroom setting" (p. 94) yielded a much lower agreement response (30.9%) than the above item regarding harm done to other classroom members.

Giangreco et al. (1993) concluded from the teachers' comments that students with severe disabilities who were exposed to inclusive settings did benefit from this experience. The children showed progress in their abilities to respond to others and an

increase in their level of functional skills, and were generally provided with opportunities that enhanced their quality of life as a result of their placement in an inclusive classroom. For their non-disabled classmates, teachers reported an increase in tolerance and acceptance of differences as a result of interacting with students with disabilities. In addition, the study reported that the teachers perceived they were more reflective as professionals in their behavior as role models and in their teaching styles, that they experienced a new sense of pride in their openness to change, and that they experienced a higher level of self-efficacy as a result of teaching in inclusive settings. Similarly, Minke et al. (1996) found that teachers in inclusive settings reported higher levels of self-efficacy and competence in their teaching skills, along with more positive views of inclusion.

In the Downing et al. (1997) study, teachers in both full and partial inclusion settings were more likely to report this "rich learning environment" (p. 136) as a benefit for students with disabilities, whereas the acquisition of social skills and opportunities to learn appropriate behaviors were cited as benefits across full, partial, and non-inclusive settings. For students without disabilities, teachers in this study were most likely to report acceptance of diversity as the primary benefit.

Perceived Barriers to Inclusion. The studies reviewed by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) indicated that a considerable number of teachers perceived that mainstreaming or including students in the general education classroom would present significant classroom problems, and believed that major changes in instructional delivery would have to be made to accommodate the students' needs. Teachers reported that

sufficient planning time, further training opportunities, and additional resources were

necessary but generally not available to implement mainstreaming / inclusion

effectively. Additionally, York and Tundidor (1995) found that teachers were concerned

about meeting the health and medical needs of students with disabilities within the

general education classroom. They also perceived the ability to manage additional

behavior challenges that could arise as a result of inclusion as a potential barrier to

implementation.

In a subsequent study reflecting the perceptions of teachers practicing in full,

partial, and non-inclusive settings, negative attitudes on the part of parents and both

general and special educators was most frequently cited as a barrier to inclusion

implementation. In addition, general educators in all three settings mentioned

availability of resources, limited knowledge of working with students with disabilities,

and the concern that the needs of all students would not be met as potential barriers

(Downing et al., 1997). Scott et al. (1998) also found that inadequate teacher training

and limited school support were identified as major barriers in utilizing inclusive

practices, particularly in implementing classroom adaptations.

Effects of Inclusion on Classroom Environment. In the Scruggs and Mastropieri

review (1996), approximately 30.3% of teachers across surveys felt that the inclusion of

students with special needs in the general education classroom would be harmful to the

classroom environment in some way. In addition, the studies reviewed indicated that

teachers perceived inclusion would require them to devote an inordinate amount of time

to the students with disabilities and would place extra responsibilities on the work load

of the general education teacher. Semmel et al. (1991) also commented that teachers in their study did not believe that full integration into the general education classroom would increase the achievement level of either students with or without special needs. The researchers concluded that the emphasis on academic performance and the press toward higher achievement scores could result in less support for including students with disabilities into the general education classroom.

On the other hand, Giangreco et al. (1993) found that the inclusion of students with severe disabilities was perceived as having a positive impact on the child with the disability, the other students in the classroom, and for the teachers themselves. However, this positive impact was only reported for those teachers who had experienced some change in their own attitudes after teaching in an inclusive setting, as teachers who did not experience any transformation over time did not report a positive impact of the student with a disability on the classroom environment. Similarly, Coots et al. (1998) suggested that teacher transformation of attitudes and commitment to success as a result of experiences with inclusion appeared to be a primary factor in creating a positive classroom environment for all students. The results of their study led to the development of four teaching philosophy themes and led to the conclusion:

> This transformation process apparently did not lead these teachers to ask whether or not their classes were equipped to accommodate students with disabilities, but rather led them to ask how to best put into practice their personal philosophies about equal access for all students, building a sense of a classroom as a community, teaching students to appreciate diversity, and helping everyone learn to do their personal best (p. 328).

Perceived Necessary Resources. As a result of their research synthesis, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) asserted that teachers perceived they needed support in the areas

of training, planning time, and personnel and materials resources when including

children with disabilities into the general education classroom. Similarly, teachers in

non-inclusive settings indicated additional training needed in the Downing et al. (1997)

study, while teachers in full and partial inclusion settings indicated a need for an

additional, highly skilled support person within the classroom. According to Minke et

al. (1996), teachers did not view the substantial support they received in the inclusive

classroom as being sufficient for meeting the needs of their students, even when

considering those students with mild disabilities. However, Lombard et al. (1998) found

that over one-half of tech-prep and vocational education teachers believed that they

could meet the educational needs of students with disabilities enrolled in their classes if

they were given adequate preparation, training, and support from special education

personnel to implement inclusion.

Although the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study were provided with

necessary personnel and materials support, they suggested that one of the more

interesting aspects of their study was that almost all of the teachers who taught in the

inclusive settings reported success with the experience once their initial fears subsided,

despite their lack of training in working with children with disabilities. Similarly, Coots

et al. (1998) found that general education teachers were able to adapt the classroom

environment and curriculum to accommodate the diverse needs of students with

disabilities. However, they identified several areas in which the teachers received a

great deal of support coming from their role as decision makers, from paraprofessionals

and related services personnel working along side them in their classrooms, and support

from student peers in the academic and social/emotional development of students with disabilities.

Methodology

 Across Studies. For the most part, studies involving teacher perceptions of mainstreaming, the Regular Education Initiative, and/or inclusion have utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methodology to various extents. Surveys and questionnaires constructed by the researchers themselves were used in early studies involving the concepts of mainstreaming and the Regular Education Initiative (REI) (Coates, 1989; Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Semmel et al., 1991), with Coates also including a qualitative component in his study in the format of two survey questions that required open-ended responses. As the 1990's progressed, some researchers utilized surveys that had previously been developed in conjunction with surveys of their own design (Villa et al., 1996), while others began using more qualitative approaches, such as semi-structured and structured interviews (Downing et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993), and classroom observations (Coots et al., 1998). Although many of the studies incorporated procedures to validate the survey instruments used, and follow-up procedures to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative results, a variety of sampling techniques, geographical areas, and response rates were investigated across studies. Therefore, the studies did have some methodological limitations.

 Early Studies. Garver-Pinhas and Schmelkin (1989) developed a survey questionnaire composed of 50 statements in order to identify major issues and concerns involved in mainstreaming, and to obtain teacher perspectives about the possible effects

of mainstreaming on both students with and without disabilities. A total of 10 out of 22

districts in two New York counties agreed to participate in the study. Response rate was

73%, and included a final sample of 247 individual participants comprised of elementary

principals, special education administrators, general education teachers, and special

education teachers.   A factor analysis procedure conducted on the instrument yielded

four factors in the areas of academic concerns, socioemotional concerns, administrative

concerns, and teacher concerns. Estimated alpha reliability coefficients ranged from .65 -

.92 across the four factors.

Coates (1989) constructed a survey questionnaire involving 15 items based on

the underlying assumptions of the REI. The survey was mailed to 125 K-12 general

education teachers in northwest Iowa, with the majority representing elementary grade

levels. Two open-ended questions involving perspectives about how the current system

of identifying and serving students with special needs could be improved, and

perspectives about what practices currently in use could be discontinued were included

as part of the survey. Response return rate for the questionnaires after seven weeks was

75%, however, not all of the teachers responded to the open-ended queries. Means and

standard deviations were reported for the 15 items, and ranked according to means.

Qualitative responses to the open-ended questions were reported as frequencies.

Semmel et al. (1991) constructed the Regular Education Initiative Teacher

Survey (REITS) consisting of 66 items in order to assess teachers' perceptions about

REI practices of mainstreaming children with mild disabilities and their attitudes

regarding REI reforms. The survey was based on a qualitative analysis of the REI

literature and a resulting REI conceptual model. Item reliability of the retained 61 survey items yielded a Cronbach Coefficient Alpha of .874. A factor analysis conducted for validation yielded a total of 14 factors relating to the issues involved in the REI conceptual model. The analysis yielded a combined Cronbach Coefficient Alpha of .825 (range of α = .789 - .833). However, large within factor variances (range = 17.49% to 33.42%) were obtained for four of the factors. A total of 381 general and special education teachers in the states of California and Illinois responded to the survey during regularly scheduled staff meetings at their schools.

Subsequent Studies. Giangreco et al. (1993) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured personal interviews with 19 general education teachers representing grades Kindergarten through grade 9 in ten Vermont schools. The interviews were based on five open-ended questions and involved teacher perspectives on their experiences in educating students with severe disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers were selected for this study because their approach to educational practice reflected "emerging support for the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in general education classrooms", and challenged "traditional notions regarding the need for centralized special classes or special schools" (p. 360). Follow-up questions were given to each respondent upon completion of the interview in order to verify the information obtained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data analysis included categorical coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) which resulted in 57 emergent themes. Text sorting via the *HyperQual* computer program (Padilla, 1990) was then used to organize text into categorical groups.

In order to assess attitudes of teachers with varying levels of experience in including children of both mild and severe disabilities into the general education setting, Villa et al. (1996) used a combination of two instruments. The revised REITS (Semmel et al. 1991) and the Heterogeneous Education Teacher Survey (HETS) developed specifically for the study were administered to special and general education teachers and administrators identified as "providing heterogeneous educational opportunities for all children" (p. 29). Although the REITS had previously been used to measure the attitudes toward the basic assumptions of the REI, the HETS was additionally designed to assess the attitudes of teachers and administrators regarding the underlying assumptions of the full inclusion model, in particular to attitudes toward students with severe disabilities. Surveys were administered at regularly scheduled staff meetings in 32 sites within various geographical regions in the U.S. and Canada, and resulted in an entire sample of 690 educators and administrators. A principle component analysis yielded two factor structures for the HETS, including "The impact of heterogeneous education on students" (factor 1) and "Heterogeneous education facilitates systems change" (factor 2). Chi-square analyses also indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions between general educators, special educators, and administrators on the two factors.

Minke et al. (1996) used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess teacher perceptions of their self-efficacy, teaching competence and satisfaction, and perceptions regarding appropriate classroom adaptations for students with disabilities. A total of 320 general and special education teachers from a school district

in the mid-Atlantic region, teaching in both in traditional and inclusive classroom settings, returned responses to an in-depth questionnaire that contained items from both previously used surveys and items specifically constructed by the researchers for the study. Parametric statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Soodak & Podell, 1993), but nonparametric statistics were used to analyze group differences in all other comparisons. For the three open-ended questions contained in the survey, the researchers employed categorization procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for data analysis.

Downing et al. (1997) also conducted a qualitative study of the perceptions of 27 administrators, special education and general education teachers at different levels of inclusive education implementation in four neighboring school districts within the southwest. Purposeful rather than random selection of school districts was used as participants were equally selected from fully inclusive, partially inclusive, and non-inclusive settings. Structured interviews were conducted and asked the respondents four questions involving perceptions of benefits and barriers to inclusion, judgments regarding the supports necessary for effective inclusion implementation, and opinions about necessary teaching strategies for including students with severe disabilities. Responses to the interviews were then categorized and frequency counts were developed from the aggregated data.

Two general education teachers from each of four districts in Southern California comprised the sample of teachers in another qualitative study conducted by Coots et al.

(1998). This study used semi-structured interviews along with open-ended questions and general probes to examine teachers' world view of inclusion, primarily with respect to teaching philosophy, applied classroom adaptations and perceived necessary supports. In addition to the constant comparison method used to categorize responses to the interviews, additional data from classroom observations augmented theme constructs that emerged from the interviews.

Limitations. Werts, Wolery, Snyder, Caldwell, and Salisbury (1996) cautioned against the contextual elements of studies involving teacher perceptions of including students with disabilities into the general education classroom. They asserted that "proponents of various perspectives on the issue have used philosophic rationales, research of differing levels of methodological adequacy, and experience with various programs to argue and to advocate, often strongly, for their respective positions" (p. 187). In addition, Werts and colleagues argued that the issue of inclusion has often been clouded by a variety of terms with subtle differences in meaning, and has been complex enough to result in much disagreement about the implications for practice. These conjectures have been reflected in many of the studies that have been conducted thus far.

For studies involving quantitative analysis, Scruggs and Mastopieri (1996) mentioned several studies in their synthesis that were not included in the final quantitative analysis because internal consistency coefficients for the survey instruments were not reported. They also stated that some results, particularly those addressing the support of the concept of inclusion, appeared to be dependent upon the wording of the actual survey items. Studies using generally worded items tended to yield a higher

percentage of agreement in support of inclusion than surveys containing more strongly worded items associated with intense views of inclusion. With regards to item wording, Garver-Pinhas and Schmelkin (1989) noted that their questionnaire included items that used the general term "handicapped" instead of referring to specific disabilities, an issue that research has shown could affect results in that teacher attitudes can sometimes be influenced by severity of the disabilities of the students in question (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Additionally, they pointed out that their findings were limited to attitudes toward mainstreaming as measured by four factors, and that other variables such as teacher efficacy, the provision of support services, and previous experience in working with students with disabilities could also influence attitudes. Other quantitative studies reported purposeful sampling rather than random sampling, depending on the comparison groups on which the investigation was conducted. In some cases, it was necessary to purposely find teachers practicing in full, partial, and non-inclusive settings, or to find educators with varying levels of experience in inclusive education.

Purposeful sampling tended to be a limitation of qualitative studies as well, along with smaller sample sizes which decreased generalizability. Investigations using small sample sizes also tended to be specific to particular school districts or individual schools, thereby again decreasing generalizability of results. In addition, some researchers reported varying levels of experience in working in inclusive settings, and in some cases, this level of experience was not known. In accordance with the findings of Villa et al. (1996) and others, level of experience would make a significant difference in measuring attitudes associated with inclusion. Finally, respondents of both quantitative and

qualitative studies were largely volunteers, and provided information based solely on self-reports.

Summary

A number of sociopolitical factors contributed to the enactment of P.L. 94-142 and subsequent legislation mandating a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all children with disabilities. Compulsory education, the civil rights movement, parent advocacy, and the movement toward equal opportunity for all people resulted in a paradigm shift within the educational system. Although the movement to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms has gained much momentum, the debate surrounding the appropriateness of general education placement for all students has not subsided.

Results of studies involving teacher philosophy and receptivity to inclusion have generally indicated that perceptions tend to vary and are associated with the severity of the disability of the child and the perceived amount of added responsibility on the part of the general education teacher. However, researchers have suggested that these negative attitudes are not necessarily a result of teachers' dislike for students with disabilities (e.g., Kauffman et al., 1988), but a result of teachers' perceptions that including children with disabilities in the general education classroom would require teachers to devote more time and attention to individual needs, while being held accountable for reaching higher goals and achievement standards. Although teachers appeared to support the concept of inclusion based on the underlying assumption of equal educational

opportunity for all, they often perceived that they did not have the necessary skills, training, or resources to implement it effectively.

On the other hand, some studies have indicated that teachers already practicing in inclusive settings believed that including students with disabilities resulted in positive changes in their attitudes and professional responsibilities (Giangreco et al., 1993; Villa et al., 1996). Results from studies involving positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion indicated that the teachers perceived they had adequate time for collaboration and planning, sufficient training and resources, and support from specialists and administration.

Studies involving teacher perceptions of inclusion have incorporated a variety of methodological procedures. While earlier studies appear to be primarily quantitative, later studies utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, with some studies utilizing only qualitative measures. Although the methodology appears to be somewhat varied, both approaches are not without their limitations.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Background

The purpose of this research was to obtain information regarding teacher perspectives about educating students with special needs in the general education classroom. The study involved 1341 general and career and technology education teachers in grades PreK-12, currently teaching in private and public schools throughout the state of Texas. The study was conducted in two phases. Phase I involved a survey to identify teacher perceptions about (a) the extent of their training in working with students with disabilities and perceived needs for additional training, (b) the frequency of communication between special and general education teachers, (c) the perceived helpfulness of suggestions given to general education teachers by special education teachers, (d) teacher involvement in ARD committee meetings and parent involvement in such meetings, (e) the provision of related services, and (f) teacher opinions about the practice of including students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Phase II of the study consisted of follow-up telephone interviews with a subsample of 25 teachers. Qualitative methodology was used to assess and analyze additional information regarding what teachers believe are the critical issues facing them in implementing inclusion, however it may be structured, throughout the state.

Both the survey and telephone interview instruments were considered confidential for purposes of this study. Information could be traced back to the participant through the undergraduate student who collected the initial data, the principal

investigator, and any additional investigators who were enlisted to code and categorize information. In addition, the name of the participant was known at the time of the telephone interviews. However, no individual names or school districts were used in the final study.

Phase I – Surveys

Participants. Initially, 1,502 practicing classroom teachers ranging from grades PreKindergarten and Kindergarten through grade 12 were individually administered the survey over a period of six academic semesters, from September 2000 through May 2002. The educators interviewed included general, career and technology, and special education teachers practicing in a variety of basic academic and supplementary domains throughout Texas. However, as the study involved perceptions of general education teachers only, surveys in which the respondents were special education teachers (n = 154) or administrators (n = 7) were omitted from the study. The resulting sample included 1,341 respondents (n = 132 PreK/Kindergarten teachers; n = 626 elementary teachers; n = 233 middle school teachers; and n = 350 secondary teachers) with 56 of the secondary teachers being career and technology educators. The number of years teaching experience for the participants ranged from 1 to 43 years, with the largest group (n = 312) having 1 – 5 years of experience and the smallest group (n = 177) having over 26 years of experience. The participants were currently practicing in public (n = 1148) or private (n = 67) educational institutions, with some having teaching experience in both private and public schools (n = 126) as well. The vast majority of teachers were teaching in public schools at the time survey data were collected.

Instrumentation. The survey instrument was developed by the professor of record for INST 210, Understanding Special Populations, an undergraduate course required by the university for educator certification. The 10 perception statements were intended to elicit teacher beliefs regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The survey can be found in Appendix A.

The first part of the survey consisted of general demographic information about the participating teacher. Each participant was asked to indicate the current subject and current grade level being taught. In these two spaces, teachers indicated whether they were practicing at the elementary level in grades PreKindergarten through grade 5 and teaching more than one subject, or whether they were practicing at the secondary level and teaching in a particular content area. Participants were then asked to indicate their total number of years experience as a teacher. Two spaces were available for participants to indicate whether they were employed in either a public or private institution, and also permitted teachers to indicate whether they had experience in both public and private schools. Participants were then asked to list their area(s) of certification.

The second part of the survey consisted of nine perception statements and one open-ended statement. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with nine perception statements involving previous training (statement 1), participation in ARD committee meetings (statement 2), educational philosophy (statements 3 & 5), the provision of related services for children with disabilities (statement 4), frequency of communication with special education teachers

(statement 6), the benefit of suggestions made by special education teachers (statement 7), parental involvement in ARD committee meetings (statement 8), and future inservice training needs (statement 9). These responses were recorded using a 5-item Likert-type scale format, with a rating of 1 indicating that the teacher strongly disagreed with the statement and a rating of 5 indicating that the teacher strongly agreed with the statement. Responses were recorded for all nine statements. An open-ended request statement designed to enable the participant to comment as freely as possible about past experiences in teaching children with disabilities was included at the end of the survey (statement 10). This statement requested participants to give an example of a situation where they had a child with a disability in their classroom, and additionally stated that the reported experience story could be positive, negative, or neutral.

Procedure. The surveys were initially conducted as part of the requirements for the TAMU undergraduate course INST 210 (Understanding Special Populations). They were first used as a class assignment in the fall semester of 2000 in order to facilitate student understanding regarding inclusion practices and teacher responsibilities currently in existence throughout the state of Texas. Undergraduate students were required to independently locate a practicing classroom teacher and conduct one survey with that teacher. The undergraduate students collected demographic information from their selected teacher, including (a) current subject teaching, (b) current grade level, (c) total number of years teaching experience, (d) whether the type of institution in which the teacher was employed was public or private, or whether the participant had teaching experience in both, and (e) teacher certification area(s). The undergraduate students then

collected teacher agreement responses to perception statements 1 – 9, and recorded the experience story (open-ended statement 10) on the back of the survey (see Appendix A).

As data were collected and discussion about the findings ensued within the undergraduate class, it was determined that noteworthy information regarding existing teacher perceptions and experiences was being compiled as a result of collecting responses to the survey. With the large sample sizes over the semesters (n = approximately 300 per semester), and the combination of both quantitative and qualitative data, it was believed that formal analyses of the data would additionally be beneficial for professionals in the field of education. Therefore, initial consent to use the existing documents in a research study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board in August of 2001. For surveys conducted over the fall 2001, spring 2002, and May intersession 2002 semesters, teachers were provided a section on the survey document itself to indicate whether or not they would be willing to participate in a further interview via the telephone.

Since the original 10-item survey was developed as a required class assignment, no formal procedures were followed by the principal investigator in the actual collection of data. Generally, undergraduate students sought out a practicing teacher and conducted the surveys through a variety of ways. Some surveys were conducted face to face, some over the telephone, and some via e-mail. However, all students used the same interview form and were required to indicate teacher responses to perception statements 1 – 9 by circling the appropriate number on the 5-item Likert-type scale, and they were required to include a brief experience story obtained from their teacher as the

response to the open-ended and final statement on the survey. Data were collected over a period of six semesters. At the end of each academic semester, completed surveys were collected from the undergraduate students and given to the principal investigator for use in this study.

Once the surveys (all surveys completed through May 2002) were obtained, an identification number was assigned to each participant and the data were entered into a database by the principal investigator and one assistant investigator. A record of responses for each participant was then created for analysis. Each record contained the identification number, the exact reported number of years teaching experience, response codes of 1 – 5 indicating the extent of agreement or disagreement with each of the nine perception statements, and response codes of 1 – 3 indicating the type of institution in which the participants indicated they were employed. A response code of 1 was used if the teacher reported being employed by a public school institution, a response code of 2 was used if the teacher indicated that he or she taught in a private school, and the number 3 was used as the response code if the respondent indicated both public and private school teaching experience.

Responses to the open-ended statement on the survey were coded by the principal investigator and one research assistant. Responses were coded with the numbers 1 – 3 and also included in each record. Responses coded with the number 1 represented negative experiences, in that the respondent described an incident that was primarily negative in nature with no positive outcome. The respondent used words that expressed anger and resentment toward school administration, legislative decree, or

incompetent special services staff. Responses coded with the number 2 represented neutral experiences, with the respondent describing an anecdote that had both positive and negative components that seemed to balance each other, or the respondent's description of the experience primarily contained clinical facts and was devoid of emotional wording. Responses coded with the number 3 represented overall positive experiences. Even if the description began with expressions of trepidation or even fear, the description ended with a positive reflection that affirmed the educational system, the students involved, and/or the teacher.

Each record also contained the current grade level at which the participants indicated they taught. Grade levels were coded with the numbers 1 – 14. Numbers 1 – 12 were entered for each of the corresponding grade levels. Elementary teachers indicating that they taught a particular subject, such as art, music, or physical education, to more than one grade level were coded with the grade level that was mid-range for all levels taught. For example, a teacher indicating that he or she taught music in grades K – 5 was given a grade level code of 3. If a secondary teacher indicated that he or she taught a specific subject, such as Algebra, then that teacher was given the grade level code of 9 since Algebra is usually taught at the ninth grade level in the state of Texas. If a teacher indicated that he or she taught at the PreKindergarten or Kindergarten level, the number 13 was used as the grade level code. The number 14 was used as the grade level code for secondary teachers who reported being in the field of career and technology. In addition to the 14 grade level response codes, the number 16 was used as the code to represent teachers who reported that they taught a variety of elementary grade levels in

"other" compensatory education programs, such as Reading Recovery or Help One Student to Succeed (H.O.S.T.S.).

Data Analysis. As the intent of this study was to explore the nature of existing perceptions of teachers regarding inclusion of students with special needs into the general education classroom, percentages and frequencies of responses to the survey items were calculated in order to describe the results. Comparisons of the frequencies of responses were made according to each of the 10 survey statements involving perceptions about previous training (statement 1), participation in ARD committee meetings (statement 2), educational philosophy (statements 3 & 5), the provision of related services for children with disabilities (statement 4), frequency of communication with special education teachers (statement 6), the benefit of suggestions made by special education teachers (statement 7), parental involvement in ARD committee meetings (statement 8), future inservice training needs (statement 9), and positive, negative, or neutral experiences in working with students with disabilities (statement 10). Frequencies of responses were compared across the three demographic groups, including (a) type of institution in which the teacher was employed (public, private, or experience in both settings), (b) number of years teaching experience, and (c) current grade level 1 - 12 or current teaching field (in the cases of career and technology, PreKindergarten / Kindergarten, or specialized elementary areas).

In order to describe the relationships involved within the teacher perceptions as indicated by responses to the survey items, the data were further analyzed by calculating

Pearson product-moment correlations between the 10 survey perception statements.

Correlations were then also examined across the three demographic groups.

As expected, the statistical analysis yielded a large number of correlation

coefficients, some of them meaningful and some of them not, so interpretation of the

obtained coefficients was based on the logical connection among certain survey items.

For example, coefficients found between statement 1 ("I received training on how to

work with students with disabilities.") and statement 8 ("Parents of children with

disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings.") were not compared in the

interpretation of correlation results, as these two perceptions were not meaningfully

"matched" with each other, and any statistical or practical significance found would

most likely be due to chance. As suggested by Borg and Gall (1989), selection of the

correlation coefficients for interpretation and discussion was based on previous research

findings involving teacher perceptions of inclusion. For example, both teacher

philosophy of inclusion and perceptions about inclusive practices have been found to be

related to the provision of a wide variety of support services, including the opportunity

to collaborate with specialists (e.g., Scott et al., 1998; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996;

Villa et al., 1996). Therefore, correlation coefficients obtained from the analysis of

statement 4 ("I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my

class."), and statement 7 ("Special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum

modifications.") were discussed in the interpretation of correlation results. As

previously indicated by research, these perception constructs appear to be meaningfully

connected to one another.

Phase II - Interviews

  Participants. A total of 188 teachers indicated that they would be willing to be contacted for a further interview on the usable surveys that were administered during fall 2001 through May 2002. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with a subsample of 25 participants selected from these 188 teachers for Phase II of the study. Represented in the sample were Kindergarten (n = 3), grade 1 (n = 3), grade 2 (n = 1), grade 3 (n = 1), grade 4 (n = 2), grade 5 (n = 3), and "other" special teaching field (n = 1) elementary teachers. Secondary teachers included grade 6 (n = 2), grade 7 (n = 1), grade 8 (n = 2), grade 9 (n = 1), grade 10 (n = 1), grade 11 (n = 1), grade 12 (n = 1), and career and technology (n = 2). Although the majority of teachers (n = 17) indicated they had solely public school experience, the subsample contained 8 teachers with both public and private school experience. Also, one of the elementary teachers was currently practicing in a private school. Years of teaching experience for the telephone interview sample ranged from 1 – 28 years.

  Five of the teachers in the telephone subsample were teachers who completed an interview with the principal investigator as part of the piloting process in the spring of 2003. These 5 and the remaining 20 teachers represented a purposeful rather than a random sample, as the intent of the interviews was to gain additional insights into teacher perceptions that may not have been captured in the initial survey. In addition, a representative subsample across demographic groups and across survey domains was warranted in order to more accurately reflect the diverse nature of perceptions as demonstrated by initial survey responses.

Selection of participants for the telephone interviews was first based on availability of the respondent. All teachers were contacted at least once if they provided a contact telephone number on the survey along with their consent. In some cases, telephone numbers were school numbers or they were not in working order. Some teachers only provided school e-mail addresses and these teachers were not contacted. Interviews were also not conducted with the persons contacted if they were no longer teaching in their indicated field, if they were administrators, or if they could not be reached after at least two attempts.

Telephone interview participants were then chosen based on grade level or teaching area, and completed for eight of the participants in the subsample, again in order to include at least one representative from each grade level. Selection was subsequently based on the participants' general philosophy of inclusion, as indicated by responses to survey statement 3 ("I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms."), and survey statement 5 ("I think that special classes for special children should be provided."). In addition, purposeful selection with respect to the responses to the open-ended survey statement ("Please give one example of a situation where you had a child with a disability in your class. The story may be positive or negative or neutral.") warranted attention as a variety of coded responses was sought to represent the entire sample. Of the original sample of 188 participants indicating consent for telephone interviews, 24% (n = 46) reported negative experiences, 47% (n = 88) reported neutral experiences, and 29% (n = 54) reported positive experiences in working with students with disabilities. More interviews with a neutral code of 2 on the

open-ended statement were included in the final telephone subsample, in order to reduce

the sampling bias associated with the volunteer nature of the interviews.

When it was determined that 20 interviews satisfactorily reflected the perceptions

of teachers in the initial sample, interviews completed in the pilot study (n = 5) were

used as they corresponded with the overall representation of initial sample responses.

The teachers in the pilot subsample of five did not comment on the issues relating to the

provision of related services or parent participation in ARD committee meetings. They

also were not asked if they would like to be provided with the results of the study. These

items were added to the interview after the pilot was conducted. This did not appear to

have affected the results, as not all teachers responded with comments that could be

included within all context category codes.

Instrumentation. The telephone interview form contained a total of 12 questions

and was developed as a supplementary guide to garner more qualitative information

regarding responses to the original 10-item survey. After a brief synopsis of the purpose

of the study and statements regarding consent to participate further, the interview began

by asking the participant to define inclusion and to describe how inclusion was

implemented throughout his or her school. The next eight items on the telephone

interview pertained to the responses on the original survey. These questions addressed

rationales behind the participants' responses, depending on whether the responses were

in agreement or disagreement with the original survey statements. The remaining four

questions on the telephone interview form were designed as open-ended response items

that asked teachers if they wanted to (a) further relate any positive and/or negative

experiences with inclusion, (b) pose any questions to the researcher, (c) add any thoughts or ideas regarding their experiences, and (d) be advised of the results of the study. The telephone transcript is included in Appendix B.

Telephone survey questions were divided into two categories, since the information obtained from the telephone survey would be different depending on whether or not the respondent agreed or disagreed with the original survey statements. If a teacher response indicated that he or she agreed with the survey statement, then that respondent was asked a separate set of telephone survey questions than if the respondent disagreed with the statement. For example, telephone survey question four asked the respondent who agreed with the statement, "I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class", (a) "What related services are you receiving for your students currently?", and (b) "How have these services helped your students be successful?". However, for the respondent who disagreed or had no opinion with this same statement, the telephone survey question asked only, "What services do you believe you need to help your students be successful?"   In addition, survey item 3 ("I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms"), and 5 ("I think that special classes for special children should be provided") were combined on the telephone survey for the purpose of more effective qualitative analysis. The combined statements were considered as one interview question because these two statements indicated an overall view of inclusion philosophy.

Procedure. The interview was piloted using a sample of five teachers in the spring of 2003. Since teachers had been provided with a section indicating whether or

not they were willing to participate further, initial consent of the participant was assumed. Following the piloting procedure, survey statements 4 ("I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class.") and 8 ("Parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings.") were added to the interview, along with a question asking the participants if they wanted to be advised of the results of the study. In addition, references to the participant as being a special education teacher were omitted since special education teachers were ultimately excluded from the study. The telephone interview was revised and consent obtained in April of 2003 to continue with the investigation. The remaining 20 interviews were conducted over the summer of 2003.

After obtaining initial consent from the participants and providing them with the necessary background of the study, the interview proceeded according to the interview schedule in a semi-structured format. Teachers were reminded of their responses to the initial survey, and were asked to comment on the questions asked as a result of their survey responses. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to comment on the following three open-ended questions:

1. Under what circumstances has working with children with special needs been either a positive or negative experience for you?

2. These are all of the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

3. Given your experience and all of the information that we have covered, do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to add?

These questions were added to the interview to encourage the participant to speak freely and to share their own story or world view about topics related to inclusion. The interviewer also interacted with the participant to establish rapport through discussing shared professional experiences. The interviews lasted from 20 – 75 minutes, the average interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. All but two of them were audiotaped, as two teachers opted not to have their interviews recorded on tape. The audiotapes were then transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), data in a qualitative study contain "certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' ways of thinking, and events" (p. 166) which emerge and repeat throughout analysis. In order to identify these patterns and organize the data, the emergent category designation method (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) was used. Through this method, themes were identified as a result of sorting statement clusters and phrases into categories or context codes as they emerged from reading and re-reading the transcripts. Families of context codes described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and themes from previous studies involving teacher perceptions were used to initially categorize and describe teacher perspectives. From these context code families, further categories emerged under four overall themes.

Statements categorized under the "Situation" code included general information about the topic and teacher definitions of inclusion, how the teachers viewed themselves in relation to the topic and the particular orientations that the teachers held about inclusion. These categories included their overall definitions of inclusion, perceptions

about the provision of related services and the program implementation descriptions, along with perceptions about previous training received and additional training needs. Finally, teachers' indirect comments about inclusion were categorized under general, positive, or negative orientations toward the practice as the teachers themselves experienced it.

Statements under the "Perspectives" theme included shared ways of thinking by some or all of the teachers and general points of view that emerged from the data. Statements categorized as Perspective statements included shared ideas about the process, benefits, and barriers to collaboration with special education teachers, and sometimes, parents. Perspectives regarding the roles of teachers, parents, and specialists in educating children with disabilities were also categorized as perspectives, along with general viewpoints about full and partial inclusion.

Various strategies and methods that teachers reported they employed to help them accomplish goals were categorized under the "Strategies" theme. This theme included comments about strategies used to collaborate effectively with specialists, develop classroom adaptations for student success, and ways in which teachers were involved in the educational planning and development of the IEP.

Some teachers indirectly stated individual viewpoints regarding specialists, students, and/or parents as a way to communicate their understanding of other people, objects, and events that make up their world. These statements were included under the "Views" theme, along with the teachers' perceptions about key issues involved in current educational practices related to inclusion.

Since the emergent category designation method "allows categories of thought characteristic of a particular setting to emerge intuitively as the researcher's own background and latent theory interact with these data" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 118), the data were analyzed and compared in relation to the evidence obtained from the quantitative results and from results of previous studies. The same relationship domains were not used for both the qualitative and quantitative components, as the intent of the emergent themes from the interviews was to accrue further insight into teacher perceptions.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the initial survey conducted in Phase I of this study are presented and analyzed. General information regarding the characteristics of the participants are presented first, followed by data analyses of frequencies of responses to the nine survey statements and responses to the open-ended experience comments to survey statement 10. Frequencies of responses are discussed individually by statement number, and comparisons among survey statements are made by the three (public/private type of institution, years teaching experience, and grade level) demographic groups. Following the sample description and frequency comparisons, analyses of the relationships between the survey perception statements are presented. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to describe the relationships among and between survey statements, and comparisons are also made by demographic groups. The results of these data analyses answer the first three research questions below.

1. What are the perceptions of Texas general and career and technology education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?"

2. To what extent are these perceptions related to grade level, years of teaching experience, and type (public or private) of institution in which these teachers are employed?

3. To what extent are these perceptions related to each other?

General Survey Information

For the first part of the survey, each participant provided general demographic information including the subject area and/or grade level at which the teacher was practicing at the time, total number of years teaching experience, type of institution in which the teacher was employed, and area(s) of educator certification. Teachers were then asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed to nine perception statements involving previous training (statement 1), participation in ARD committee meetings (statement 2), educational philosophy (statements 3 & 5), the provision of related services for children with disabilities (statement 4), frequency of communication with special education teachers (statement 6), the benefit of suggestions made by special education teachers (statement 7), parental involvement in ARD committee meetings (statement 8), and future inservice needs (statement 9). These responses were recorded using a 5-item Likert-type scale. An open-ended request statement ("Please give one example of a situation where you had a child with a disability in your class.") was included in the last part of the survey (statement 10).

Type of Institution. Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they were currently teaching in a public school or in a private school, or whether they had combined experience in both public and private institutions. Frequencies and percentages of the total number of respondents in each group are presented in Table 1.

A total of 1,148 respondents (85.6%) indicated that they were teaching in public schools and had no private school experience. A total of 67 respondents (5%) indicated that they had only taught in private schools with no public school experience, and 137

TABLE 1

Frequency and Percent of Respondents – Type of Institution

Type	Frequency	Percent
Public	1148	85.6
Private	67	5.0
Public & Private	137	9.4

respondents (9.4%) indicated that they had both public and private school teaching

experience. The majority of teachers who participated in the study were practicing their

profession within the public school system at the time of data collection.

Years of Teaching Experience. The second demographic variable included

information about the number of years teaching experience each respondent had at the

time of data collection. Frequencies and percents of years teaching experience are

presented in Table 2.

Years of experience ranged from 1 year to 43 years, with the majority of

respondents (n = 312) indicating that they had 1 – 5 years of experience. The number of

teachers indicating that they had 6 – 10 years and 11 – 15 years of experience was fairly

evenly split (n = 225, and n = 232 respectively), as was the representation of respondents

having 16 – 20 years, and 21 – 25 years of experience (n = 196 and n = 199

respectively). A total of 177 respondents indicated that they had 26 or more years of

teaching experience, which completed a general pattern of reduction in representation as

teaching experience approached 26 years and beyond.

TABLE 2

Frequencies and Percent of Respondents – Years Teaching Experience

Number of Years	Frequency	Percent
1	65	4.8
2	68	5.1
3	76	5.7
4	58	4.3
5	45	3.4
6	44	3.3
7	50	3.7
8	46	3.4
9	34	2.5
10	51	3.8
11	42	3.1
12	47	3.5
13	55	4.1
14	37	2.8
15	51	3.8
16	36	2.7
17	47	3.5
18	42	3.1
19	23	1.7
20	48	3.6
21	30	2.2
22	36	2.7
23	51	3.8
24	40	3.0
25	42	3.1
26 +	31	2.3

Current Grade Level / Teaching Field. Respondents were asked to indicate the

grade level or teaching field in which they were currently practicing on the survey.

Actual grade levels included PreK/Kindergarten, elementary grades 1 through 5, middle

school grades 6 through 8, and secondary grades 9 - 12. Frequencies of responses for

grade level are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Frequency and Percent of Respondents – Grade Level / Teaching Field

Grade Level / Field	Frequency	Percent
PreK / Kinder	132	9.8
Grade 1	131	9.8
Grade 2	108	8.1
Grade 3	126	9.4
Grade 4	114	8.5
Grade 5	72	5.4
Grade 6	88	6.6
Grade 7	65	4.8
Grade 8	80	6.0
Grade 9	93	6.9
Grade 10	82	6.1
Grade 11	78	5.8
Grade 12	41	3.1
CareerTech	56	4.2
Other	75	5.6
Total	1341	

Specific content area and elective courses at the secondary levels, with the exclusion of career and technology education courses, were included in the grade level at which the course is generally taught in Texas (e.g., a teacher whose teaching field biology would be included in the grade 9 grade level group). Teaching fields included career and technology education at both the middle and secondary levels, and were considered as a separate group due to the specialized nature of the courses. The "other" teaching field category involved teachers practicing as specialists (e.g., as a general reading specialist in no specified program) or working in compensatory education (Title I programs) such as "Help One Student To Succeed" (H.O.S.T.S.). These programs occur at the elementary grade levels, so the data were considered elementary teacher responses.

The majority of respondents (37.1%) indicated that they taught at the PreK-Kindergarten (n = 132) or early elementary grade levels at grade1 (n = 131), grade 2 (n = 108), or grade 3 (n = 126). The remaining teachers who indicated elementary grades 4 (n = 114) and 5 (n = 72) as their current teaching field comprised 13.9% of the total group of respondents. At the middle school level, a total of 88 teachers indicated they taught grade 6, a total of 65 teachers indicated grade 7, and a total of 80 teachers indicated grade 8, resulting in 17.4% of the group of respondents teaching at this level. Secondary high school teachers at grade 9 (n = 93), grade 10 (n = 82), grade 11 (n = 78), and grade 12 (n = 41) represented 21.9% of the total respondents. As a separate group, middle and high school career and technology teachers comprised 4.2% of the total group, and 5.6% of the respondents (n = 75) indicated that they taught in "other"

specialized teaching fields. These data suggest that early elementary teachers were more likely to be surveyed or were more likely to agree to be surveyed as indicated by the large numbers of early childhood and early elementary grade level teachers represented in the entire group of respondents. However, this also may simply be due to the fact that a larger number of undergraduate students collecting the survey data were interested in becoming teachers of younger children, and were thereby more likely to survey an early elementary teacher.

Survey Perception Statements - Frequencies

For purposes of comparing frequency counts across demographic groups, survey statements were considered independently. Using a 5 item Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, teachers responded to nine survey statements involving their perceptions about previous training (statement 1), participation in ARD committee meetings (statement 2), philosophy toward full inclusion (statement 3), the provision of related services (statement 4), philosophy toward partial inclusion (statement 5), teacher communication (statement 6), teacher perceptions of the helpfulness of suggestions made by the special education teacher (statement 7), parental involvement in ARD committee meetings (statement 8), and future inservice needs (statement 9). Teachers across the three groups primarily responded that they were in agreement (4 or 5) or disagreement (1 or 2) with the statements, resulting in very few "no opinion" responses. Therefore, actual percentages of teachers agreeing or disagreeing with the statements are considered, except in the instances in which the responses appeared to affect the mean.

Results of the open-ended statement involved teacher perceptions about their experiences with children with disabilities. Each respondent was asked to give an example of a situation in which he or she had experience with a student with a disability in the classroom. These comments were coded using a smaller scale that indicated whether the respondent reported a negative experience (1), neutral experience (2), or positive experience (3) in working with children with disabilities.

Response Frequencies for Survey Statements 1 – 9. Response frequencies, means, and standard deviations for the first nine survey statements for the entire sample (n = 1,341) can be found in Table 4. Response frequencies for survey items one through nine across the three (type of institution, years teaching experience, and grade level) demographic groups are depicted in Appendix C.

Overall, the great majority (92%) of the teachers in the sample perceived that special classes for children with special needs should be provided (statement 5). The highest percentage of item agreement across all of the statements was found for statement 5, along with the highest mean (4.46) and lowest standard deviation (0.81), indicating strength in agreement with the statement. In addition, only 29% of the teachers in the sample agreed with the philosophy that all students should be educated in general education settings (statement 3), most of them (64%) indicating that they did not agree with this philosophy. Although greater variability occurred within the responses to statement 3 (SD = 1.25), the mean (2.51) was much lower which also reflected a general indication toward partial inclusion philosophy.

TABLE 4

Response Frequencies to Survey Items 1 – 9 for All Data (n = 1341)

	%Responding						
	Strongly Disagree				*Strongly Agree*		
Perception Statements	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1. I received training on how to work with students with disabilities.	13	21	5	43	18	3.33	1.32
2. I am an active participant in ARD committee meetings.	7	8	5	29	51	4.10	1.22
3. I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms.	22	42	8	22	7	2.51	1.25
4. I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class.	3	15	9	45	28	3.79	1.10
5. I think that special classes for special children should be provided.	2	2	4	33	59	4.46	0.81
6. Regular educators and special educators do not communicate often.	27	39	7	21	6	2.40	1.25
7. Special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications.	3	10	8	45	34	3.97	1.05
8. Parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings.	3	14	15	41	27	3.75	1.10
9. I would like more inservice training on working with children with disabilities	4	12	12	45	27	3.79	1.10

With respect to training, a slight majority (61%) of the participants agreed that they had received some training in working with students with disabilities (statement 1), while approximately one-third (34%) of the sample disagreed that training had been received. The mean (M = 3.33) for this statement indicated that agreement was only slightly above "no opinion" on the scale. However, the greatest variability in agreement ratings (SD = 1.32) across all survey statements occurred for this statement about previous training received, with only 5% of the teachers actually responding with "no opinion" to the statement. In addition, over two-thirds of the teachers (72%) perceived that additional training was needed (statement 9), despite the majority who responded that they had previously received training. Less variability (SD = 1.10) also occurred for the responses to statement 9 involving future training needs.

A large majority of teachers (80%) perceived themselves as "active participants in ARD committee meetings" (statement 2), but fewer (68%) of the respondents perceived parents as being actively involved in such meetings (statement 8). However, further examination of the data indicated that teachers who agreed that they were active participants in ARD committee meetings were more likely to agree that parents were active participants as well, as 73% of the teachers who agreed that they were actively involved in the meetings (n = 1,078) also agreed (n = 785) that parents were active participants.

Almost three-fourths (73%) of the teachers perceived that they received "the related services that children need to be successful" (statement 4) in the general education classroom. Frequencies of responses to this statement generally coincided

with the frequencies obtained for statement 6 ("Regular educators and special educators

do not communicate often."), as 66% of the teachers disagreed with the statement. In

addition, response frequencies to statement 7 ("Special educators make helpful

suggestions on curriculum modifications.") corresponded with the other two statements,

in that 79% of the teachers perceived that special educators provided suggestions that

were helpful. Obtained means for statements 4 and 7 were similar (M = 3.79 and M =

3.97 respectively), as was the variability within the responses to the statements (SD =

1.10 and SD = 1.05 respectively). In addition, teachers who perceived that general

educators and special educators communicated often, indicated by their disagreement to

statement 6, were more likely to consider the suggestions for curriculum modifications

as helpful. Further examination of the data indicated that 88% of the teachers who

disagreed (n = 881) with statement 6 involving infrequent communication between

general and special educators also agreed (n = 773) that the suggestions provided by

special educators were helpful.

   Statement 1 – Previous Training Received. As a whole group (N = 1,341), over

half (61%) of the teachers agreed that they had "received training in working with

students with disabilities" (statement 1), a percentage that varied somewhat with respect

to type of institution, years of experience teaching, and grade level. Percentages of

responses in agreement with receiving training ranged from 59% (public and private

combined) to 65% (private only) for type of institution, with 62% of public school

teachers responding that they had received training. Interestingly, these results indicated

that teachers practicing in private institutions have received training to some extent, but

whether this training occurred in teacher preparation programs or was provided by the local education agencies in which these teachers serve is not inherent in the data.

Percentages ranged from 56% (11-15 years) to 69% (1-5 years) with respect to teaching experience. This higher percentage for teachers with 1-5 years experience could be due to the fact that teachers may be receiving more training in working with special populations, either in undergraduate courses or through school districts, as mandated by current legislation (IDEA, 1997). However, there was not a particularly large gap between any of the categories for years teaching experience to indicate that more training has occurred in the past few years.

Percentage of agreement for receiving training ranged from 49% for grade level 8 to 68% for grade levels 3 and 7, with the largest range discrepancy in percent of teachers that reported previous training occurring at the middle school level (range 49% - 68%). Although there is no apparent reason for this, the discrepancy could be attributed to the smaller percentage of grade 8 teachers indicating strong agreement or no opinion with the statement (M = 2.9 for grade 8 and M = 3.2+ for all other means). A slight majority of teachers across groups consistently reported having received previous training at some point in their careers, however, the time and extent of the training was not revealed by the data.

Statement 2 – Teacher Participation on ARD Committee. Overall, a large majority (80%; M = 4.10) of the teachers agreed with statement 2 ("I am an active participant in ARD committee meetings.") which could indicate compliance with federal mandates that general education teachers must attend ARD committee meetings and

participate in the educational planning for students with disabilities (IDEA, 1997). As suspected, the percentage of teachers practicing in private schools and participating in ARD committee meetings was much lower and did not constitute a majority (34%). In addition, it was not surprising that this lower percentage rate of participation in private schools was evident in the group that had both public and private school teaching experience (71%). However, these percentages did indicate that there is at least some participation in ARD committee meetings even when the teacher is practicing in a private institution, where funding issues regarding special education services are not at stake and legal issues regarding ARD committee meetings are not as compulsory. These results indicated that public institutions appear to be complying with legal mandates at some level, and that general education teachers are involved to some extent in educational planning for their students with disabilities. However, the extent to which general education teachers participate in ARD committee meetings and are involved in educational planning was not inherent in these data.

Percentages were most consistent with respect to number of years experience, as percentages of responses in agreement with active participation ranged from 78% for 11-15 years to 86% for 21-25 years and a large discrepancy in responses was not observed for this group. These results were not surprising, as ARD committee participation is not usually a function of experience; rather it is contingent upon the role of the general education teacher in the education of a student with disabilities.

The majority in agreement with ARD committee participation was fairly consistent across grade level groups as well, with a slight decrease in participation

among secondary general education teachers in grades 9 - 12 (range = 68% - 74%; M

range = 3.71 – 3.95), preK/Kindergarten teachers (74%; M = 3.96), and elementary

teachers practicing in specialized fields (71%; M = 3.73). The decrease in percentage of

participation at the secondary level could most likely be due to the structure and

organization of secondary schools, such as the customary departmentalization of content

area subjects at that level; and to the probability that higher level courses, such as

English AP, calculus, and physics have a lower number of students with disabilities

enrolled in them. However, this factor was not apparent in secondary middle school

teacher responses (range = 82% - 87%; M range = 4.13 – 4.23). Although the

percentage of participation of career and technology teachers was more representative of

the secondary grade levels (77%; M = 4.20), the mean for response agreement was more

indicative of participation of elementary teachers, slightly higher than the mean for the

overall sample. This could be due to the fact that the highest "no opinion" response rate

(18%) was returned by career and technology teachers representing both middle and

high school grade levels, although the rationale behind these "no opinion" responses is

not known. The decrease in percentage of participation at the PreK/Kindergarten level

could be attributed to the fact that students with learning disabilities (the category in

which most children qualify for special education services) are not identified as having

disabilities until they are older and beginning to read, a presumption which may also

account for the increase in participation of grade 1 teachers (87%) despite equal

representation in the sample. In addition, this decrease in participation at the PreK-

Kindergarten level could be influenced by the larger representation of teachers at this

level teaching in private schools, in which ARD committee participation is generally low
(34%). Also with respect to grade level, teachers practicing in special areas such as
reading or Title I programs at the elementary level were less likely than their
counterparts to be active participants in ARD committee meetings, possibly indicating
that the primary responsibility for general education curriculum planning for students
with disabilities lies with the general education teacher.

Statement 3 – Teacher Philosophy on Full Inclusion. Findings did not result in a
majority of teachers in agreement with statement 3 ("I believe that *all* children should be
educated in regular classrooms."). Responses in agreement with this statement (29%)
represented the lowest percentage of teachers in agreement across survey statements.
Response frequencies indicated that this philosophy was not supported regardless of the
type of institution in which general education teachers were employed (range = 26% -
30% in agreement). In addition, of the teachers who responded that they agreed (n =
357) with the statement that all students should be educated in regular classrooms, 330
of them also responded that they believed that "special classes for special children
should be provided".

The data indicated a tendency of agreement with the philosophy of full inclusion
to decline with respect to years of experience teaching, with the lowest percentage (21%)
of agreement occurring for the 26+ years teaching experience group. This could be a
result of the level of familiarity that teachers with more experience have had with
traditional service delivery models. However, the decrease could be due to the larger
percentage of "disagree" responses obtained as years of experience increased.

Percentages ranged from 15% for grade 11 to 43% for grade 2, but did not vary widely between these two grade levels (M = 2.13, SD = 1.12 to M = 2.86, SD = 1.34 respectively). However, trends in the data did indicate that agreement with the full inclusion philosophy appeared to be associated with grade level, with elementary teachers (33.57% combined) showing more agreement with the philosophy than secondary teachers (23.25% combined).

Statement 4 – Provision of Related Services. An overall majority (73% for the entire sample) of the teachers reported that they received the related services necessary for their children with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom (statement 4). Percentages did not vary greatly across the years of teaching experience group (range = 67% to 81%), and no apparent trend was observed that indicated response agreement was influenced by years of teaching experience. However, responses in agreement were understandably lower for teachers practicing in private schools (55%) in which special education services are not generally provided by the school district.

A large majority of teachers at the elementary level indicated that they received the related services needed for students with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom (range = 72% - 85%, total % for elementary grade levels = 78.6%). Percentages had a tendency to decline as grade level increased (range = 55% - 73%, total % for secondary grade levels = 65.4%), and were substantially lower for secondary teachers in the career and technology field (55%). This discrepancy in percentage of agreement for career and technology teachers could reflect the larger percentage of these teachers who responded to this statement with either a 2

(disagreement) or a 3 (no opinion), although factors that generally differentiate career and technology teachers from other secondary teachers (e.g., number of students with disabilities enrolled in their classes, content involved in the courses, goals and objectives of the courses) could have influenced their responses.

Taken individually, these response percentages yielded no information regarding the type of related services that teachers believe they receive that help their students experience success, nor the extent to which the services are perceived as being "supports" to the teachers involved. Teachers may have viewed "related services" to appropriately mean those services that students receive in addition to the general education curriculum (e.g., occupational therapy, speech, medical services), but the discrepancies in percentages in perceived related services might also be associated with confusion in terminology. For example, teachers may have interpreted "related services" to include personal supports, such as the level of communication and cooperation among general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, and/or parents.

Statement 5 – Teacher Philosophy of Partial Inclusion. A vast majority (92%; M = 4.46) of the entire sample of teachers indicated agreement in response to survey statement 5 ("I believe that special classes for special children should be provided".). These percentages did not vary greatly across all three groups (range = 87% – 97%, M range = 4.26 – 4.56), indicating general support for the continuum of services provided within traditional inclusion models. For the type of institution group, the highest percentage of agreement with the statement occurred for all teachers with experience in both public and private schools (94%; M = 4.45, SD = .80), although the percentage of

agreement for teachers in public schools was about the same (93%; M = 4.47, SD = .80), and both were generally indicative of the entire sample. The lowest percentage in agreement for the provision of special classes occurred for teachers practicing in private schools (87%). This percentage was perhaps indicative of the lack of special classes provided in private schools, and also reflected the greater variability in responses within this group, as the mean was very close to the entire sample (M = 4.30) and the standard deviation was higher (SD = 1.00). However, other factors related to private school teachers, such as less experience with children with severe disabilities in their classes, could have influenced this lower percentage.

Discrepancies in percentage of agreement were even smaller among the years of teaching experience group (range = 91% – 94%), with the lowest percentage occurring for the teachers that had 26+ years experience (91%). However, this percentage was also very close to the entire sample and this category of teachers actually responded "strongly agree" more frequently.

Among the grade level group, the means varied very little (frequency range = 87% - 97%; M range = 4.28 – 4.63), the highest means and percentages coinciding with lower variability among responses. Overall, the frequency of responses and their corresponding means indicated considerable support for the provision of special classes for students with disabilities, a view that is aligned with more traditional service delivery models.

Statement 6 – Frequency of Teacher Communication. Overall, about one-fourth of the teachers responded that they agreed with this inversely worded statement on the

survey (27%; M = 2.40). Frequencies of responses to statement 6, "Regular educators

and special educators do *not* communicate often", ranged from 19% - 38% in agreement

for the grade level group, from 23% - 29% for the years of teaching experience group,

and from 26% to 34% for type of institution. Although the means across groups

generally clustered around the mean for the entire sample, frequencies of responses

indicated that secondary teachers (33.29% combined) were more likely to agree that

general and special educators communicated less often than elementary teachers

(25.57% combined). In addition, over one-third of the career and technology teachers at

the secondary level (38%) indicated that they agreed that special educators and general

educators did not communicate often. This discrepancy in frequency of responses

indicated that secondary teachers, especially those in the field of career and technology,

perceive that they have less contact with special education teachers than their elementary

counterparts. Although slightly less than one-half of the teachers practicing in private

schools indicated that they generally disagreed with this statement (41%), this

disagreement suggested that there is communication to some extent between general

education teachers in private schools and special education personnel, or that private

school teachers perceive that the communication exists in public institutions even though

they may not be directly involved.

   Statement 7 – Special Educator Provision of Helpful Suggestions. Frequency of

responses to survey statement 7, "Special educators make helpful suggestions on

curriculum modifications" showed a substantial number of teachers (79%; M = 3.97)

overall in agreement with the statement. This percentage appeared to coincide with the

number of teachers in agreement with frequent teacher communication, and followed the same general trend with respect to grade level as several of the previous statements, in that the results indicated a decrease in agreement that special educators provided helpful suggestions for curriculum modifications at the secondary grade levels.

With respect to type of institution, teachers in public schools responded the most comparable to all teachers surveyed (79%; M = 3.98), with teachers in private schools (76%; M = 3.99) and teachers with both private and public school experience (74%; M = 3.85) not varying greatly from the whole sample in how they perceived the suggestions of special educators in making curriculum modifications. There was also a slight tendency for percentage of responses in agreement with the statement to increase as years of teaching experience increased, but this trend only involved a percentage discrepancy of 1 (for 16-20 years experience and 26+ years experience) to 3 (21-25 years experience) points, and the means remained about the same as the mean for the entire sample.

Although the means tended to cluster around the 3.97 for the entire group, percentages indicated a steady decline as grade level increased with career and technology teachers again at the lower end of the frequency response percentages (67%; M = 3.73; SD = 1.14). At the elementary grade levels, means for each grade were above 4.0 indicating a larger number of teachers responding "agree" or "strongly agree" to the statement. In addition, percentage of responses in agreement were all above the percentage for the entire group (range = 81% for grade 1 to 88% for grade 6), except for grade 5, for which the percentage (75%), mean (3.85), and standard deviation (1.13)

were more similar to secondary teachers' responses. Although there is no apparent

reason for this anomaly, it could have occurred due to the slightly larger percentage of

teachers who responded with "no opinion" coupled with a smaller percentage responding

"strongly agree" to the statement.

Statement 8 – Parent Involvement in ARD Meetings. About two-thirds of the

teachers overall (68%; M = 3.75) agreed with statement 8 ("Pparents of children with

disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings."). Again, frequency of

responses and means did not differ greatly among groups, but the same general pattern

of decrease in agreement as grade level increased was apparent for this statement as

well. Percentages of responses indicating agreement with parent involvement in ARD

meetings were below one-half of the teachers surveyed at grade 12 (44%) and for career

and technology teachers (49%), thus substantiating a typically held principle that

parental involvement decreases in general for all children as they get older and move

into young adulthood.

For type of institution, public school teachers responded similarly to the entire

sample (69%; M = 3.77) and over half of the teachers with public and private school

experience indicated agreement with the statement. For those teachers practicing in

private schools only, the percentage of agreement responses decreased to 55%, with a

larger percentage of teachers (36%) in this group responding with "no opinion". There

was indication that some private school teachers agreed that parents were actively

involved in ARD committee meetings (16% even strongly agreed), but this percentage

could include the perception of parent involvement in general as slightly over one-half of

the teachers in private schools (52%) responded that they themselves were not active participants in the meetings.

Means and response frequencies were similar to the whole sample across categories in the years of teaching experience group, with the exception of teachers with 21-25 years of experience (79%; M = 4.01). Although these responses indicated teacher agreement with the opinion that parents are active participants in ARD committee meetings, teacher perceptions about the extent of meaningful participation by parents or their perceptions about the usefulness of this participation are not inherent in this set of data.

Statement 9 – Additional Inservice Needs. Although over one-half of the teachers agreed with statement 1 ("I received training on how to work with students with disabilities."), even a larger percentage overall (72%; M = 3.79) indicated that they "would like more inservice training" (statement 9) in this area. Compared with the response frequencies for previous training, these percentages were somewhat higher across all groups, with the frequencies of agreement tapering off yet again toward the secondary grade levels and decreasing with years of experience teaching.

Frequencies of responses for public school teachers (72%) coincided with response rates for the sample as a whole, and ranged from 71% (public and private combined) to 85% (private only) for type of institution. Interestingly, this high percentage of agreement for private school teachers could indicate that they are experiencing changes in classroom composition and that their student populations are

also becoming more diverse, necessitating inservice programs on serving the needs of students in special populations.

For the years of experience teaching group, percentages ranged from 61% (over 26 years) to 78% (11-15 years), with a large discrepancy in comparison with the total sample occurring for teachers with over 26 years experience. Again, this percentage could be reflective of the perceived usefulness of previous training, but it could also indicate a higher comfort level overall in working with students with disabilities as a result of experience.

Percentages of responses that indicated a desire for more inservice training ranged from 53% for secondary career and technology education teachers to 88% for Pre-K/Kindergarten teachers. Teachers at the grade 1 (80%; M = 3.98) and PreK/Kindergarten (88%; M = 4.18) levels had the highest means and agreement response percentages, possibly indicating that these teachers are experiencing children with a variety of learning problems in their classrooms and are being held more accountable for their progress. On the other hand, a smaller number of secondary teachers agreed that more inservice was warranted, even though fewer of these teachers also reported that they had received previous training. This disparity in response rates to more inservice training for secondary teachers could be due to factors such as a decrease in enrollment of students with disabilities in higher level content area subjects, or teacher expectations about how student learning should be assessed in high school. However, this lower percentage could be interpreted as teachers at the secondary levels are not

inclined to believe that previous training has helped them meet the needs of their

students with disabilities, thus perceiving that any future inservice would not be useful.

       Response Frequencies for Statement 10 – Open-ended Comments. Although the

coding system was different, teachers generally responded positively to the open-ended

statement inviting them to relate a story about having a child with a disability in the

general education classroom at any point in time in their teaching careers. For the whole

sample, 42% reported positive experiences with children with disabilities, and described

situations in which "the system", the students involved, or the teacher was affirmed in

some way. Responses from 34% of the sample reflected neutral experiences, in which

the teachers described both positive and negative components to the situation that

seemed to balance each other, or the description was devoid of any emotion attached to

the experience. A lower percentage (24%) of all teachers responded negatively to the

open-ended statement, and reported experiences that resulted in no positive outcome and

implied anger or resentment toward school administration, special services staff, or

legislative decree. These frequencies coincided somewhat with the frequencies of

responses to the open-ended statement by participants who consented to be contacted

further by telephone. Of the participants who gave their consent to be contacted further

(n = 188), many of them (47%) reported neutral experiences, while 24% reported

negative experiences, and 29% reported positive experiences. Response frequencies for

survey responses regarding positive, negative, or neutral experiences in working with

students with disabilities can be found in Appendix C (Table C10).

For type of institution, the highest percentage of positive experiences was reported for teachers in the public schools (44%), while the lowest percentage of responses that described positive experiences occurred from teachers that had both private and public school experience (33%), with private school teachers reporting slightly more positive experiences (37%). The highest percentage of negative descriptions of experiences across all groups occurred in the category of teachers with public and private school teaching experience (32%). However, reasons for this discrepancy would be based on speculation, as the actual setting in which these teachers are currently practicing is not known.

Interestingly, two of the trends from previous statements were reversed when teachers were asked to respond freely. First, 48% of the teachers with 26 or more years of experience responded with a positive reflection of their experiences, suggesting that despite disagreement with previous perception statements, teachers in this group have actually experienced inclusive practices in a positive manner. In addition, the lowest percentage of negative experiences was reported at the 12th grade level (10%), while some of the highest percentages of negative experiences with inclusion were reported at the PreK/Kindergarten (27%) and grade 1 (27%) elementary levels. Although the negative response percentage for grade 12 was largely influenced by the number of neutral descriptions (54%), of the teachers in the career and technology category, 46% described positive experiences with students with disabilities. These percentages may indicate that secondary and career and technology teachers perceive that the special

education service delivery systems, however they are structured, do function to some extent for students with disabilities enrolled in their courses.

Summary

Frequency data indicated that over two-thirds of the teachers interviewed throughout the state of Texas did not support the philosophy regarding the *full* inclusion (perception statement 3) of children with disabilities into the general education classroom. Responses in agreement to this statement represented the lowest percentage of teachers in agreement across survey statements, while responses in agreement to the philosophy of *partial* inclusion (perception statement 5) represented the highest percentages in agreement across the statements and all three demographic groups. Response frequencies indicated that the concept of *full* inclusion was not supported regardless of the type of institution in which general education teachers were employed. However, trends in the data did indicate that agreement with the *full* inclusion philosophy appeared to be associated with grade level, with elementary teachers showing more agreement with the philosophy than secondary teachers. In addition, perceptions about *full* inclusion appeared to be related to number of years teaching experience, but only for those teachers with above 25 years of experience. One the other hand, a vast majority (92%) of the entire sample of teachers did agree with the idea of *partial* inclusion, indicating considerable support for the provision of special classes for students with disabilities.

A little over one-half of the teachers agreed that they had received training in working with students with disabilities, and responses in agreement with the statement

tended to vary somewhat with respect to grade level, type of institution, and years of experience teaching. Although a consistent trend in the data was not observed, a slight majority (61%) of teachers across groups reported having received previous training at some point in their careers. However, despite the responses indicating previous training, a larger majority (72%) of teachers responded that additional training in working with students with disabilities was desired as part of their inservice programs. The trend in the data indicated a decrease in future training desired by secondary teachers and teachers with more than 25 years of experience, but for the most part, the perception that future training of some type is warranted was observed across the groups.

Overall, a large majority (80%) of public school teachers agreed that they were active participants in ARD committee meetings, a majority that remained fairly constant across years of teaching and grade level groups, with a slight decrease in participation among secondary general education teachers, PreK/Kindergarten teachers, and elementary teachers practicing in specialized fields. ARD committee participation was influenced by type of institution, but the percentages also indicated that there is at least some participation in ARD committee meetings even when the teacher is practicing in a private school. Likewise, a majority (68%) of the teachers overall agreed that parents of children with disabilities were involved in ARD committee meetings. Again, frequency of responses indicated the same general pattern of decrease in agreement as grade level increased, with agreement falling just below the majority for teachers at grade level 12 and for teachers in the field of career and technology. Interestingly, response frequencies for private school teachers indicated that more teachers agreed that parents,

rather than the teachers themselves, were active participants in ARD committee meetings.

An overall majority (73%) of teachers in the entire sample reported that they received the related services necessary for their children with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom. Percentages did not vary greatly across the years of teaching experience group, but they were understandably lower for teachers practicing in private schools. A larger majority of teachers at the elementary level perceived that they were provided with necessary related services for students with disabilities, but percentages had a tendency to decline as grade level increased and were substantially lower for secondary teachers in the career and technology field.

These grade level trends in the perceptions about the provision of related services were similar to perceptions about teacher communication and collaboration. Overall, about three-fourths of the teachers in the whole sample agreed that special educators and general educators communicated frequently, but discrepancies in response agreement indicated that secondary teachers, especially those in the field of career and technology, perceived that they had less contact with special education teachers than their elementary counterparts. In addition, secondary teachers were less likely to agree that special educators made helpful suggestions about curriculum modifications. This was especially true again for career and technology teachers, and for teachers at the 11th and 12th grade levels. Interestingly, although the responses of teachers with more years of experience indicated a general decline in agreement with respect to the frequency of communication between special and general educators, teachers with more years of experience were also

slightly *more* likely to perceive that the suggestions given by special educators for curriculum modifications were beneficial.

Teachers generally responded positively to the open-ended statement inviting them to relate a story about having a child with a disability in the general education classroom. Most teachers reported positive experiences with children with disabilities, and described situations in which "the system", the students involved, or the teacher was affirmed in some way, while about one-third of the teachers reported neutral experiences. About one-fourth of all teachers responded negatively to the open-ended statement, and reported experiences that resulted in no positive outcome, with the expression of anger or resentment toward some aspect of special services delivery. Interestingly, some of the highest percentages of positive experiences were reported by teachers with more than 25 years of experience and teachers working in the field of career and technology, these teachers having been less likely to agree with full inclusion philosophy. Generally, data for the open-ended statement indicated that elementary teachers as a combined group were more likely to respond with positive experiences, but they were also more likely to report negative experiences than teachers at the secondary level.

Survey Statements - Correlations

Survey perception statements that were connected in a logical manner were combined for purposes of discussing the relationships involved between and among the statements, since statistical analysis of the survey items across the three demographic groups yielded a large number of correlation coefficients and not all of them necessitated

interpretation. Therefore, the correlation coefficients obtained for perception statements were based on this reasonable "connection", and as suggested by Borg and Gall (1989), on previous research findings involving teacher perceptions of inclusion.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are discussed according to teachers' views of inclusion philosophy and according to four domains that contain related themes of teacher perceptions. These domains include perceptions regarding (a) previous training and future training needs, (b) teacher and parent participation on the ARD committee, (c) the provision of related services, and (d) teacher communication.

Correlations found between survey statement 3 ("I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms."), statement 5 ("I think that special classes for special children should be provided."), and statement 10 ("Please give an example of a situation where you had a child with a disability in your class.") are discussed first, as they are the survey items that are considered representative of teachers' overall philosophy of inclusion. Since research suggests that teacher perceptions are influenced by their own attitudes about including students with disabilities in the general education classroom (e.g., Downing et al., 1997; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), overall teacher philosophy is not considered a perception domain. Rather, all perception statements are considered in relation to teachers' general views about inclusion philosophy, and are also compared across the demographic groups (type of institution, years of teaching experience, and grade level).

Discussion of the first domain includes comparisons of the correlation coefficients obtained for statement 1 ("I received training on how to work with students

with disabilities.") and statement 9 ("I would like more inservice training on working with children with disabilities."). Correlation coefficients for these two perception statements are discussed together, as research suggests that both previous and inservice training serves an essential role in teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their willingness to implement inclusive practices (e.g., Salend & Duhaney, 1999; Scott et al., 1998).

The second domain includes teacher perceptions about their own participation (statement 2: "I am an active participant in ARD committee meetings.") and the participation on the part of parents (statement 8: "Parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings.") in ARD committee meetings. In addition, research suggests that both parents and teachers perceive that communication serves an important role in developing inclusive practices for students (e.g., Bennett et al., 1997), so statement 6 ("Regular educators and special educators do not communicate often.") is included in the discussion of the relationships involved in this domain.

Both teacher philosophy of inclusion and perceptions about inclusive practices have been found to be related to the provision of a wide variety of support services, including the opportunity to collaborate with specialists and parents (e.g., Bennett, et al., 1997; Minke et al., 1998; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Villa et al., 1996). Therefore, correlation coefficients between statement 4 ("I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class."), and statements 7 ("Special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications.") and 8 ("Parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings.") are discussed together.

The fourth domain includes teacher perceptions about the level of communication between general and special educators. Discussion with respect to this domain includes comparisons of the obtained correlation coefficients between statement 6 ("Regular educators and special educators do not communicate often."), and statements 2 ("I am an active participant in ARD committee meetings.") and 7 ("Special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications."). Since it is reasonable to assume that special educators and general educators have an opportunity to communicate during ARD meetings, statement 2 was included in this domain. In addition, statement 7 was included as research indicates teachers perceive that collaboration is an important tool to ensure the success of their students with disabilities (e.g., Scruggs & Mastropierii, 1996; Villa et al., 1996), and that general educators are likely to apply the suggestions given to them by their special education colleagues (e.g., Scott et al., 1998).

In general, many of the correlation coefficients found across domains and across groups were not large in magnitude, however, this is not of particular concern since the influence of any single factor is not likely to be large given the complex nature of relationships involved in educational research. Since the primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding into the relationships among teacher perceptions regarding inclusion, rather than to determine any predictive value of any one variable, trends in the data along with slight to moderate correlations were considered. Borg and Gall (1989) suggested that "correlations in the range of .20 to .40 may be all that we

should expect to find" (p. 634) in most educational research. However, these correlations can nonetheless signify important relationships.

Philosophy of Inclusion. Correlation coefficients between survey statement 3 ("I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms."), and statements 5 ("I think that special classes for special children should be provided.") and 10 ("Please give an example of a situation where you had a child with a disability in your class.") can be found in Table 5. Some relationship trends worth noting were obtained for the statements involving teacher philosophy of inclusion.

The coefficients for statements 3 and 5 were overall in the expected negative direction, but the low magnitudes reflected the narrow gap between teachers responding in agreement with one statement and in disagreement with the other statement, suggesting a clear overlap in response agreement. For the entire sample, the correlation between full and partial inclusion philosophies was statistically significant ($r = -.19$, $p < .01$), as was the correlation for public school teachers ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$), although both were small in magnitude. Slightly stronger relationships were observed for teachers with less teaching experience, the strongest relationship occurring at the 6-10 years of experience category ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$), with the coefficient for 26+ years of teaching experience ($r = -.21$, $p < 01$) reflecting the higher percentage of "strongly disagree" responses to statement 3. For grade level, the coefficients of highest magnitudes occurred for grades 11 ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$) and 12 ($r = -.43$, $p < .01$), again reflecting the more frequent "strongly disagree" responses to the statement, "All children should be educated in regular classrooms." Additionally, a slight trend in the inverse relationship

TABLE 5

Correlation Coefficients for Statement 3: "I Believe that ALL Children

Should be Educated in Regular Classrooms."

	Perception Statements	
Group	5	10
ALL	-.19**	.14**
Public	-.22**	.15**
Private	-.16	-.19
Pub & Priv	-.02	.16
Exp 1-5	-.19**	.19**
Exp 6-10	-.29**	.09
Exp 11-15	-.23**	.20**
Exp 16-20	-.10	.14
Exp 21-25	-.11	.13
Exp 26+	-.21**	.11
PreK-Kin	-.16	.08
Grade 1	-.22*	.15
Grade 2	-.24**	.28**
Grade 3	-.25**	.23**
Grade 4	-.36**	.09
Grade 5	-.01	.11
Other	.14	.30*
Grade 6	-.14	.35**
Grade 7	-.34**	.05
Grade 8	-.09	.04
Grade 9	-.24*	.20
Grade 10	-.10	.14
Grade 11	-.27*	.02
Grade 12	-.43**	-.38*
CareerTech	-.13	.14

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)*
* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)*

was fairly consistent for teachers in the early elementary grades, but the trend decreased dramatically after grade 4.

For the most part, relationships were not identified between teacher philosophy of *full* inclusion (statement 3) and the responses to the open-ended statement 10, except that they were generally in a positive direction. However, the relationship between these two statements was again different for grade 12, in that the coefficient was negative and fairly moderate in magnitude ($r = -.38$, $p < .05$) when compared to the other grade levels. This was perhaps due to the larger number of teachers at this grade level who responded in disagreement to statement 3, yet alternatively reported less negative experiences. However, no significant relationships were found between the perception that students should be provided with special classes (statement 5) and reported experiences with students with disabilities (statement 10).

Previous Training & Inservice Needs. For the most part, the correlation coefficients between survey statement 1 ("I received training on how to work with students with disabilities.")and survey statement 9 ("I would like more inservice training on working with children with disabilities.") were small in magnitude. Correlation coefficients for these two statements can be found in Table 6 (statement 1) and Table 7 (statement 9).

The majority of the coefficients were negative, indicating an overall inverse relationship between the two statements, slightly corresponding with the assumptions that teachers who received training in the past were not likely to agree that more training was necessary, and that teachers who did not receive training were more likely to agree

TABLE 6

Correlation Coefficients for Statement 1: "I Received Training on How to Work with Students with Disabilities."

	Perception Statements			
Group	9	3	5	10
ALL	-.11**	.12**	-.02	.07*
Public	-.12**	.13**	-.01	.08**
Private	-.04	.15	-.21	-.02
Pub & Priv	-.15	-.02	-.02	.01
Exp 1-5	-.15*	.12*	.01	.10
Exp 6-10	-.14*	.12	-.08	.10
Exp 11-15	-.05	.15*	-.06	.05
Exp 16-20	-.19**	.15	.00	.02
Exp 21-25	-.09	.06	-.03	.11
Exp 26+	-.04	.06	.05	.08
PreK-Kin	-.07	.02	-.14	.00
Grade 1	-.02	.18*	.02	.02
Grade 2	-.24*	.20*	-.16	.35**
Grade 3	-.14	.12	.05	.05
Grade 4	-.13	.18	-.22*	.11
Grade 5	-.37**	.06	-.02	-.04
Other	-.29*	.24*	.20	.02
Grade 6	.04	.01	.09	.11
Grade 7	-.19	-.17	.05	.13
Grade 8	-.12	.15	-.10	-.10
Grade 9	-.17	.05	.01	.01
Grade 10	.06	.07	-.06	.29**
Grade 11	-.16	-.03	-.04	-.06
Grade 12	.04	.26	.19	.14
CareerTech	-.05	.15	-.30*	-.05

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

TABLE 7

Correlation Coefficients for Statement 9: "I Would Like More Inservice

Training on Working with Children with Disabilities."

	Perception Statements			
Group	1	3	5	10
ALL	-.11**	.21**	-.02	.03
Public	-.12**	.20	-.02	.01
Private	-.04	.23	-.01	.15
Pub & Priv	-.15	.27**	-.01	.07
Exp 1-5	-.15*	.27**	.03	.07
Exp 6-10	-.14*	.15*	-.08	.05
Exp 11-15	-.05	.13	-.06	-.02
Exp 16-20	-.19**	.29**	-.07	-.03
Exp 21-25	-.09	.19**	-.01	.08
Exp 26+	-.04	.19*	-.07	.05
PreK-Kin	-.07	.23**	-.02	.08
Grade 1	-.02	.15	-.16	.08
Grade 2	-.24*	.07	-.02	-.13
Grade 3	-.14	.26**	-.20*	.09
Grade 4	-.13	.11	.03	-.03
Grade 5	-.37**	-.01	-.09	-.05
Other	-.29*	.12	.06	.03
Grade 6	.04	.18	.06	.06
Grade 7	-.19	-.04	.16	.04
Grade 8	-.12	.43**	.01	-.08
Grade 9	-.17	.15	-.01	-.03
Grade 10	.06	.31**	.03	.26*
Grade 11	-.16	.40**	-.03	.06
Grade 12	.04	.39	-.21	-.16
CareerTech	-.05	.27	.12	.08

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

that more inservice was warranted. The correlation coefficient for all groups was

r = -.11, and this was not surprising given that the percentages of agreement responses

were over 60% across groups for both statements. The relationship between previous

training received and perceived inservice needs was highest for teachers in grade level 5

(r = -.37, p < .01), grade level 2 (r = -.24, p < .05), and for teachers in elementary special

programs (r = -.29, p < .05). Looking back at the frequency responses for these two

statements, teachers in grade level 2 and in the "other" category were similar to the

entire sample. However, grade 5 teachers were among the lowest percentage of

elementary teachers who reported that they had received previous training, or that more

inservice training was warranted, yet the relationship between the two was negative and

strongest at this particular grade level.

Other statistically significant coefficients were obtained for teachers in public

institutions (r = -.12, p < .01), and teachers with 16-20 years of experience (r = -.19, p <

.01). However, although these particular coefficients did reach statistical significance,

the observed lack of strength in the relationship between the two statements across

groups suggested that the relationship between previous training and need for future

inservice cannot be generalized across any of the subgroups, except to say that there is

generally a negative correlation between the two. An important factor to consider is the

assumption that previous training at some point was part of the teachers' preparation

programs, whereas the desire for additional inservice might be more related to personal

or internal teacher characteristics.

There were fewer coefficients within the range of r = .20 to r = .40 between

statement 1 (previous training received) and the three statements involving teacher

philosophy (statements 3 full inclusion, 5 partial inclusion, & 10 experiences), than

between statement 9 (future inservice training needs) and the three philosophy

statements. Correlation coefficients between statement 1 and statement 3 were generally

positive, but very low across groups and relatively close to the entire sample (r = .12, p

< .01). Although some of these coefficients were statistically significant, they were not

large enough in magnitude to be able to practically determine that previous training is

associated with the belief that all children should be educated in regular classrooms.

One noticeable trend in the data was that coefficients were generally higher for

elementary school teachers in grades 1 – 4, the group that responded with the highest

percentage of agreement to both statements, although the relationship was not observed

for preK/Kindergarten teachers who responded similarly.

Relationships between statements 1 (previous training) and 5 (partial inclusion)

were divided into positive and negative coefficients fairly evenly within the years of

teaching experience and grade level groups. A moderate relationship between statement

1 and 5 was found for career and technology teachers (r = -.30, p < .05), indicating a

general view by this group that special classes should be provided despite training in the

area of children with disabilities, as this was a negative coefficient and 90% of career

and technology teachers responded in agreement with statement 5. With the exception

of the career and technology teachers as a unique group, relationships between statement

1 and 5 appeared to be too slight and too varied in direction to generalize that previous

training is related to teacher philosophy on partial inclusion in any significant way.

Coefficients of $r = .35$ ($p < .01$) and $r = .29$ ($p < .01$) for grade levels 2 and 10

respectively were obtained indicating a slight to moderate relationship between training

received and teacher response to the open-ended experience story (statement 10) for

these two grade levels. However, all other coefficients for grade level were substantially

low in magnitude. The majority of the coefficients across all subgroups revealed little or

no relationship between survey statement 1 (previous training received) and the other

three statements involving teacher philosophy.

For correlations between survey statement 9 (additional inservice needs) and

survey statement 3 (full inclusion) in particular, more coefficients of higher magnitudes

were obtained. A correlation coefficient of $r = .21$ ($p < .01$) was obtained for all data

showing a slight relationship between the need for more training and perceptions that all

children should be educated in regular education classrooms. This coefficient did not

vary much with respect to type of institution, but was somewhat higher for teachers with

both public and private school teaching experience ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). Correlation

coefficients for years of experience teaching ranged from $r = .13$ for 11-15 years to

$r = .29$ ($p < .01$) for 16-20 years, but decreased as years of experience went beyond the

16-20 years of experience category. Years of teaching experience appeared to be related

to perceptions toward full inclusion, but did not correspond with the trends in the

frequency of responses data. For the grade level groups, slight relationships were found

between statements 9 and 3 for PreK-Kindergarten ($r = .23$, $p < .01$)and grade 3 ($r = .26$,

p < .01). However, coefficients of higher magnitudes clustered around the secondary

grade levels (with the exception of grade 9), although these teachers were less likely to

respond in agreement with both statements than their elementary education colleagues.

These coefficients ranged from r = .27 (p < .05) for career and technology teachers to

r = .43 (p < .01) for grade 8 teachers, indicating that secondary teachers who perceived

that they needed more training were more likely to respond affirmatively to the survey

statement, "I believe that all children should be educated in regular classrooms."

For the remaining two survey statements, correlation coefficients showed little or

no relationship between the need for more inservice training (statement 9) and (a) the

belief that special classes should be provided for special children (statement 5) or (b) the

experience story as a response to statement 10. Low magnitudes in combination with

obtained coefficients in both positive and negative directions emphasized the lack of

relationship involved.

Participation Among Stakeholders in ARD meetings. Table 8 depicts the

relationships observed between participation (statement 2) and communication among

stakeholders in ARD committee meetings. Overall, the correlation coefficients between

statement 2 ("I am an active participant in ARD committee meetings.") and statement 6

("Regular educators and special educators do *not* communicate often.") were found to be

in an expected negative direction. The correlation coefficient was r = -.21 (p < .01) and

ranged from r = -.17 (p < .01) for public school teachers to r = -.33 (p < .01) for private

school teachers. This higher coefficient for private school teachers was most likely due

to the lower participation in ARD meetings coupled with a higher percentage of

TABLE 8

Correlation Coefficients for Statement 2: "I am an Active Participant in

ARD Committee Meetings."

| | *Perception Statements* | | | | |
Group	6	8	3	5	10
ALL	-.21**	.16**	.10	.10**	.05
Public	-.17**	.16**	-.02	.10**	.05
Private	-.33**	.15	.20	-.19	-.04
Pub & Priv	-.28**	.13	.04	.16	.03
Exp 1-5	-.11*	.05	.10	-.08	.10
Exp 6-10	-.25**	.11	-.10	.15*	.05
Exp 11-15	-.16	.18**	.00	.09	.07
Exp 16-20	-.28**	.19**	-.01	.33**	-.03
Exp 21-25	-.25**	.23**	.07	-.05	.00
Exp 26+	-.26**	.24**	-.14	.17*	.06
PreK-Kin	-.30**	.18*	.13	.12	-.06
Grade 1	-.22*	.27**	.14	.04	.13
Grade 2	-.20*	.21	-.23*	.13	.09
Grade 3	-.18*	.25**	.03	.05	-.09
Grade 4	-.09	.20	-.26**	.05	.01
Grade 5	-.25*	.27*	.08	-.02	-.02
Other	-.19	.09	.32**	.07	.00
Grade 6	-.29**	-.11	.07	.20	.11
Grade 7	-.35**	.02	.03	.05	.40**
Grade 8	-.43**	.14	-.11	.16	.04
Grade 9	-.18	.18	.02	.09	.12
Grade 10	-.05	.10	-.09	.12	.01
Grade 11	-.24*	.05	-.03	.21	.03
Grade 12	-.21	-.01	-.06	.22	.16
CareerTech	-.21	.09	-.20	-.08	.10

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

agreement with statement 6 (frequency of communication). However, the lower

obtained coefficient for public school teachers falls short in being able to generalize that

a relationship exists between ARD committee participation and teacher communication

for type of institution, since public school teachers are the group that is most likely to

actually attend the meetings.

For years of teaching experience on the other hand, ARD committee participation

seemed to be related somewhat to teacher communication especially with respect to

those teachers with more experience ($r = -.28$, $p < .01$) for 6-10 years, ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$)

for 21 – 25 years, and ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) for 26+ years. This reflected the general trend

that teachers with more years of experience were less likely to agree that general

education and special education teachers did *not* communicate often.

With respect to grade level, some interesting trends were observed. A slight

relationship along with a decreasing trend in magnitude of the coefficients was found for

the early elementary grades, with a range of $r = -.30$ ($p < .01$) for PreK-Kindergarten

teachers to $r = -.18$ ($p < .05$) for grade 3. This trend in coefficients then began to

increase at grade 5 ($r = -.25$, $p <.05$) by significant increments through the middle school

grades [($r = -.29$, $p < .01$) for grade 6, ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$) for grade 7, and ($r = -.43$, $p <$

$.01$) for grade 8], and decrease again at the high school level. In addition, the

relationship for career and technology teachers between participation and

communication was in a positive direction, which indicated that those teachers in this

group who responded that they were active participants in ARD committee meetings

were also more likely to respond in agreement with the statement that regular and special

education teachers do *not* communicate often. For the most part, these data indicated that there was a moderate relationship between ARD participation and the belief that teachers did communicate at least at the middle school level, as the coefficients were in a negative direction and a substantial majority of teachers at this level agreed that they were active participants in ARD meetings. Further examination of the data confirmed this finding.

Correlations for teacher participation in ARD meetings and perceptions about parent involvement in ARD meetings (statement 8: "Parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings.") coincided somewhat with the coefficients observed for teacher participation and communication discussed above, although the coefficients tended to be lower in magnitude and positive in direction as expected. The coefficient for the relationship between teacher participation and parent participation was $r = .16$ ($p < .01$) for the whole sample, and did not vary much with respect to type of institution. However, the correlation coefficients indicated a steady increase in magnitude with respect to years of experience teaching, with a range of $r = .18$ ($p < .01$) for 11-15 years to $r = .24$ ($p < .01$) for 26+ years. This trend appeared to correspond with both the frequency of response trends for statements 2 (teacher participation) and 8 (parent participation), and the relationship trends for statements 2 (teacher participation) and 6 (frequency of communication), thereby lending some support to the idea that a communication factor exists within the perception of active involvement in ARD committee meetings on the part of teachers and parents.

For grade level, teacher participation appeared to be related to perceptions about active parent participation in ARD meetings at the elementary grade levels, with a range of r = .18 (p < .05) for preK-Kindergarten teachers to r = .27 (p < .05) for grade 5 teachers. This is not surprising, as more elementary teachers in general perceived that parents were active participators in ARD committee meetings than secondary teachers. The relationship trend at the middle school level was noticeably absent when teacher participation was compared to parent participation rather than communication between special and general education teachers. In addition, these very low magnitudes in the observed coefficients indicated that although teachers perceived that they were active participants in the meetings, the perception was not related to the way they perceived active involvement of parents.

Practically significant correlation coefficients for teacher participation in ARD committee meetings (statement 2) and the three statements involving teacher philosophy were too sporadic in terms of magnitude and direction to suggest that any relationship exists between them. Similarly, very few coefficients above .20 were obtained for teacher communication (statement 6) and the three teacher philosophy statements. Therefore, these data suggested that teacher perception of involvement in ARD meetings, perceived parental participation, and teacher communication appeared to be more related to one another than to any philosophies that teachers might hold about inclusion.

Provision of Related Services. Relationships between statement 4 ("I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class.") and statement 7

("Special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications.") are depicted in Table 9. The correlations among these two statements appeared to be stronger and more frequent than the majority of the relationships found within all of the other statements on the survey.

Obtained correlation coefficients for teacher perceptions about the provision of related services and their perceptions of the "helpfulness" of special education teachers' suggestions for instructional modifications were $r = .32$ ($p < .01$) for the entire sample and $r = .33$ ($p < .01$) for both public school teachers and teachers with private and public school experience. The coefficient for private school teachers was much lower, which is not surprising, as the gap between frequency of response agreement was much wider for the private school group. However, type of institution did appear to make a difference in the relationship between these two statements.

Correlations for the years of teaching experience group were slight to moderate with a range of coefficients from $r = .26$ ($p < .01$) for 6-10 years to $r = .39$ ($p < .01$) for 11-15 years, with the highest magnitudes occurring with more years of experience. All coefficients were statistically significant and were large enough in magnitude to conclude that a relationship between perceived access to related services and beneficial teacher collaboration exists for teachers with all levels of teaching experience. Further examination of the data confirmed that if teachers perceived they were provided the necessary related services for their students with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom, then they were more likely to agree that special education teachers provided helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications.

TABLE 9

Correlation Coefficients for Statement 4: "I Receive the Related Services

That Children Need to be Successful in My Class."

	Perception Statements				
Group	7	8	3	5	10
ALL	.32**	.28**	.21**	.13**	.17**
Public	.33**	.28**	.19**	.12**	.15
Private	.17	.10	.28*	.08	.15
Pub & Priv	.33**	.38**	.26**	.15	.34**
Exp 1-5	.28**	.27**	.13*	.05	.20**
Exp 6-10	.26**	.35**	.33**	-.29**	.16*
Exp 11-15	.39**	.20**	.24**	.20**	.24**
Exp 16-20	.36**	.30**	.22**	.17*	.19**
Exp 21-25	.31**	.24**	.24**	.19**	.01
Exp 26+	.32**	.30**	.09	.14	.19*
PreK-Kin	.22*	.19*	.36**	-.04	.33**
Grade 1	.24**	.30**	.14	.17	.10
Grade 2	.27**	.29**	.13	-.04	.20*
Grade 3	.32**	.31**	.26**	.22*	.19*
Grade 4	.36**	.21*	.19*	-.16	.13
Grade 5	.28*	.41**	.29*	.02	.18
Other	.36**	.52**	.29*	.41**	.19
Grade 6	.18	.04	.17	.26*	.21*
Grade 7	.25*	.03	.12	.20	.23
Grade 8	.29**	.23*	.11	.21	.05
Grade 9	.37**	.34**	.00	.24	.28**
Grade 10	.31**	.35**	.39**	.14	.19
Grade 11	.41**	.12	.08	.01	.25*
Grade 12	.57**	.39*	.09	-.04	.06
CareerTech	.27*	.22	.14	.25	-.05

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

This was also the case for grade level, as all correlations were in a positive direction and were above r = .20 in magnitude. Coefficients ranged from r = .22 (p < .05) for PreK-Kindergarten to r = .36 (p < .01) for grade 4 and special teaching fields at the elementary level. However, the coefficient for grade 6 (r = .18, ns) appeared to be an anomaly with no logical reason, as the frequency data and variability for statement 4 and 7 were similar to elementary grade level groups. Coefficients tended to be higher for secondary levels with a range of r = .31 (p < .01) for grade 10 to r = .57 (p < .01) for grade 12. Despite some differences, a general trend in a slight to moderate relationship between teacher perceptions about their access to related services and their perceptions about meaningful teacher collaboration was observed across the three groups.

Some noteworthy relationships appeared between teacher perceptions of access to related services and two additional statements. Although the coefficient was r = .27 (p < .05) between statement 4 (related services) and statement 7 (curriculum modification suggestions) for career and technology teachers, perceptions of access to related services appeared to be more associated with teacher communication (r = -.39, p < .01) than with teacher collaboration. This appeared to be the case also at grade level 1 (r = -.27, p < .01), grade level 5 (r = -.39, p < .01) and at grade level 7 (r = -.31, p < .05). In addition, relationships between perceived access to services and parent participation in ARD committee meetings (statement 8) were higher for grade level 1 (r = .30, p < .01) and grade level 2 (r = .29, p < .01), and were considerably higher for teachers in grade level 5 (r = .41, p < .01) and the other elementary teachers in specialized fields category

(r = .52, p < .01). Correlations between statement 4 (related services) and statement 8

(parent participation) can be found in Table 9 as well.

Some correlation coefficients worth noting were observed for the relationships

between teacher philosophy of inclusion (statements 3, 5, and 10) and survey statement 4

regarding the provision of related services. With the exception of a few, coefficients

were generally in a positive direction across the three philosophy statements, and were

more closely related to the full inclusion statement (statement 3) rather than the open-

ended request (statement 10), or the statement involving philosophy about partial

inclusion (statement 5). Statistically significant but very slight relationships were

observed for the entire sample (r = .21, p < .01) and for public school teachers (r = .19, p

< .01) between perceptions about related services and full inclusion philosophy. The

relationship appeared to be stronger for private school teachers (r = .28, p < .05) and

teachers with private and public school experience (r = .26, p < .01). However,

perceptions about related services for the public and private experience group appeared

to be more related to their actual reported experiences with children with disabilities (r =

.34, p < .01) rather than perceptions about full inclusion.

Although several statistically significant coefficients were obtained for the years

of experience teaching group across all three teaching philosophy statements,

relationships between access to related services (statement 4) and philosophy of

inclusion appeared to be consistently, yet slightly, related to teacher perception of full

inclusion (statement 3). Coefficients for teachers in the mid-range of years teaching

experience ranged from r = .24 (p < .01) for 21-25 years to r = .33 (p <.01) for 6 – 10

years, but no apparent trend across the other two statements was observed for this group.

Similarly for the grade level group, no apparent trend was observed to indicate

consistent relationships between provision of related services and teacher philosophy

toward inclusion. However, statistically significant coefficients were found for the

PreK/Kindergarten and other specialized fields groups. For PreK/Kindergarten teachers,

perceptions about related services appeared to be associated with perceptions about full

inclusion (r = .36, p < .01) and actual experience in including children with disabilities in

the classroom (r = .33, p < .01). Additionally, the highest relationship across groups was

observed between related services perceptions and partial inclusion philosophy (r = .41,

p < .01) for teachers working in specialized fields at the elementary levels.

Frequency of Teacher Communication and Collaboration. Some considerable

relationships were observed between statement 6 ("Regular educators and special

educators do not communicate often.") and statement 7 (Special educators make helpful

suggestions on curriculum modifications."). The coefficients obtained for these two

statements are depicted in Table 10.

The highest correlation (r = -.35, p < .01) for the entire sample between any of

the perception statements was found between statement 6 (teacher communication) and

statement 7 (suggestions for curriculum modifications). This relationship was also

reflected in the public school group (r = -.34, p < .01) and in the private and public

school experience group (r = -.57, p < .01), but was noticeably absent from the

perceptions of private school teachers (r = -.07, ns). For private school teachers,

TABLE 10

Correlation Coefficients for Statement 6: "Regular Educators and Special Educators Do Not Communicate Often."

		Perception Statements		
Group	7	3	5	10
ALL	-.35**	-.08**	-.05	-.09**
Public	-.34**	-.06*	.10**	.05
Private	-.07	-.02	.26*	-.06
Pub & Priv	-.57**	-.25**	-.26**	-.17
Exp 1-5	-.45**	-.18**	.05	-.08
Exp 6-10	-.43**	-.08	-.11	-.01
Exp 11-15	-.30**	-.03	-.06	-.13*
Exp 16-20	-.27**	-.06	-.09	-.22**
Exp 21-25	-.33**	-.03	-.07	-.10
Exp 26+	-.25**	-.07	-.04	.05
PreK-Kin	-.31**	.02	-.06	-.19*
Grade 1	-.36**	-.09	-.14	-.13
Grade 2	-.20*	-.04	.00	.02
Grade 3	-.40**	-.06	.05	-.07
Grade 4	-.42**	-.08	.04	-.19*
Grade 5	-.33**	-.22	.08	-.01
Other	-.49**	-.12	-.17	-.22
Grade 6	-.28**	.03	-.15	.02
Grade 7	-.23	.22	-.21	-.23
Grade 8	-.42**	.06	-.18	.14
Grade 9	-.43**	-.24*	-.09	-.14
Grade 10	-.27*	-.10	.10	-.04
Grade 11	-.30**	-.16	.06	-.21
Grade 12	-.25	-.09	.12	.29
CareerTech	-.33*	-.19	-.06	-.11

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

collaboration between teachers appeared to be more related to parent involvement in ARD committee meetings (r = .42, p < .01), perhaps indicating that teachers in private schools are more often involved with special educators within contexts that include parents as well.

For the years of experience teaching group, communication (statement 6) and teacher collaboration (statement 7) appeared to be more related for those teachers with the least experience [(r = -.45, p < .01) for 1-5 years and (r = -.43, p < .01) for 6-10 years]. However, the coefficients for the remaining years of experience categories were all above r = .20 as well, and ranged from r = -.25 (p < .01) to r = -.33, p < .01) for 21-25 years of experience.

Some noteworthy relationships were observed between teacher perceptions of suggestions provided by special educators (statement 7) and teacher communication (statement 6) for the majority of the elementary and middle grade levels. The highest coefficients were obtained for teachers in specialized elementary fields (r = -.49, p < .01), followed by grade 8 level teachers (r = -.42, p < .01) and grade 9 level teachers (r = -.43, p < .01). All remaining coefficients were above r = .20, and were statistically significant with the exception of grade level 7 (r = -.23) and grade level 12 (r = -.25). Collaboration between general and special education teachers appeared to be associated with communication for career and technology teachers (r = -.33, p < .05) as well. Overall, teacher perceptions of the helpfulness of suggestions for curriculum modifications provided by special education colleagues appeared to be associated with the frequency of communication between the two educators.

Generally, no significant trend was observed for relationships between teacher collaboration and philosophy of inclusion. Although the coefficients were statistically significant across all three statements for the entire sample, they did not represent practically significant relationships. Some coefficients showed a slight relationship between the provision of helpful suggestions (statement 7) and the statement involving partial inclusion (statement 5), but for the most part, the coefficients were spread fairly evenly across all three philosophy statements and were too sporadic to suggest any clear pattern of existing relationships.

Summary

Relationship trends involving perceptions about *full* and *partial* inclusion tended to be fairly low in magnitude and negative in terms of their direction. This combination reflected the general tendency for teachers to respond to opposite sides of the scale for the two statements, but not to a large degree. For the entire sample and for public school teachers, the correlations between full and partial inclusion philosophies were statistically significant, although both were very slight in magnitude. Very few relationships were identified between teacher philosophy of *full* inclusion and the nature of the experiences with students with disabilities that teachers reported, and there was no apparent trend observed except that they were generally in a positive direction. In addition, no significant relationships were found between the perception that students should be provided with special classes and reported classroom experiences.

The majority of the correlation coefficients for teacher perceptions about previous training and the need for additional training were negative, which indicated an

overall inverse relationship between the two perceptions. In addition, coefficients were generally higher for elementary school teachers with the exception of the PreK/Kindergarten category. Although some of these particular coefficients reached statistical significance, the observed lack of strength in the relationship between the two statements across groups suggested limited generalizability.

Relationships between previous training and inclusion philosophy appeared to be too slight and too varied in direction to generalize that previous training is related to teacher philosophy in any significant way. However, teacher perceptions regarding future training did appear to be somewhat related to the philosophy of *full* inclusion, as more coefficients of higher magnitudes were obtained, especially at the secondary grade levels.

Teacher perceptions of their own participation in ARD committee meetings appeared to be related to frequency of communication between regular educators and special educators to some degree for all three groups. The coefficient for public school teachers was lower than that of the entire sample and the other two categories for type of institution, indicating limited generalizability between ARD participation and teacher communication for that group. For years of teaching experience on the other hand, ARD committee participation seemed to be related somewhat to teacher communication, especially with respect to those teachers with more experience. A slight relationship along with a decreasing trend in magnitude of the coefficients was found for the early elementary grades, with coefficients of higher magnitudes occurring at the middle school grade levels and coefficients of lower magnitudes occurring at the high school grade

levels. However, the correlation for career and technology teachers between participation and communication indicated an altogether different type of relationship than other grade levels, as the coefficient was observed to be positive in direction.

Correlation coefficients for teacher participation in ARD meetings and perceptions about parent participation in ARD meetings tended to be in the expected positive direction, but they were lower in magnitude than the coefficients between teacher participation and communication. Coefficients did not vary much with respect to type of institution, but a steady increase in magnitude as years of experience teaching increased was observed. Coefficients were considerably larger for these two perceptions at the elementary grade levels, but the very low magnitudes in the observed coefficients at the secondary levels indicated the perception was not associated with the way they perceived active involvement of parents.

Correlation coefficients for teacher participation in ARD committee meetings and the three statements involving teacher philosophy were too sporadic in terms of magnitude and direction to suggest that any relationship exists between them. Similarly, very few coefficients were obtained for teacher communication and the three inclusion philosophy statements to suggest a relationship. For teacher perceptions about parent involvement in ARD committee meetings and philosophy of inclusion, more statistically significant coefficients were obtained, but they remained fairly low in magnitude and corresponded with the other two statements in that coefficients were both positive and negative and there was no apparent trend to suggest generalizability. Therefore, teacher perception of involvement in ARD meetings, perceived parental participation, and

teacher communication appeared to be more related to one another than to any philosophies that teachers might hold about inclusion, either perceptually or through actual experience in the classroom.

Relationships between teacher perceptions of the provision of related services and teacher collaboration appeared to be stronger and more frequent than relationships between any of the other perception statements. Obtained correlation coefficients for teacher perceptions about provided related services and their perceptions of the "usefulness" of special education teachers' suggestions for instructional modifications were statistically significant and above $r = .30$ for the entire sample, public school teachers, and teachers with both public and private school experience. For private school teachers, however, the coefficient was much smaller in magnitude. All coefficients were statistically significant for the years of teaching experience group and were large enough in magnitude to conclude that a relationship between perceived provision of related services and beneficial teacher collaboration exists to some degree across years of experience. Similarly, coefficients were sufficiently high in magnitude to suggest a relationship between perceived related services and teacher collaboration. In addition, some noteworthy relationships appeared between teacher perceptions of related services received and teacher communication, especially for teachers in the career and technology field. In addition, relationships between perceived access to services and parent participation in ARD committee meetings were higher for some grade levels, especially at the elementary level.

Most of the observed relationships between teacher philosophy of inclusion and the other perception statements occurred for perceptions regarding the provision of related services. With the exception of a few, coefficients were generally in a positive direction across the three philosophy statements, and were more frequently related to the perception that all children should be educated in regular classrooms, rather than perceptions regarding partial inclusion or reported actual experience with students with disabilities in the classroom.

The highest correlation coefficient for the entire sample between any of the perception statements was found between teacher collaboration and perceived frequency of communication. This relationship was also reflected in the coefficients for the public school group and for the private and public school experience group, but was not observed for private school teachers. For private school teachers, collaboration between teachers appeared to be more related to parent involvement in ARD committee meetings.

For the years of experience teaching group, collaboration appeared to be more related to communication for those teachers with the least experience, but the coefficients for the remaining years of experience categories were all above $r = -.25$ ($p < .01$). Stronger relationships were observed between teacher collaboration and teacher communication for the majority of the elementary and middle grade levels than the relationships found between teacher collaboration and perceptions about access to related services. This also was observed to be true for career and technology teachers. Overall, teacher perceptions of beneficial collaboration with their special education

colleagues appeared to be associated with the frequency of communication between them.

Generally, no practically significant trend was observed for relationships between teacher collaboration and philosophy of inclusion. Correlation coefficients were spread fairly evenly across all three philosophy statements, and were too sporadic in terms of magnitude and direction to suggest any clear pattern of existing relationships.

CHAPTER V

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter V presents the findings from telephone interviews conducted with a subsample of 25 teachers representing elementary, middle, and secondary grade levels. Although the majority of teachers (n = 17) indicated they had solely public school experience, the sample contained eight teachers with both public and private school experience and one elementary teacher who was practicing in a private school at the time of data collection. Years of teaching experience for the telephone interview sample ranged from 1 – 28 years.

In lieu of using perception statements or relationship domains to explore teacher perceptions, context codes described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and themes from previous studies involving teacher perceptions were used to categorize and describe teacher perspectives toward some of the key issues involved in inclusion. The context codes that emerged from the data are depicted in Table 11.

Situation themes are presented first as general descriptions of inclusion programs in Texas and teacher perceptions about past, present, and future involvement in these programs. Situation themes are followed by perspectives about collaboration, shared ideas about the roles of teachers, parents, and specialists in educating children with disabilities, and general viewpoints about full and partial inclusion. The perspective themes are followed by the various strategies and techniques that teachers have employed to help them accomplish goals. Finally, individual viewpoints regarding

TABLE 11

Context Codes and Definitions

Context Code	*Definition*
Situation	
Overall Definition of Inclusion	General information describing the setting,
Program Description	subjects, or topic
Level of Implementation	How teachers define issues related to
	Inclusion
Related Services	How teachers view themselves in
Training Received	relation to inclusion
Additional Training Needs	Particular orientations teachers might
Orientation Toward Inclusion	hold about the topic of Inclusion
Perspectives	
Collaboration	Ways of thinking shared by some or all of
Role of Teacher	the teachers
Role of Parent	Shared rules and general points of view
Role of Specialist	about educating children with disabilities
Full & Partial Inclusion	
Strategies	
Collaboration with Specialists	Methods or techniques that teachers use in
Development of IEP	order to accomplish particular goals
Classroom Adaptations	
Views	
Students	The teachers' understanding of themselves,
Parents	other people, objects, and events that
Specialists	make up their daily experiences or their
Key Issues	"world"

Source: Bogdan & Biklen (1992)

specialists, students, parents, and key issues facing teachers today are considered. The results of the data analyses answer the fourth research question, "What additional insights were gained from the follow-up telephone interviews regarding teacher perceptions of inclusion?".

General Interview Information

The first part of the telephone interview consisted of a general definition of inclusion according to each respondent's viewpoint, followed by descriptions of how inclusion is implemented in his or her school and responses about perceived involvement with inclusion practices. Participants then elaborated on their original responses to the first nine survey statements, and were asked again to respond openly about their experiences with including children with disabilities in their classrooms. Finally, the respondents were asked if they had any additional comments about their experiences with inclusion.

Situation Themes

Transcript commentary that was categorized under the situation themes included those ideas that reflected an overall "world view" of teachers within the context of inclusion. This theme contained information on the setting, level of program implementation, training received, training perceived as needed, and orientation toward inclusion as perceptions of how the teachers defined the elements of including students with special needs into the general education classroom, and how they envisioned themselves in relation to its practice.

Overall Definition. Generally, all teachers in the sample (n = 25) to various

extents defined the concept of inclusion as involving children with special needs in the

general education classroom. Some teachers (n = 4) perceived inclusion as

"mainstreaming children with special needs into regular classrooms", while others (n =

3) used the actual word "including" children with special needs into the regular

classroom. About the same number of teachers (n = 5) perceived that inclusion involved

the education of "all students" or "as many students as possible" in "all classes" with "all

of the other children", with one of these teachers stating, "All children, no matter what

their needs, are to be included in *every facet* of the school." Similarly, one of the

teachers who perceived that inclusion was for as many students as possible broadened

the concept of the regular classroom and stated that, "You want as many students as

possible to be educated in a *normal setting*."

Some teachers (n = 4) expanded their definitions by specifying their perceptions

of the students with "special needs", while others (n = 4) expanded their definitions by

specifying the contexts in which children with disabilities are included. Perceptions

about the actual students included terminology such as, "students that have special needs

that are the appropriate grade level and need extra help in the classroom", "an

educational plan for specific students that have additional learning needs that cannot be

met in a regular classroom", "students from all different backgrounds and all different

abilities working within the same classroom", and "all students with different learning

levels along with the other kids". Perceptions regarding the contexts in which students

with special needs are educated included phrases such as, "including them into the

regular classroom and the regular curriculum", "giving them all the same opportunities to learn", "allowing children that have special needs to be able to have the exact same education, classroom setting, and all the other variables that any other student would have", and "allowing children of all learning abilities in one classroom to learn together".

Very few teachers (n = 3) mentioned any type of legal terminology as they explained their perceptions of inclusion. One career and technology teacher stated, "I would say that it would be including any and all students regardless of their ability into the classroom to the *maximum extent possible*", while two elementary teachers used the term Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as part of their definitions.

One of the teachers perceiving that inclusion involved the LRE additionally stated that, "Inclusion should be…where it is beneficial as possible for a student to be in the Least Restrictive Environment and yet still have his educational needs met." Similarly, another teacher perceived inclusion as a process that provides some benefit for children with special needs, stating that inclusion meant to, "include children with special needs into a regular classroom setting, so that they can be with regular ed kids and benefit from them." Finally, one teacher constructed her perception of the nature of inclusion around a social context, explaining that "special needs children [are included] with the other children so that it mirrors how they'll function in society".

Program Description. All of the teachers interviewed reported some experience with the practice of inclusion, again, to various extents and along various levels of the continuum of services. Most descriptions were based on the level of student participation

in the general education classroom and the extent of support students with disabilities received in that general educational setting. Program descriptions tended to change as grade level increased regarding student participation in the general education curriculum, moving from full inclusion of students spending their entire day in the general education classroom with the teacher and support personnel, to students attending only some courses at the high school level while being pulled from content area classrooms to attend special resource and/or life skills classes. As a combined group, respondents view of the level of implementation of inclusion in Texas appeared to primarily reflect a partial inclusion model, with students receiving instruction in general education settings, as well as being pulled out for special instruction in alternative settings when appropriate for their educational needs.

Level of implementation. Teachers at the PreK/Kindergarten level (n = 3) and early elementary teachers (n = 4) tended to describe programs containing the least amount of pull-out from the general classroom setting, and they were somewhat varied with respect to the structure of their programs. One Kindergarten teacher explained,

> We have a pull-out program…basically they're [students] in my room all
> day long but they do pull-outs based on their needs. They'll pull them out
> instead of having them sit with the whole group and do one-on-one right
> in front of them to make sure they were really hearing the concepts and
> grasping what I was teaching. So they come in our room and show us,
> and just do a little pull-out. I have had a lot of people come into my room
> to train me [because] in Kinder…at least at my school…they don't like
> taking them so young.

Another teacher characterized her school's Kindergarten inclusion program as consisting of two Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) developmental classes in which the children with disabilities receive some instruction, while also being

included for part of the time in Kindergarten classrooms with paraprofessionals to assist

them "in order to make a comfortable, more normal environment for everyone." The

third Kindergarten teacher described a basic pull-out program whereby the students were

included in the "regular classroom" and pulled-out for resource. However, this same

teacher indicated that her particular school's program included only children with mild

disabilities, as clarified by her statement about the characteristics of the student

population at her school.

> Now, we don't have any…really handicapped children, we have more or
> less just children who I would say have learning difficulties.

At the early elementary level (grades 1 and 2), teachers shared comments that

typified partial inclusion programs as well, with the exclusion of one private school first

grade teacher who reported, "Well, in the last two schools I was in, we didn't have

special [education], so we had them all day." For the remainder of the early elementary

teachers in public schools, the use of paraprofessionals and other support staff within the

classroom to assist students with special needs seemed to be fairly predominant.

> Inclusion is implemented in the school that I teach at by having special
> needs children put in the regular [education] class and, most often, they're
> accompanied by an aid that will help you ensure their success within that
> classroom.

> Children are included unless pulled to go to a resource room or speech.
> Otherwise they are in the classroom even if, hearing impaired or autistic,
> they've worked it out so they have a personal aid – someone that is with
> them at all times in all classes.

> It would be implemented by the teacher working with counselors and
> other support staff, pinpointing the needs of those students and designing
> a lesson that would include teaching a message that would increase
> participation of those students. I have counseled with speech therapists,

with resource teachers, with counselors. They would tell me all of the things that I could do to help these children be more successful.

Teachers in the upper elementary grades (n = 7) reported various levels of pull-out for their students, with content area emerging as a factor determining the extent of access to the general education curriculum. One teacher commented, "I'm a music teacher, and I have all of the children in my school in my classroom." Similarly, fourth and fifth grade teachers described programs that were almost completely inclusive for certain content areas.

> They are included during social studies and science. They try to leave the kids with special needs in the classroom as much as possible during the day.

> We're almost 100% inclusion….We do have some direct service, but probably 90% at least. [The students are educated] in the Least Restrictive Environment – usually they're just pulled out for…one subject only and of course it has to be according to their IEP. Like for example math or language. I'm a regular math/science teacher and so I've had all kinds of kiddos!

> We have a resource teacher…let's say they have a qualifying disability, the child would go to that teacher's class, let's say it was for reading, but yet only for their qualifying handicap. They would still be in regular ed math, regular ed social studies, regular ed science, and so forth.

In addition to content mastery and resource assistance, upper elementary general education teachers reported the placement of paraprofessionals and special education teachers in their classrooms to aid in instruction and to provide suggestions for instructional adaptations. They commented:

> I know it's implemented through music, art and P.E., and sometimes through science and social studies…I've had many resource students in my classroom that came from the resource/content mastery classroom. I would have them for everything…if they had problems, I would workwith the content mastery teacher.

> We have content mastery and we have a resource room….This past year we had another teacher come in with them that would make sure that they were with me and that she would just kind of keep encouraging them as we went along.

Two elementary teachers noted that they had had experience with full inclusion programs in the past. They described co-teaching situations in which children of a wide range of ability levels were included within the same classroom for instruction. One fifth grade teacher stated, "the special ed teacher was with me almost the whole day…my focus then was reading but with emphasis on social studies and science." However, these teachers reported that their schools had returned to more traditional models with resource classrooms and content mastery assistance. In addition, one reading specialist reported that, although she had previously had students with more severe disabilities in her classroom, the students were currently going to lunch, rotation, and recess with the other children, but had "their own private classroom" for instruction. In both cases, the paradigm shift was attributed to changes in district administration and accompanying philosophy.

At the middle school level (grades 6 – 8), teachers (n = 5) tended to describe partial inclusion programs as combined systems of resource and content mastery support along with co-teaching methods in content area classrooms. More teachers reported actual instructional assistance within the classroom rather than other types of support from both paraprofessionals and special education teachers. In addition, teachers from these grade levels began to address the use of modifications to the general education

curriculum as part of the inclusion practices at their schools. Teachers representing all

three grade levels commented:

> Oh yes, always [students are accompanied by another teacher]. I think
> that our limit is eight special needs students per classroom. You'll get a
> visit from the assistant principal and she'll explain it…and usually you
> get some one-on-one if it's a severe disability. I teach social studies, and
> usually when they're starting to let the students try to fly on their own,
> they'll try science or social studies first, especially in 6th grade.

> We use a co-teach situation in some instances where there's two certified
> teachers in the room, and in other instances we have students with
> modifications who are included in the regular ed classroom and the
> regular ed teacher's responsible for making sure that those modifications
> are met.

> We have a co-teach system where a teacher comes in…usually an
> aid…and is with the teacher in the regular classroom to help those
> students who need special help.

As illustrated from the above comments, the trend from the upper elementary grades

regarding extent of access to the general education curriculum based on content area

subject appeared to be present at the middle grade levels as well. In addition, more of

these teachers reported having students with severe disabilities included as part of the

general education setting. One sixth grade science and social studies teacher explained,

"I have every special ed kid and every life skills child in my class every year."

Similarly, a middle school language arts teacher described her class as "all inclusive".

She further explained, "I don't teach a specific level, my class is not AP, it's not an

elective course, and I do have a lot of special ed students within my classroom."

Secondary teachers (n = 5) as a group were less likely to be involved with

students with disabilities on a regular basis within their classrooms, depending upon the

subject area taught and the level of severity of the disability. These teachers appeared to

vary the most in terms of their descriptions of program implementation and related

services provided. They tended to describe programs that used "helping", or "inclusion"

teachers within the classrooms, in conjunction with pull-out special instruction

assistance. One teacher explained that her involvement with students receiving special

education services was minimal, due to the fact that she was a writing teacher, and

seldom had students who were not involved in the general administration of the

statewide assessment (TAKS). This same teacher also reported that, although teachers

did accompany students with special needs to the general education classroom in some

instances, inclusion was not implemented to a great extent in her school and that

classrooms for students with special needs were still provided. Another high school

teacher attributed her limited involvement with inclusion to her subject area. She

explained:

> I don't have a whole lot of involvement with it because the subject areas
> that I teach are elective classes, and therefore a lot of those students don't
> sign up to take my classes.

However, this teacher also described pull-out instructional arrangements and inclusion

teachers that accompanied students with special needs to the classroom "in certain

cases". Additionally, one teacher reported that "helper" teachers accompanied students

to "targeted classes when we have a lot of special needs students", while another

described the "helper" teachers as being involved with individual instruction in the core

classes when needed. Both of these teachers specifically mentioned modification sheets

as part of having students with special needs in their classes. Although they taught in the

same content area, one teacher felt that the sheets were helpful while the other perceived

that they were not, as illustrated by the following opposing viewpoints:

> I just made sure I kept him on track and just had something – we had our
> little sheets that would tell us what to shorten and what to give them as far
> as modification goes.

> There are a lot of guidelines and the modification sheets are geared
> towards specific like English, math, science, those kinds of subjects, but
> in my area [computer science], the modifications are very vague and…a
> lot of times I don't know exactly what they expect of me.

The career and technology teachers clearly had more involvement with children with

special needs at this level. One teacher commented that a "learning lab" was available

for students who needed extra instructional assistance, while the other career and

technology teacher reported that students "might attend a special classroom and be

pulled from an academic class." However, both career and technology teachers

confirmed that students with special needs were enrolled in their courses to a greater

extent than any of the other teachers at the secondary level.

Related Services. Due to differing levels of understanding with respect to the

types of services that constituted "related" services, teachers' perceptions of the

provision of related services as part of their inclusion programs ranged from specialists

working in the classrooms with the students and teachers to special education teachers

providing suggestions for instructional modifications. The majority of the teachers'

responding (n = 15) agreed that they received the related services necessary to help their

students be successful, but how these services were utilized by the teachers varied to

some extent. Three teachers determined that related services not only meant specialists

such as physical and occupational therapists, but that it included classroom materials,

information about modifications, and special education teachers and paraprofessionals

working with the students both in and outside of the classroom.

> I've had children who've gotten laptop computers. I feel like [our]
> district does …an excellent job of providing paraprofessionals…A also
> think they do a very good job of listening to teachers and providing
> materials that the teacher feels like would be helpful for the success of the
> child. Special needs teachers and even college professors come and
> observe within my classroom and make modifications.

> Yes, all of those. Resource teacher, counseling, speech therapist
> ….physical therapy especially for some of my little ones.

> [When] we actually had a student that was paraplegic…he had somebody
> that would come in and help him type. In the situation where you have
> more than just a few special ed kids in the regular ed classroom and
> you're provided with a helping teacher, they go around during the
> lectures and help out with that.

Four elementary teachers described programs in which students received services from a

variety of resource personnel either inside or outside of the classroom setting, according

to their needs and the decisions of the ARD committee. Students were either pulled from

the classroom by occupational and physical therapists, speech therapists, and counselors

or the specialists themselves visited the classroom and worked with the students and

teachers during the regular school day. One teacher explained that in certain situations,

such as that of a child with autism or a hearing impairment: or teachers defined the

related services they received as solely those services provided to them from their

special education departments.

> In the case of an autistic child, they pull in people from all over the city to
> help with that. Also with kiddos who are hearing impaired, they pull
> from other parts of the system, other than just your diagnostician and your
> resource person…They pull all of them in. Any time that's in an ARD,
> that's provided.

Contrary to the viewpoints of the majority of secondary teachers, two career and technology teachers also reported the provision of related services such as, speech therapy, counseling, and physical therapy on site at their schools. One teacher's school received related services through a special education cooperative due to the size of the district, but believed that the services were well dispersed throughout the school due to the "conscientious" manner of the special education director. The other career and technology teacher reported working along with the specialists within the classroom, due to the "hands-on" nature of her content area. This career and technology teacher specifically gave an example of how the physical therapist might work with her in learning how to use assistive technology with students in her classroom.

> The physical therapist comes in to modify my equipment….If I have a student who needs to learn how to manipulate something using only her feet, the physical therapist comes into my classroom and shows me how to work with the student in doing an activity with only her feet.

While one elementary teacher defined the related services she received in terms of those services provided solely by the special education personnel on her campus, five teachers reported that the services were not provided in their particular classrooms for various reasons. These teachers went on to describe the related services offered in other school settings.

> I haven't had students that have needed those sort of skills. The teacher that…had a student in a wheelchair with a severe disability, had an occupational person come into the classroom with them, so in addition to the helping teacher, she had that person with just that one student.

> [Related services are] not [provided] within my classroom, because I teach music….Some kids go for horseback riding and whatever it is their need is. I mean, there's always occupational therapists and people on our campus.

They bring all of that stuff in with them….I don't have to be provided with that. I had one little boy with cerebral palsy that talked through a computer. That [computer] was with him all the time.

I really don't see the counseling and speech therapy that much in my classroom, because the counselors and the speech therapists call them out of my class.

Well, I don't receive that within my classroom. They're sent to special people who can help them [if they have a hard time reading a test]. I do receive information about my students…I do have one computer class that I have had an aid who comes in and helps them interpret instructions in my classroom…those different types of implementations, but not those [related] services.

Contrary to the viewpoints expressed by the majority of teachers, four secondary teachers and one teacher in a private school commented that the services were not provided for them. The private school teacher explained that most related services were obtained by parents outside of the school, and therefore she stated that she communicated with parents as much as possible. In addition, one second grade teacher with private school experience concluded:

Well, I guess in a private school, you don't have all of those resources, so you can't help children in a private school as much as you can in a public school with the public services that are offered. I guess that's the down side.."

The secondary teachers, however, were less inclined to elaborate on the reasons for the lack of services provided in their classrooms. One teacher simply stated, "I have not needed anything like that recently." Another teacher commented:

My school is not very good about disseminating information….At times some kids fall through the cracks, and they're a special ed kid and I never knew it.

For the most part, the 15 teachers viewed the provision of related services as being beneficial as supports for them or instructionally helpful for their students, even if the services were not supplied in their own classrooms or if the services were simply instructional modifications and information about students. Teachers perceived that the training involved when related services specialists worked with them in the classroom was professionally beneficial for them and educationally helpful for their other students. Likewise, both career and technology teachers agreed that these services were helpful, and commented that they were especially helpful when applied to the general classroom setting. On a more general level, some teachers expressed that the benefits of related services were manifested in the increased self-esteem and success of their students. One second grade teacher with extensive experience explained the benefits she had observed in her students over the years.

> Well I've seen one child just about come alive. The speech is there where
> it was almost nothing before, the physical movements, the holding the
> pencil, the coloring, the finishing their work. For some kids it's just been
> an overnight success, it's just been incredible.

However, not all teachers perceived such benefits despite agreement that the services were available, as typified by the alternative viewpoint of a first grade teacher with the same number of years experience.

> Truthfully, I think it takes longer than a year for us to see…especially
> occupational therapy and…it's longer than the nine months that we get
> them. These kids that need so much help, I think it takes longer than that.

The music teacher was included in the group of respondents who perceived that receiving related services was beneficial to teachers and students; however, she also

remarked that the absence of needed personnel in the classroom "just absolutely

devastates the whole class." In addition, one middle school teacher lamented:

> I think what's probably lacking in public schools is something general, is
> emotional, psychological. It's just so hard to hit all of the students with
> so many problems that are coming in from different places and moving so
> many times in a year….They just have so many needs that are not being
> met.

This teacher went on to explain that perhaps these types of problems were not the issues

that could be ameliorated by the provision of related services by the school, but were

more related to the changing social structure of the home and family. The capability of

the system to address all of the needs for students both with and without disabilities

seemed to be a pervasive them throughout the interviews.

Training Received. Overall, 15 out of 25 teachers reported having had

some type of training, whether that training occurred at the pre-service

undergraduate or post-graduate levels, whether it occurred as part of their

districts' staff development programs, or whether the training was a combination

of both pre-service and "real world" experience. Most teachers reported no or

very little pre-service training, but stated that the training they had received was

primarily due to inservices given by their own districts or by their local education

service centers, or that information was received by attending conferences related

to helping children be successful in the general education classroom. Some also

described "on the scene" training provided by specialists or other teachers in

their schools, and many viewed "on the job" training as a necessary part of the

learning process in being an educator. In addition, the six teachers who described

training that was a combination of both their pre-service teacher education and

staff development programs further explained that the primary portion of this

training was also due to inservice opportunities. The one teacher who suggested

that her training was primarily due to pre-service undergraduate coursework had

only one year of teaching experience, thereby limiting her experiences with

inservices and staff development seminars.

Pre-service training at the undergraduate level did not appear to be directly

related to number of years teaching experience. However, teachers with more than 20

years experience and teachers who graduated before the 1990's were more likely to

report no or very little training until they started their teaching careers.

> I graduated back in the eighties, and that really wasn't…most of the
> classes back then weren't using the inclusion…it was very different back
> then….[Now] we all get training each year with our inservices for
> different things.

> I graduated in 1975, so [university] was just starting to get a good
> education program….I had some excellent teachers that did a good job
> with just including it whether it was in the curriculum or not….I don't
> know if it really applied to me until I started in actual teaching. At the
> time, it was a new thought. We were in a totally different era. [Now] we
> probably get maybe one half-day staff development. I think my district is
> pretty good about keeping it refreshed in your mind.

> I guess if I count college, I took a three hour course that was on special
> needs children to get my degree….Most of the training that I've received
> was in the format of what we would call a staff development workshop.

Although training did not appear to be related to years of teaching experience,

the type of teacher education program and the requirements for earning teaching

certificates did appear to have an influence over the level of pre-service training. For

example, two teachers who graduated from the same university and who both had less

than five years experience presented conflicting viewpoints on the level of pre-service

training received.

> I was in early childhood…so I would say maybe 12 hours at [university].
> I feel like they helped me out a lot.

> I know I had one course at [university] about special needs students…but
> I took it during the summertime so it was more of a shortened course.

Two more experienced teachers reported receiving pre-service training as part of their

programs.

> I think it was a 12 hour certification, as far as formal when I was in
> college. I had a certification at that time, back in the 70's. It was called
> minimal brain injury certification.

> In order to get my certification, I had to go through some special
> education observations and things like that. I went through an alternative
> certification program.

In addition, one experienced teacher mentioned receiving pre-service training in her

early childhood certification program that was not ongoing as part of staff development,

while another teacher with six years of experience attributed her lack of training to the

fact that she did not teach a core subject area course at the secondary level.

> Two teachers stated that they had received post-graduate training. However,

while one of these teachers reported additional training in speech and language therapy,

children with reading disabilities, and discipline in the classroom received by the district,

the other reported that inservice training was severely lacking in her school. She

commented:

> I would say no [inservice training has been provided], but we have asked
> for it. That is big – for next year, we have some input for inservices and
> that is at the top of our list. The population is changing so much with the
> kiddos we get that it is a must – that we are all trained.

Teachers reported various degrees and levels of training received solely within staff development seminars and inservice workshops. Hours of training per year given by the school districts ranged from six to 20, with additional hours added by attending conferences and personally researching topics of interest. This training did not appear to be related to either years of experience teaching or grade level / subject area. However, extensive hours of training were reported by the two career and technology teachers, as one of these teachers was the career and technology coordinator for her school while the other began teaching in a school that was "run by federal programs". Interestingly, these two teachers stated that all of their training had been received solely through staff development rather than through any pre-service coursework. Even though the extent of training was quite varied across the group, all teachers reported that the training was ongoing throughout the year, and that most of it was both applicable and beneficial.

For the most part, teachers who reported a combination of pre-service and staff development training identified learning about the different disabilities as the predominant aspect of training at the pre-service level, while working with modifications and making sure they were followed emerged as the predominant aspect in their staff development training. Similarly, working with modifications was the predominant aspect of training for those teachers who reported training as part of inservice programs. Additionally, teachers mentioned working with emotionally disturbed children and behavior problems in the classroom, understanding learning styles, and troubleshooting for issues that might come up in the classroom as common topics for staff development training.

Of the 10 teachers who disagreed that they had received training, most attributed the lack of preparation to staff development priorities, the structure of the dual program system, and applicability of the little training that was received.

> I do have an early childhood certificate from [university] and I did work with some handicapped children, but it's not been an ongoing thing. It's been a long time since I graduated [and] that's not always a priority for staff development.

> I think it's [lack of training] because our system is set up to where…we have a special ed teacher and I am a regular ed teacher, so I think the way the classrooms are set up and currently designed, I'm not required to be knowledgeable about special ed….I have had a little bit [of training on learning styles], but the little bit I've had I haven't been able to or I don't feel like I know enough to apply.

> Well, you know I've been teaching 23 years, so when I went through education classes there was very little mention of that….So the training I have received over the years has been, not in depth…I feel like I didn't have as much in depth training that would have made me better able to meet their needs.

Although all of these teachers disagreed that they had received training, most of them mentioned some previous training in the areas of applying modifications and understanding the types of qualifying disabilities, but further commented that the training was not enough. In addition, all of the teachers stated that receiving training in working with children with disabilities was necessary, many further noting that it would be beneficial as well.

Perceived Training Needed. A great majority of teachers (84%) agreed that they would like more training in working with students with special needs. Some teachers viewed the training needed in terms of how to apply it to daily experiences in the classroom, while others perceived that additional training was needed in understanding

the nature and characteristics of their students with disabilities. In addition, some

commented on specific areas of training that they wished to receive and others made

more general statements such as:

> Because we have inclusion, just more input on how we can work with
> them in the regular classroom.

> The kind of training where they teach you specific strategies to use in the
> classroom.

> Helping me to know what are realistic expectations…knowing what to
> expect.

> What's the best approach to these kids…there's a different way to
> approach them and things that work for them that maybe don't work for
> the other kids.

> Reminder things – this works well with this or this works well with
> that….If you can just remember that this is where they're coming from
> and this is what you need to do to make it successful for them.

Despite varying years of teaching experience, both teachers at the Kindergarten

and first grade levels responded that they strongly agreed to the need for more inservice

training. Generally, these teachers were concerned with understanding developmental

levels and learning processes of students with disabilities, and were more likely to

comment on needing training that would address the emotional health of their young

students. For example, when asked what type of additional inservice training was

needed, one teacher responded:

> The population of kids is changing….It's just really, really different, so
> we just need everything. You all need to know about the physical and the
> emotional abuse these kiddos go through. You know we don't know
> what'' happened in the morning [before they get to school].

Some of these early elementary teachers additionally commented on needing training

that would reflect current research findings in the areas of brain development, and in

knowing how to create the optimal learning environment for children with disabilities.

> [Training is needed in order to] stay current on research whether it be
> brain research or…making sure that we stay up to date on findings and
> methods that have been found to be successful and not be afraid to change
> old ways of doing things…

An additional noteworthy comment came from the private school teacher of first grade,

who perceived that she needed to know:

> …how to really pinpoint children with needs so that I have a more
> educated guess to give the parents and to give me a better feel for what I
> need to try before I drop something heavy on the parent like that.

> Some of the inservice needs that were expressed by the early elementary grade

teachers were also reflected in the responses of the remainder of the elementary teachers.

Teachers were still concerned with developmental levels and ways to optimize the

classroom learning experience, as well as in research findings that address how to teach

students so that they can be successful in the general education setting.

> …The more that we are expected to do with special needs students, I do
> think that it would be very helpful to have specific needs met on your
> campus. We need to know the problems of the children that come into
> our classrooms. We need to know what it's named, we need to know
> what they're capable of…we just need to know!

> …The brain research information that is no coming out I find very
> interesting. I think that that would probably be another area that would
> benefit my special ed kids, because that would give me a better
> understanding as to not only how they receive the information but how
> they process it.

Some of these teachers mentioned needed training that addressed children with dyslexia,

and specific strategies for teaching reading to children with learning disabilities. One

fifth grade teacher believed that more training was necessary due to increased

accountability and higher academic standards of the TAKS. In addition, the reading

specialist teacher queried:

> How do we modify so that they're getting what they need to for grade
> level but they're getting it where they understand it?

> Teachers at the middle school and high school levels were also concerned with

understanding how children with disabilities processed the information being taught to

them, and in specific ways to meet the needs of their students in the general education

setting.

> I KNOW what Down Syndrome is and I know what cerebral palsy is, but
> I really, educationally, academically have no idea what they're supposed
> to be capable of… and I'm sure those are just as different from kid to kid
> you know as in any child.

> Just…it would be helpful to hear from experienced teachers that have
> dealt with students with special needs and how they coped within their
> classroom, instead of special ed teachers saying, and giving you a little
> list…effective means that other teachers have used.

As a whole group, however, these teachers were more likely to report needed training in

classroom management and discipline, and in developing and implementing appropriate

modifications for their students. In addition, they were more likely to respond that they

needed "refresher" or "reminder" types of additional training.

> Three of the four teachers who disagreed with wanting more inservice training

had over 20 years of teaching experience, two of them being the career and technology

teachers who reported sufficient training already received. One additionally stated:

> I think it's important to have the training, but, you know a wagon will
> only hold so much freight, and I think that's the way they're doing
> teachers now. The way they're just loading us down too much. We're

blessed here with small classes, but the other districts I worked in we had 20-25 to 30 kids to a class sometimes, and it was hard to be everything to every kid. I just don't think they should expect a classroom teacher to be able to do all that stuff. I'm sorry, we just need some help. So that's why I said that [disagreed], besides being old and grouchy and about to retire.

One elementary teacher with 26 years of experience stated that more inservice wasn't desired because of the amount of time she had been teaching, and that the training received in the meetings she had attended seemed like, "it was the same thing over and over…it doesn't really help you with the child". In addition, a secondary teacher with much fewer years of experience (6 years) than the other three attributed her lack of desire for more inservice training to the nature of the students enrolled in her class ("they need very few modifications") and to her subject area, computer science.

Inclusion Orientation. Although not asked to respond directly to any statement involving each teacher's general orientation toward inclusion, many indirect comments that teachers made throughout the interviews revealed general perspectives on the practice. However, all teachers did respond to the request, "Under what circumstances has working with children with special needs been either a positive or negative experience for you?", many of them expressing both positive and negative points of view.

Both Kindergarten and first grade teachers comprised the group that was most likely to make general comments reflecting their perspectives about the nature of their students, the system, and the essential characteristics of teachers that are involved with children with disabilities. Three teachers mentioned the age of their students as an

important aspect in developing an environment of acceptance in the general education

setting.

> You know we're talking about five year olds but they're very accepting
> of everybody and really want to help children. They seem to know that
> the child is a little different and they want to help it seems like…

> Overall it's been great. It's been a little bit of extra time, and I wish I
> could learn more how to individualize. I think that's every teacher's goal,
> but it's definitely mine – in a room of 23 five year olds – How can I
> manage the room and just work with these students?…From what I've
> seen, they're so eager to help, and as adults we're always [thinking and
> saying] "I don't need help, I don't need help", and they are so okay with
> that.

> [We need to] incorporate children with special needs into the classroom –
> we all have special needs in a way….Younger kids are so accepting –
> they don't see disabilities. They're not prejudiced or judgmental.
> They're willing to help and don't stand off. They want to be right there
> helping the child.

One first grade teacher perceived that accomplishing effective inclusion and ensuring the

success of her students depended upon innate teacher qualities rather than the

characteristics of the students.

> I think one of the most important things is that children that are included
> feel successful, and are recognized for their success…that caring
> personality that is crucial to inclusion. There is no room for sarcasm or
> negativity.

Additionally, another first grade teacher candidly reported that including students with

disabilities into the classroom was an absolute component of her school's overall

philosophy.

> Any students that have been enrolled in my classroom that have needed
> the special attention have gotten it. That's just part of the deal – no
> questions asked!

This view was also shared by a middle school science teacher who stated:

>Of course, everybody comes into my class. I'm a science teacher so,…as far as I'm concerned, everybody's in my science class, and that's the policy of our school, …I mean science is for everybody…

One fifth grade teacher recalled the year that her school was fully inclusive, when she worked along with the special education teacher and her children were not pulled for any instruction. Although her district was not practicing this fully inclusive program at the time of the interview, her comments illustrated a general orientation as a result of having had experience and success with it, primarily in terms of student success.

>She [special education / inclusion teacher] was with me for two and one-half hours a day and it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. Like I said, to have that support and to have her expertise, but to watch the kids in that environment, I think it made a tremendous difference.

The remaining teachers who made indirect comments about their orientations toward inclusion represented a variety of grade levels from elementary to secondary, and were fairly diverse in their number of years teaching experience. However, these comments were not as positive as the early elementary teachers who were more affirming of the school system and of their students. Although these teachers did believe that certain aspects of inclusion were certainly positive, many of them perceived a challenging component to inclusion that imposed hardship on the teacher and/or the students, in either managing behavior or in providing effective instruction. Three elementary teachers shared such comments.

>Certainly you wouldn't ever hurt them, I'm just saying, it's kind of gone to the extreme, there's been situations I'm sure that have warranted the laws, but to me I don't know…it's [managing discipline issues] just very unrestrictive.

>So it was a positive thing, but it was also very draining. Every day I would go home exhausted because of the needs of that only child. But I

truly believe that he needed to be in the regular classroom [because] I also see the results of that at the end of the year and it's also very rewarding.

I think a lot of times students would come in when we were doing activities and making things, and those kinds of things they really understand. Hands-on-things…they enjoyed that and with help they could participate. But doing paper/pencil and reading, and reciting facts and answering questions on paper – they really…They're just overwhelmed [and] I don't think that's fair.

Similarly, three teachers expressed concern regarding the difficulty that including students in the general education curriculum presented at the secondary level. Although generally not positive, the comments contained more of an element of frustration in the inability to reach the students rather than pure negative connotations.

You just feel like that there's somebody out there that could reach them and you want it to be yourself. I wanted to be able to reach whatever it was to get the flame going [in one of her students], but even both of us working together, it just didn't happen.

The abstract concepts presented in some classes are just beyond the scope and you're setting a child up for failure if you put them into something where it's almost impossible for them to visualize.

Well, I feel like they're entitled to have the knowledge of other students in whatever percentage of knowledge that they can receive, and that can benefit them in life in general….Each student is an individual and that's what makes it so hard. I just find that there are some students that it's just impossible [to meet] the expectations that I set for them, and I don't want to lower those expectations because then that student doesn't perform to what I know they're most capable of.

Interestingly, the career and technology teachers, although similar in number of years teaching experience, had opposing viewpoints regarding their general orientations toward the practice of inclusion. One teacher perceived that:

So often those kids, they aren't tracked as such, but so often they get used to being given stuff, and they use that a lot, and I don't have a lot of sympathy with those kids that don't try. [However] I'm not an advocate

of just sticking anybody in special ed or whatever [either], but some kids need that help.

However, the other career and technology teacher appeared to perceive her students within a much broader social context than just the educational system.

Students all have the right to be in my classroom, especially in elective subjects because we are giving them skills for life and skills to live independently. Just like I had one little girl who could shampoo hair, she was in cosmetology, and that's about all she could do was to shampoo hair, but she was successful. She can work at it and become independent, she has a skill that can help her to be successful in life.

Approximately one half of the teachers (48%) across grade and teaching experience levels reported experiences with inclusion that were both positive and negative in nature. Ten teachers (40%) chose to comment only on the positive aspects of inclusion, while three (12%) reported having primarily negative experiences.

Teachers who reported a combination of experiences generally perceived inclusion as positive, but similar to the more general perceptions, their comments reflected some of the frustrations involved in the challenge of successfully reaching students with special needs. These teachers were more likely to view inclusion as a learning process, and they were more likely to see the negative aspects as "frustrating", "sad", "heart-breaking", or "horrible" for them and their students.

[It was] extremely rewarding to be able to work with them, but it's extremely frustrating to teach until you're blue in the face and them not get anything…I'm thinking they are just sitting here wasting their time – I'm doing nothing for them, and I'm here to be their teacher…you want to provide the best services….I think every year I'm learning more and more.

I learn from the way children respond – once they [get answers to] all of their questions [about the child with a disability], they are ready to move

on with the business of the class.…[Experiences with inclusion have been] negative because it can be frustrating, especially when not trained.

One teacher stated that the positive part of working with inclusion was working with each individual child, seeing success in "that light inside their head [that goes on] once they get something". This teacher saw the negative aspect as the fault of the school system, in completing the paperwork and worrying about the requirements of the state to show that "you're doing what you're supposed to be doing".   However, some teachers discussed this dual perspective by starting out with generally positive remarks, and then later commenting on negative experiences they had had with specific students.

When something happens for a kid and the light goes on for them, and they're settled and they're working, and they're getting along with the kids…they're at school and they love school and it's a good place for them, it's fabulous. It's the best, because you get to see it all happen, and there's nothing better. But when it's not happening, it's horrid, horrid, horrid. The child I had was the hardest that I've ever gone through….[It was] very traumatic on everyone. But again, I was fighting family dynamics and not what the child needed….

The positive part is watching children over a span of three years…being very successful and just being an amazing student in the classroom – it's just wonderful to see. I guess the negative is…seeing a student where you've tried all these things and it's just not working. I think that's really the saddest part. For some reason, something is not clicking.

Well, with [student] of course it was positive in that she was trying so hard and I liked her so much, and I was trying so hard…But the negative side was, I didn't reach her. I didn't change things and she failed writing…and it just killed me…

Additionally, some teachers reported positive experiences with inclusion that included benefits for both students with and without disabilities. However, negative aspects were attributed to managing the behaviors manifested by particular disabilities, usually emotional or psychological, while meeting the needs of the other students.

Like I said, I would have no objection of going back to the idea of having those kids just stay all day long – with the support of course, that's the key…[But] the Tourette's child always comes to mind when questioned about things like this because it just seemed to be very convenient when he would show the typical symptoms…As long as he was happy, it was never around. If he got angry, all of a sudden he was saying some very choice four letter words, and it never seemed to happen at home….I have a hard time with children that come up with psychological or emotional disabilities.

I think it's been more positive because I think…when kids with special needs are in your classroom, it helps the other students to be more compassionate, to be teachers of each other, to be more tolerant. The kids through the years can also see the growth in different students. They can celebrate their successes, they can get better perspectives on their own lives. And negative…only in discipline issues, emotionally disturbed situations when you're constantly having to make sure you're meeting their modifications…there's times when you cannot meet the needs of regular ed kids. You just cannot meet their needs because you're constantly trying to make sure that they're [ED students] sitting in.

Of course my first year to teach I had lots of special needs students. I had one emotionally disturbed child…It was just a really, really hard year not being as prepared for what to expect…having all those levels and being able to maintain a good classroom discipline – that's what made it very hard. What can you do effectively without punishing those special ed kids, yet being fair to all. I think that's my only negative. Everything else I've had has been very positive.

The three teachers who indicated primarily negative experiences with inclusion

did so with three different perspectives on why their experiences had been negative.

One elementary teacher described a story in which she had been attacked by a student,

commenting that, "I mean I've never felt like that in my whole life – to where it was just

a frightening experience for me." Another teacher related her negative experiences to

feelings of helplessness as a teacher and low self-esteem of her students.

The experience is negative when you feel helpless as a teacher. A child is very aware of which situations are negative or positive. As far as thinking they're stupid, I had a child who was the most popular student

> but he perceived himself as not being [popular] because he felt he was
> stupid. I've tried everything that I possibly can and I just see them getting
> behind. I don't think it's a reflection on their intelligence, but they
> struggle, they really do and it breaks my heart.

In addition, one secondary teacher attributed her negative experience with inclusion in

terms of delivering the curriculum, providing necessary modifications within the

classroom and meeting the needs of all students.

> The negative part of it is that, in a class with 22, I had six students that
> needed modifications and assistance…it was very difficult for me to
> accommodate, and to keep on track and help every one of those six
> students that had modifications.

> Lastly, 10 teachers of varying grade levels and years teaching experience

discussed the positive aspects of including children with special needs in their

classrooms. For the most part, these experiences were characterized by the rewards of

being challenged as a teacher and the value of observing their students with disabilities

experience growth and success. One first grade teacher commented:

> There's so much reward that's priceless. That's the way I feel like I
> experience working with children with inclusion…it has been
> overwhelmingly positive and rewarding. The successes are very uplifting
> so I would encourage anybody to do that. If you're going to have a child
> that's going to be included in your classroom, you always want to work
> for the good of the child.

Other elementary teachers described situations that were "heart warming" in

experiencing success along with their children with special needs.

> It's mostly positive. You usually really love the kids you invest in the
> most. You just give your heart to them. It's fun to see them get
> motivated and change.

> Those children have a special place in your heart, they always will, and
> you always remember the little successes that you see. It's a thrill when
> you see those little light bulbs turned on and somebody being successful.

In addition, secondary teachers were more specific in their descriptions, and were more likely to experience the positive elements of inclusion in observing success in their students through the connections made with them in the classroom.

> That's been probably a positive for me to realize that, once I can make that connection that student is going to be better off.

> Well, I've had mainly positive results with really being gratified to see these kids like the subject and be successful in the subject. If I can find that I teach in the way that they learn the best, then they go home and they talk to their parents about what we've talked about in class.

Interestingly, both career and technology teachers again had unique perspectives when describing the positive aspects of their experiences with inclusion. They believed that working with students with special needs had for the most part provided personal and professional benefits to themselves as educators.

> It gives me more patience as a teacher. It helps me to see how kids can be successful.

> I think it's made me try harder, and I think it's made me a better teacher, because sometimes it forces teachers to stretch themselves, and to try different techniques and to try different things that they probably wouldn't normally learn if those kids weren't in the classroom.

Similarly, another high school teacher reported such benefits.

> A few years ago I had a girl with cerebral palsy and that was a very positive experience…I learned more personally working with her.

Overall, teachers were positive in their orientations toward the concept of inclusion and the practice of including children with disabilities into the general education classroom. However, understandably so, the practice did not appear to be without its challenges.

Perspective Themes

Comments included under the perspectives theme were statements and descriptions that reflected "shared ways of thinking" between all or some of the teachers about certain aspects of inclusion. This theme included teacher perspectives on collaboration, and the variety of roles that teachers, specialists, and parents serve in educating students with disabilities. In addition, general points of view about the nature of full and partial inclusion practices were included under the perspectives theme.

Collaboration. All of the teachers interviewed shared some information about their experiences in collaborating with special education personnel, and in some cases, with parents. However, teachers were fairly evenly split with respect to whether or not they agreed that there was frequent communication between general and special education teachers. Fourteen teachers (56%) agreed that both special and general education teachers communicated often, while 11 teachers (44%) were not in agreement that communication took place on a frequent basis. Furthermore, the two career and technology teachers also ended up on opposing sides of the issue. Although there seemed to be this difference in extent of communication, five general points of view seemed to emerge as a result of teachers' reflections. These perspectives included collaboration as an ongoing process, as a necessary practice to ensure success of students, as a connection that requires mutual respect and open-mindedness, as a reliable support for problems that arise in the classroom, and as a function of the extent of accessibility to special education teachers.

Teachers who perceived that collaboration was an ongoing process also tended to

agree that special education teachers were both accessible and helpful in their

suggestions.

> I think that the sharing of suggestions and ideas should just be an ongoing
> process because, it's like with regular ed children…they progress in
> spurts and sometimes have reversals and progress. You need to just
> constantly try to help on another. I've always felt very fortunate that I've
> worked with people in that. When you work together, the success level
> rises immensely.

> I think it [communication] should be always. We're all working towards
> the same goal of educating children. They were always very helpful in
> giving me suggestions of how they did it, and sometimes I think sharing
> what we do with children helps us be more successful.

In addition to the importance of accessibility in the ongoing process of collaboration,

some teachers chose to comment on the nature of that ongoing process itself. They

tended to describe collaboration as an endeavor that required mutual respect, open-

mindedness, and honesty between the teachers involved.

> You need to be open to allow those people in to give you the help that
> you need.

> [It is important] that they [special education teachers] don't take it
> personally, that they really try to help you, because it's very difficult, I
> mean it is not easy with all of the expectations that we have.

> As long as you're willing to seek out, as long as you're willing to find out
> what's the best thing you can do for that student, then you'll get the
> response back that you need.

> We've discussed a lot of things and sometimes there's been some changes
> made, but on a regular basis, usually I go with what they suggest. But
> you have to listen…you have to ask and you have to listen…

Also with respect to accessibility and student performance, some teachers viewed the

frequent collaboration with special education teachers as a necessary support for student

success. These teachers perceived that special education teachers were available if problems arose in the classroom that needed to be quickly addressed. They were also more likely to suggest that they shared teaching strategies and information about classroom instruction on a more frequent basis, indicating more of a partnership in responsibility for student success.

> Yes, we communicate fairly often. Those teachers are friends of mine too. I may go in before class or they may come into my classroom before school starts and they say, "what do you think about this?"…and we go over the student. If a problem comes up in the classroom, I can immediately contact our special ed teacher.

> I talk to my special ed people all the time. I have to give her a copy of my lesson plans before she comes into the class so that she knows what I'm going to be doing. At the same time, we talk about some of the individual problems that we see in our class.

> If I ever need anything, I don't mind opening those lines of communication…and they're good to work with me if something comes up.

In addition to the five shared viewpoints, teachers who agreed that general education teachers and special education teachers did not communicate frequently were more likely to report that they felt isolated from the special education teacher, and that teaching practices were seldom merged when collaboration was attempted. They also saw that the special education teachers had specialized training that could provide benefits to them and their students.

> A regular ed teacher should include special needs children in the classroom, but there is a fine line that requires someone who is specially trained. Special ed teachers have the training that we need.

> As far as providing modified work for the kids that has to do with the objectives we're working on, I really feel like that doesn't happen

enough. I think [their suggestions are helpful] because they are the ones
that are supposed to have the expertise, that maybe have thought about it
in different ways than I've thought about it.

The general education elementary teachers who did not agree that collaboration occurred

on a frequent basis tended to consider that working with special education teachers was a

necessary support for the success of their students. However, inaccessibility to the

special education teacher and feelings of isolation tended to interfere with their attempts

to obtain this support.

I think that everybody sort of gets too busy in their own little space and
room and they forget. Sometimes you work together as much as you
can….They have a lot of good ideas and they've really been trained in
that area.

You're just so isolated from each other in our building that you don't get
to sit down and talk to them. If you're lucky enough to eat lunch with
them you can discuss problems your having or students, or how to deal
with something.

I mean I know what the IEP says, but I don't know her teaching practices.
Because she is working in her own classroom with her own students, we
do not correlate or coordinate what I'm doing with my regular ed kids and
how she could either modify that or carry it over into her own classroom.

And you realize, you know if we had talked a little bit about what was
going on when they're pulled out, or what needs to be done here, this
would not be a problem because communication would have solved that.

One fourth grade teacher reported these feelings of isolation, but further expressed

similar thoughts to many other teachers about the necessary open-minded nature of the

collaborative process.

Well, I just think that it's almost like they're two different…this is my
area, this is your area and there's not a lot of communication between the
two. Almost like they're isolated. I think there needs to be more
communication…I like to be able to share how I feel like that child

functions in the regular classroom and maybe encourage that they need to be in there more, or maybe they don't need to be in there.

Secondary teachers also reported being isolated from the special education teachers to a certain extent, and suggested that contact and collaboration with resource and content mastery teachers was on more of a reactive, problem intervention basis rather than attempted as a proactive process. Comments made by these teachers indicated that the lack of communication interfered with effective teaching strategies and student success.

> Every once in a while I get a teacher who will come down to the regular classroom and say, "what did you mean by this assignment, can you explain this to me so that I can help" which is great, but most of the times that doesn't happen. I send them down to the content mastery room and hope they get it, and sometimes they come back with an assignment that is completely different from the one I assigned.

> It's just so often that I get the answer that they have too many students to take care of that they don't coordinate with us as much as I would like to see….Sometimes I feel like if they know something about a student that I have in my class they should contact me about that rather than me stumble through three or four weeks of teaching and discover that this child is struggling and then I have to go and find out that they had information to help…

> Sometimes for me, it would be helpful if they would discuss with me what is expected in my class, and then we can make a decision whether the student would be capable of performing, rather than just putting a student in there and then a lot of times pulling them out after, you know four weeks because they can't do it. That has happened numerous times.

Also at the secondary level, one career and technology education teacher commented that, "the lack of communication occurs with the special education teachers and the regular educators". She further explained that her experience with collaboration took place on a daily basis, because:

> All vocational teachers have a direct influence on special needs children. We are giving them skills for life which they don't often get in academic subjects.

Although both elementary and secondary teachers reported that communication between general education and special education teachers was needed on a more frequent basis, they considered the collaborative process as being potentially helpful for them. Many commented on improvement in collaboration and communication that has begun to occur in their schools. In addition, all of the teachers agreed that ARD meetings were very beneficial because of the collaborative nature of the meetings. Most educators perceived themselves as active participants in these meetings, providing necessary information regarding the progress of students in the general education classroom to both special education teachers and parents. They also agreed that discussions within ARD meetings provided a way to focus on the student and make decisions about what changes needed to be made in the general education classroom in order to meet the needs of students. In other words, collaboration.

General Education Teacher Role. A number of teachers (92%) commented indirectly on their roles in educating students with disabilities in the general education setting. As mentioned previously, all of these teachers perceived that the function of the general education teacher on the ARD committee was a very important role. Most teachers considered this role as a primary means of communicating both the academic and social/emotional progress students were making in the classroom. In addition, teachers perceived that participation on the ARD committee was a way to receive help in managing the behavior of their students.

Some teachers further explained that their role on the ARD committee was important because of the amount of time a particular child spent within the general education setting.

> I feel, as the teacher, that I'm with the child the majority of the time, so regardless if there's 15 people in the room, I'm one of the main ones that gets to observe [the students]…because I'm with them all the time.

Other teachers viewed this role as meaningful in the opportunity to discuss the child with parents and get input regarding home and family life.

> After all, we're serving their kids…We really discuss what we think they're capable of, what our goals are for them – to hope that everybody's on the same page. ARD meetings go on much longer than they really need to – a lot of it is due to the fact of being understanding to the parent, giving them enough time.

> One thing that's critical to me at the ARD is that there is a time for celebration, because these parents really need to hear positive…and it's very important that, while it's very business-like, that you take time to develop a personal relationship with the parent and have positive things to tell them about their child…

Teachers also perceived that the amount of time a student with disabilities spent in the general education classroom contributed to their role as decision-maker and primary provider of the curriculum. Their role on the ARD committee was perceived as more of an advisory role.

> As far as special materials, as far as special teaching materials, I provide all that. Nobody even knows what I need so why would I bother anybody about that…as far as a change in my curriculum where I could get it more on their level, I'm going to provide all that.

> Generally I help advise with elective courses. I have more of an insight on that – what kind of course they should take to get their fine arts credit.

> Vocational education teachers are very much involved in teaching children with special needs. It really doesn't take a lot to help teachers

see that modifications aren't as difficult as they seem…I attend all ARD meetings, and tell the parents and all of those involved what vocational courses would be good for the student – what classes would help that student be successful in gaining skills for independence.

In addition to their role on the ARD committee, some teachers shared insights into their roles as the general education teacher outside of the committee meetings. One Kindergarten teacher stated that she played a "major role within a partnership" with the special education teacher in developing the curriculum for students both with and without special needs. Another early elementary teacher commented that she taught her students to consider the classroom as a community of "helpers" when working with a child with disabilities. She included that it was important to provide instruction in life skills as well as in academics as part of her classroom environment. Along the same line of thinking, one fourth grade teacher shared how the importance of considering the classroom as a "helping environment" enhanced student success.

A lot of times, they're put in the regular classroom for social studies and science, but it's basically, "OK, this is what we have to do for them." It's not, "OK, is it helping them or is it not?", and I think that input is important. It's more work on us, but that's what we're called to do. If they know they are going to be successful, they're going to try to perform for you…They want to be successful and they want to hear your praise.

Other additional teacher roles were described as "facilitator" of learning and "advocate" for ameliorating the problems that might accompany children with special needs when they are included in the general education setting. Many teachers again described the changing structure of the family, and the myriad of emotional issues that students may face before they even get to school in the morning. These teachers, regardless of their

years of teaching experience, generally perceived themselves as positive influences in their students' lives with the ability to make a difference.

Parent Role. Fewer teachers (72%) responded with perspectives about the nature and role of the parent in educating children with disabilities. However, many teachers did make indirect comments about the roles of parents in educating their children through the interview discussion pertaining to parents as active members of ARD meetings. Teachers who perceived that parents were actively involved in ARD committee meetings viewed the parent role as a critical element in the success of students, especially with respect to the significant information about the background of the student that could only be provided by the parent.

> They play a huge role in the history of the child because they are so young. We just don't know anything other than just the few months he's been in school, so that's where they mostly play a role.

> School is just so different now, that it's just so…it's critical for the parents to be there [ARD meetings]…I really feel like the more you work with the parents, the better and more successful that child is going to be.

> We would not fully understand the child without the parent. When the parent indicates things that are happening at home, it helps us to know how to treat the child at school.

> They are the ones that know the most about their students. They are the ones that want to see their students be independent and on their own.

However, teachers who considered parents not to be active in the meetings elaborated on the invaluable assistance that parents could provide if they were in attendance. They also perceived the parent serving a support role in providing useful information about the children involved.

Oh yes…I believe parent participation would be extremely helpful, especially if they would come and say, "hey this is what's going on, this is what I'm seeing. How can you help my child?"

They need to be involved, and they need to understand what's going on with the kid…Quite frankly, if parents don't value an education, the kid doesn't have much of a chance…

In addition, the one teacher in a private school commented:

They're not active in ARD meetings because we don't have them. We individually talk to them. They tell me the situation and what suggestions that the doctors or other diagnosticians have for me. Parents are your best help usually.

Other teachers commented that parents often revealed important insights into

effective strategies used in the home and provided suggestions that might be applied in

the school setting.

Often they can provide insights that affect the child's performance and happiness, and learning. They've been with the children many more years than we as educators have been with their children, and often they have strategies that work and ideas to share that are invaluable for the educational process for their child.

These teachers perceived parents as having a critical place in the support system for their

students as well. One teacher described this system as a "triangle" between the parent,

general educator, and special educator. She further stated:

You reinforce each other and support each other…the children just do so much better if the parents are involved.

Other teachers shared the same view of the reciprocal role of parents and teachers as

supports and reinforcers of successful techniques used in the home and in the school

setting.

Oh yes, yes…It's so hard to get, but yes! Once everybody's on the same page, it's just wonderful because you've got support at home which is an absolute must, and then what you're doing at school.

I think they need to see all the things we're doing for their child and I think that they need to be aware of things that they can also do at home to reinforce helping their kid at home, because they can't get it all at school.

One middle school teacher included some noteworthy comments about parents and the critical role parents served in the education of their child from her experiences while teaching in a private school.

The parents themselves were addressing so many of the problems that the child might be experiencing, that actually the child in the classroom was not experiencing the same sort of difficulties that a regular public education classroom might see.

This comment, along with the other teachers' comments about parent participation in ARD meetings and more generally, in their children's education, indicated that most teachers believed that parent involvement was critical to the success of children with special needs included in their classrooms. One teacher openly stated that parents must be "advocates" for their children , while others suggested that parents must be involved in the decision-making process if the parents are going to feel supported in that role. Although several teachers commented that uninformed decision-making and unreasonable demands by parents could actually hinder student success, more often than not they believed that successful inclusion was highly dependent upon the supportive role of the parent.

Specialist Role. Some teachers (32%) responded indirectly with shared perspectives on the role of the special education teacher and/or special education personnel during the interview questions relating to collaboration and the provision of

related services. Most teachers perceived special education personnel as support people,

in providing suggestions and ideas as to how to modify assignments or implement

instructional adaptations in the classroom. These teachers were more likely to describe

the role in terms of the expertise that special education teachers provided.

> They know what they're doing – they've done it…We need to listen.

> I think the special education teachers basically know the needs more than
> the regular ed teacher because they have them more...they've worked
> with special ed kids for so long, they're always looking for ways to help
> those kids. A lot of times in the mainstream classroom, those kids also
> have some needs too that maybe have not been identified, so I think it's
> very important for them to be part of the curriculum development...before
> the school year even starts.

> You do need professionals that can tell you that this is the right thing to
> do when he shuts down.

If the teacher was involved in a co-teach situation, the special education or "helper"

teacher was perceived as taking on the role of encourager, observer, and provider of

necessary information.

> She would just kind of keep encouraging them as we went along…

> There are certain times during the year where she comes in and , just
> observes. She would definitely let me know if there was a problem.
> There are certain times when I'm at my wit's end and I can't reach a
> child, and I feel like I'm not being successful and the child's not being
> successful in my classroom. Our special ed teachers are really good about
> knowing when to come in and offer information and when not to…

> In addition, other teachers commented on the quality of assistance they received

from special education personnel. Whether the person to whom they were referring was

an actual teacher, paraprofessional, or a special education administrator, it appeared that

teachers viewed this role as most supportive when they were able to speak highly of the skill level and commitment on the part of the special education personnel.

Partial and Full Inclusion. In addition to perspectives on the various roles served by stakeholders in educating children with disabilities within the general education setting, teachers shared their views on partial and full inclusion. All 25 teachers responded to some extent with their perspectives on this issue. Of the entire group, seven elementary teachers (28%) and two secondary teachers (8%) agreed with both aspects of inclusion, or that all children should be educated in the general education classroom and that special classes should also be provided. About the same number of elementary teachers (20%) and a larger number of secondary teachers (32%) did not support full inclusion, but agreed with partial inclusion, and one elementary teacher (4%) agreed that "all children should be educated in regular classrooms". One elementary and one secondary teacher indicated that they had "no opinion" on the full inclusion issue, but the secondary teacher agreed with the provision of special classes for special students. Some unique and some common views were revealed regarding the circumstances under which children should be fully included into the general education classroom, or the circumstances under which special classes should be provided and children should be educated on a partial inclusion basis.

The one elementary teacher who believed that all students should be fully included into the general education classroom offered this comment as her rationale:

> Some are so severe that it can cause others not to learn because of distractions, although they need to be in the regular classroom. Every child deserves a chance, every child needs to be educated and treated equally.

Although other elementary teachers commented on the equality and "fairness" of

educating children with disabilities along with their non-disabled peers, they tended to

qualify their reasons by suggesting circumstances under which this placement would not

be best for the child with the disability. Some were general in their statements and

referred to special placements for children who could not "function" in the general

education setting, or for whom placement in a regular classroom would be a detriment to

their learning.

> Yes, if at all possible these children need to be included within, with
> regular ed children, but not to their detriment. If they're not learning and
> they would learn better in the environment of working one-on-one for
> part of the day…when they can achieve and be successful, then we have
> to allow for common resource classes.

However, some were more specific in referring to specific disabilities that would require

too much time taken by the classroom teacher or would incur other hardships on the

teacher or the children in order to address the needs involved. Interestingly, teachers

differed in some cases on their ideas concerning the type of disability that would warrant

a more restrictive setting, as illustrated by the following opposing viewpoints of two

Kindergarten teachers:

> I think that as long as they can function in a regular classroom and if they
> don't take so much time away from the classroom teacher. It really
> depends on how severely handicapped they are…Most children with
> learning disabilities can function in a regular classroom I think. They do
> not have to be on grade level because a lot of the kids can't be, [but] like
> a child in a wheelchair who you have to lift out and take to the bathroom
> – that type of thing is really hard.

> Well…[a child with] any sort of a physical disability for sure [should be
> educated in the regular classroom] because that doesn't at all have
> anything to do with their learning… As long as it's not a learning

disability where I'm working with 20 students and there's one that's just not grasping it because he's seeing it differently than everybody else is seeing it…I feel that they should be in the classroom. As far as academics, I feel like that would scare me to death to be in a room where they were talking about nothing I knew.

Similarly, two fifth grade teachers referenced specific disabilities in their comments that also reflected two opposing viewpoints:

I think if they are capable of doing on grade level work, but with adjustments, more time and modified tests, that that's reasonable. But when I think they're below grade level, if they're second or third grade level in a fifth grade class for example, they can't quite be serviced in the regular classroom.

These are children who have a clear strength and weakness…children who, as much as even two to three grade levels below I think can still be successful within the regular classroom. These are children who are capable of progress, who would be capable of success within their IEP's and their limitations.

In addition, this latter fifth grade teacher along with another teacher at the same grade level and with the same level of teaching experience suggested that, specifically, those children whose primary instruction needed to target life skills, or those children whose disabilities were more severe were the students for whom special classes should be provided.

Other elementary teachers viewed special classes as a necessary provision if the child with the disability was perceived as "taking away" something from the other children's education, whether it was through taking too much of the teacher's time or whether it was because needs were not being met due to other issues.

I think it's a good idea…no matter how severe the disability or the situation is, but they should be around regular ed kids just for socialization reasons if nothing else…I do feel like that at the same time, they don't need to be in the regular ed classroom all day long unless they

can truly function in there, because it really takes away from the regular ed kids' education. So I do think that their needs can be met in a more specialized setting for part of the day. They [have] just such basic needs that they'll get ignored if they don't have a special class.

When they can do it…when they can keep up with and they don't disturb the other kids…There's a fine line there because other children are involved.

Along the same line of thinking, some teachers perceived that special classes should be provided if the child with the disability or other children were jeopardized in some way, either physically or emotionally, by a general education placement.

I think it's [full inclusion should be considered] when the teacher is able to help them. It's more those that…just can't keep up, or the emotionally disturbed ones that do things offensive to the other kids, who hurt themselves or someone else…

I think that there's some special ed kids that are really successful in the regular classroom and I think they deserve that opportunity as much as anybody to be there. [But] I've sometimes seen them to the point of frustration and disrupting others and taking all of the teacher's time to try to help them. I feel like that's not right either, that's doing a dis-service to them too…I feel like they deserve more attention than what a regular education teacher can give them.

Secondary teachers were somewhat similar to the elementary teachers in their perspectives about the circumstances under which either a general education placement or placement in a special class should be made. Most secondary teachers agreed that general education placements were beneficial for students with disabilities in terms of their socialization. In addition, they held perceptions that students should be placed in the general education classroom if the placement did not interfere with the learning of both the student with the disability and their other students. However, the grade level on which the students functioned appeared to be more of a concern, especially with respect

to reading level. Teachers had opposing viewpoints on the issue of academic level as

well, some willing to accept basic understanding and comprehension of instruction to a

higher degree than others.

> When the student is capable of…on any level of understanding what's
> going [on]…If I feel like they're going to be intact, in focus and on task
> then they should be in there on any level…if they're going to benefit on
> any plane at all. Also I think they should be in my classroom for
> socialization.

> When they're capable of the reading level that the majority of students in
> that classroom are on. Math problems are not a problem for me most of
> the time – with the math it's visual enough…if a student is in a
> wheelchair or whatever, that doesn't matter, if they're on the reading
> level they can be taught in the classroom…But in a classroom of 30-35
> twelve year olds, it's impossible with only one helping teacher and eight
> severely needy students to touch every one of them and help them and
> also keep the rest of the class on level.

At the secondary level, the degree to which teachers agreed to using the general

education setting as a placement for developing social skills in their students with

disabilities appeared to vary with the type of behaviors exhibited by the student with the

disability. These teachers expected their students to have some social skills intact if the

student was to be placed in the general education classroom, and the comments indicated

more of a concern of secondary teachers with student behavior.

> I feel like they need to have a certain amount of skills so they can just be
> with the other kids successfully. If they're really having problems
> socially, or if their reading level is so far below the other kids…they need
> to be in a smaller class with a teacher that can meet their needs on their
> own level.

> In a case where the behavior cannot be modified enough to where the
> student can learn, or where the student cannot prevent others from
> learning, then that student needs to be in a special classroom.

In addition, secondary teachers were more likely to perceive that special classes should be provided if the students would benefit from receiving instruction in certain skill areas, and if the students were perceived as taking too much of the teacher's time away from instruction or from the other students.

> I think a regular classroom is okay for most of the electives because there's not enough students enrolled in those and it's really a specific course…but the math, science, stuff like that I think…not segregating them, but breaking them up is a little bit more beneficial so that you can target the specific needs of the specific children.

> If their needs are…beyond that of a regular classroom teacher.

> It helps in the situation where they're not totally excluded from other kids, yet when they do need that individual attention they can get it without being embarrassed to ask for it in a large class setting.

Overall, secondary teachers commented on general circumstances under which students with disabilities should be placed either in their classrooms or under more restrictive settings. More often than not, they stated that a student should be placed in the general education setting if it would benefit the student and help that student to be successful, and if it would not interfere with the learning of the other students. However, they indicated more of a concern with basic skill levels, student behavior, and severity of the disability than elementary teachers when discussing placement in the general education setting.

Strategies Themes

Comments included under the strategies theme were indirect statements that teachers made about actual techniques and methods they used to help their students be more successful, and to enable the teachers themselves to accomplish the goals they had

set for their students. This theme included strategies applied in the collaboration process, development of the IEP and curriculum, and classroom applications applied as a result of working with specialists and/or receiving training. Also included in these categories were general comments about what strategies the teachers would like to be able to use as well. Although not all teachers responded with statements under each category, they had some noteworthy reflections regarding the strategies they put to use in order manage the changing nature of the classroom and help their students with disabilities be successful in the general education setting.

Collaboration. Eighteen teachers (72%) chose to discuss the strategies they employed to accomplish student success through collaboration with special education teachers and specialist personnel. Although these indirect comments were taken from several of the interview questions and elaboration on those questions, most teachers who made comments relating to collaboration strategies agreed that special education teachers made helpful suggestions in providing curriculum modifications. This implied that the actual strategies offered by the special education teachers were tried in the general education classroom and were found to be successful to a certain degree. Teachers used the collaborative process as a means for acquiring information on their students and specific suggestions for how to help them in the classroom, to monitor progress, and to find out about other teaching techniques that might be applied for more effective instruction. The two teachers who did not agree that special education teachers were helpful in providing ideas discussed strategies that they would like to employ as a result of collaboration with a specialist.

Generally, several teachers believed that collaboration between special and general educators occurred on a frequent basis as a natural part of their responsibility in meeting the needs of their students with disabilities, similar to many of the perspectives in that collaboration was an ongoing process. They commented that interventions and suggestions provided by specialists were most necessary when their students were having difficulty grasping a concept, or when there was a sense that learning was not taking place. They further discussed the use of the collaborative process as a strategy for addressing individual problems with a student on an as needed basis.

> When the student is having difficulty in the classroom…maybe with just some very simple lessons…they're having great difficulty with it. I think that would be a time when you would want to seek some help so that the child will be successful.

> So I think it's when I…I think the only time I really solicit that or even when it's offered is when one or the other of us, either me or the staff, senses that learning's not going on.

Additionally, one teacher suggested that this collaboration was actually part of the teacher's role in meeting the needs of all students.

> Suggestions are necessary when the curriculum isn't working for the student; regular ed teachers need ideas to help them meet the needs of the students. The regular ed teacher plays a major role in developing curriculum to meet the needs of all children, including those with special needs. A major role within a partnership.

Most teachers used collaboration as a means for obtaining specific suggestions for revising modifications or for making specific adaptations to lessons within the classroom. For example, one middle school teacher explained that she obtained such suggestions in a variety of ways.

Well we have a couple of ways…In a co-teach situation, they do it right there as the lesson is presented…or if it's homework or whatever then they'll talk to the student usually individually, or we can discuss it ahead of time.

With the mods only situation, we have kind of like a little booklet that the regular ed teachers are given that talks about all of the modifications, and it kind of gives some suggestions on what to do and what not to do…in modifying a test, some ideas that they recommend and some things that they consider no-no's.

Additionally, some teachers explained that they actively sought out other teachers,

parents, and related services specialists to gain a better understanding their students'

needs, to "pull together experiences", and to obtain information about previous

successful strategies that might have been used.

…I have called meetings, gone to the counselor and set up meetings for children who we knew needed some special help…I've gone to the speech therapist, I've gone to the resource teacher about different children and asked them how they handle certain situations. In my room I was seeing the same thing and I was not having success with a child, so I went to them and asked what worked best for them, and they were able to give me suggestions as to how they did it. So, I would try that and most of the times it would help with a little bit of adjustment.

You've got to bring those students up to where they should be. So you have to use everything that you can, and think that the special ed teachers have been a resource in that. They've given me ideas.

[And then after I talk to] other special ed teachers and faculty members, I go down and talk to the special ed counselor and the diagnostician, to find out if there's anything else that I'm missing. Sometimes I see something that's not in the modification sheet so I go down there and I want to find out, is this something I'm seeing or is this something we want to address in the next ARD meeting. And so I go purposely to talk to them.

The private school teacher commented about using such a strategy as well.

…I do work with people who have special ed training, and so we talk all the time and pull together our experiences.

One career and technology teacher commented that collaboration with the special

education teacher had resulted in effective means for resolving conflicts and other issues

that had been raised in the classroom.

> Sometimes I just run up a brick wall trying to get through to the kid…and
> sometimes it's a personality conflict. It's not anything I did or the kid
> did, but we're just missing the boat somehow. And so those staff
> members that work with them more frequently and every day usually in
> the learning lab or something, have been able to come in and kind of
> moderate the situation and get us over that.

> Some teachers utilized the opportunity for collaboration as a way to monitor

student progress and to keep the special education teachers posted regarding how their

mutual students were doing in the general education classroom. Not only did teachers

mention that the collaborative process was used to monitor the academic progress of the

child, but they also mentioned that it was important to discuss the child's emotional and

social progress.

> …I've had students before that weren't real tactile, they didn't have very
> good hand-eye coordination, so I was able through shop exercises and
> suggestions from the special ed people…I noticed they weren't doing too
> good and I thought they could anyway, but the special ed people they just
> broke me down and told me that those kids just couldn't handle that
> tactically. So it helped me a lot in those aspects…

> [Collaborate] bi-weekly, sometimes formally and sometimes
> informally…keeping posted on social and emotional issues in addition to
> educational issues.

As another way to monitor progress, many considered the discussions that took place

prior to the student's ARD committee meeting to be a useful way of exchanging

information, and used this opportunity to revise the student's educational plan if

necessary.

> Prior to…our special ed teachers really do talk to us about what we're doing with them, that we're meeting their modifications.…they give us suggestions.

Furthermore, some teachers reported the use of a pre-ARD committee meeting checklist as a means for focusing in on student needs and progress.

> Well prior to the ARD meetings, they send us a form and we go through and check what we think needs to be done, what areas need to be modified. Then we get together before we even have the ARD to make sure the child needs the same needs in the classroom before we go into the ARD. That way, we're familiar with what we're doing and what we need to be doing before we meet with the parent.

In co-teach situations, classroom observations of the teaching methods and techniques used by the special education teacher were taken and applied to the general education curriculum as well. Teachers mentioned that observing a successful technique or teaching style and then discussing it with the special education teacher could increase their genre of effective interventions.

> Yeah - they do. They come in and they tell me different manipulatives to use and different ways to teach…you know you're often, you're teaching it this way and it shows me a whole another way that a child will…I can't even describe, maybe it's some math concept that I'm teaching and they'll draw a picture with a little pictograph on it.

> Like I'll notice her teaching it a different way or something, doing something a little bit different with them when she's explaining it and I always talk to her about it because lots of times that method can be helpful to other kids too - that I haven't thought of.

> Training within the classroom, with just people observing what you're doing and giving suggestions and recommendations is very beneficial.

In addition to actual collaboration strategies employed, some teachers commented on what they would do if it were possible to collaborate more with both parents and specialists. Although some disagreed that special education teachers were

helpful in providing curriculum modification suggestions, they explained the

circumstances under which these suggestions might be helpful for them.

> I think if they would help us to modify. They say, "they need three
> choices instead of four", well I think that's kind of cheating the kids
> sometimes. It's not actually pulling from their brain, it's just giving them
> the easy way out. Right, [more effective] modifications [that] would help
> us to actually modify our exams and our assignments.

> Good example, I finished doing a novel with my reading classes. It
> would not have been impossible for her to take that book and modify it
> for her special ed kids…in the same text or in the same material that [I
> was] using.

The latter teacher explained how she used such a strategy during her first years teaching

in the classroom.

> When I first started out, I would frequently go to a specialist teacher and
> say, "OK, I'm teaching this concept on the American Revolution, and I'm
> expecting my regular ed kids to know this. Can my special ed
> kids…what should I knock out…what should I hold them accountable
> to?", …and she would give me suggestions of…just how much
> information I should hold them to. Or, let's say they were visual learners,
> she would give me ideas on how to manipulate the information for them.

Additionally, the private school teacher offered a statement that was similar to other

teachers' views in the prospective use of collaboration with parents as an effective

strategy.

> I would like to explain to them what I'm trying and have them follow up
> at home. Have them tell me if they see any changes at home.

Most teachers who commented on the strategies they employed in collaborating

with special education teachers, parents, and other specialists considered the process to

be beneficial in that they discovered strategies that perhaps would not have been used if

the collaborative process would not have been available. In addition, all of the strategies

that teachers reported using in collaborating with others appeared to be successful for the child or situation presented. For the most part, the strategies reflected the perspectives that teachers had toward the collaborative process in terms of accessibility and ongoing support. Those that perceived the process was not as pervasive in their schools as it might have been had definite ideas with respect to the application of collaborative strategies that could be beneficial.

Development of IEP. The vast majority of teachers considered themselves active members in ARD committee meetings, therefore most of them (64%) commented on ways in which they were involved with developing the Individual Education Plans (IEP) for their students with disabilities. They mentioned both indirect and active participation in developing IEP's for behavior and social skills as well as for academics. For the most part, IEP's were discussed and finalized at the ARD committee meetings. However, several teachers mentioned that they documented interventions applied based on goals and objectives targeted for meeting specific needs, and then revised the objectives and modifications throughout the year as part of the IEP development process.

Teachers who were more likely to be indirectly involved in developing the actual IEP for students tended to participate by discussing general goals for students based on their performance in the classroom. These goals were formulated to ensure continued success especially at the elementary levels, and included all areas of student development.

> I have been with a resource teacher and she would help me. I have not had any on academics really, more on behavior.

Not that much in kindergarten – just basically what I wanted to see in these pullout programs for him to accomplish and then I just kept a copy of that for myself. Being in kindergarten I actually haven't sat down with one and written it out with them.

The main thing is if there's something on the IEP maybe that you aren't having to use but there were other things that maybe you felt like needed to be used, to make sure that you called a special ARD and got those in place as soon as possible, to make sure the child was successful.

Teachers from both elementary and secondary levels mentioned that their schools utilized a staffing meeting prior to the actual ARD meeting to discuss areas of student success and to revise the IEP. Some teachers considered their participation in these meetings as an expected part of their role as the general education teacher. On the other hand, some teachers considered these pre-ARD meetings as being collaborative nature. Nuances of self-efficacy emerged within the statements of teachers who were provided the opportunity to discuss their observations and contribute to the whole educational plan of the child.

But yes, we are expected to provide information prior to an ARD regarding the success of the IEP…not just academic but behaviorally, socially, those types of things…

So, we pretty much fill it out with our own hands, what we think they need. It's not consistent across the board. If they don't need math help but they do need reading help, when we fill out the IEP's then that's what we'll do. I think we pretty much target what we've seen in our class and what we feel like the student needs. It's always up for adaptation if it needs to be later, but at the point that we make the decision it's pretty much clear in my mind what I need to do.

Well, we normally have a staffing before we have an ARD. The ARD would include parents, but before we do that we usually have a staff meeting and all of the people that work with that child then get together and formulate what's going to be discussed at the ARD. One of those things is…statements of what the child has been successful with and then goals for the following year based on that success – and lack of success…

> You know the areas of strength and weakness, because one thing that's critical to me at the ARD is that there is time for celebration, because these parents really need to hear positive, and special needs children always have lots of positive things to tell about.

Other teachers reported a checklist used also prior to the ARD's that addressed student needs, progress, and assessment. These checklists were then used as a tool for discussion and for development of the IEP at the ARD meetings. The checklists also appeared to be useful in that they enabled teachers to reflect on the student's needs and to make recommendations based on student progress.

> The special ed teachers send out a checklist to the teachers that teach each student. We go through the checklist and say all kinds of things…if we think they'll be successful on the TAKS test, or if they need to have an alternative test…We look at their modifications and we can recommend if they need additional modifications or if it's less or the same.

> All of our teachers in the vocational department are sent a survey or a checklist that asks about the skills and objectives that their students have worked toward and mastered or not mastered. They complete that survey and then the IEP is developed from the survey. Sometimes we have to change the IEP after the ARD meeting if the objectives need to be modified, but for the most part we complete the teacher survey before the ARD.

> In many cases, teachers were involved in developing the IEP while the ARD meeting was being conducted. They mentioned reporting observations and interventions tried in the classroom to parents and all others in attendance as their part in contributing to the IEP. Some teachers also reported that they answered questions and provided suggestions for instructional modifications while they were attending ARD meetings. Again, the collaborative nature of developing the IEP during the meeting emerged throughout the commentaries.

Yes, and of course, what the goals are…what goals the special ed teacher feels that they can meet as well as what the parent's expectations are…

It's usually during the meeting…it's just kind of the input into how the students are progressing, what would help them.

At those ARD meetings, we get probably five sheets, and on those sheets are listed all the possible ways things can be adjusted for the students, and we go down individually without each others' help checking things, and then we share that and discuss it together and we come up with the IEP.

Any time a student is referred to special ed in our district, all of the teachers have to fill out the modification sheets if they have that kid in class, and then we're held accountable for those in lesson plans and grade books. [The ARD meeting] is when everything is drawn together. We're in an educational co-op for special ed, and that's when the diagnostician comes. She ties everything together, and then it's developed and we sign it there.

Elementary teachers were more likely to be general in their statements regarding involvement in developing the IEP. The focus of their participation tended to be on the development of goals and objectives that were age and grade appropriate. Alternatively, as grade level increased, the focus of developing the IEP tended to shift from a more general nature to specific modifications and targeted needs. In addition, secondary teachers were more likely to be involved in developing the IEP during the ARD meeting itself, but they reported opportunities to revise modifications throughout the year if necessary.

Use of Classroom Adaptations. A few teachers (24%), primarily elementary, commented on how they applied instructional adaptations or training received from specialists as part of their classroom teaching practices. One teacher fairly new to the teaching field explained that she in fact would like to return to undergraduate school, because although she had learned quite a bit through her coursework, the application of

the learning in the classroom through the actual teaching experience had been invaluable in expanding her perspectives on children with disabilities and including them in the general education setting.

Those teachers who mentioned applying instructional adaptations in the classroom followed the interventions indicated on their students' modification sheets, or they followed the suggestions made by the special education teacher for the most part. They mentioned fairly common instructional strategies such as preferential seating and extended time for their students when answering questions or taking tests. Teachers mentioned adjustment of actual assignment and test requirements, and appropriate use of particular manipulatives as common suggestions given by the special education teachers.

> When you visit, and you talk about what children can do within your regular ed class, they can often give suggestions about how to modify what you're doing for a higher success rate. Maybe it's something minor like use of a manipulative that they use in resource, and then have access to in your own classroom, or a special pencil that might be used.

> Well, say we're going to have a test. The special ed teacher indicates that she thinks this particular question may be a little bit too hard, and to either re-phrase it or re-do it so that the student has more pictures to look at instead of written words or something like that. Sometimes they'll even help me modify the test themselves. We'll sit down together and modify the test.

> I have a form in my filing cabinet that would allow me to know exactly what the needs are for those children – if they need to sit up close to me, if they needed larger print…just if they needed to touch things, if they needed a longer time to answer a question… and always checking back with them too, making sure that they were able to see and understand things…that was part of it.

> Well, [suggestions for curriculum modifications] pretty much should be used all the time. I tend to use them mainly in a testing situation or some

kind of assessment. If the kid has to write something or do some kind of project, then I want to modify it according to their plan.

More contemporary instructional strategies such as using a differential curriculum or targeting students' intelligence types were not mentioned. However, some teachers did report that understanding learning styles had been beneficial for them when deciding the type of strategy that would be best to use for an individual child. One teacher commented on such strategies that she had used.

> I have tried presenting things in either, like finding things that come on tape for my audio learners…or providing them with the opportunity of maybe instead of learning a list of vocabulary, illustrate it for my visual learners.

In addition, one teacher mentioned applying what she learned from specialists working both with her and with her students with disabilities within the classroom.

> I've had OT, occupational therapist…how to work with the students on slant boards and the big thick pencils, and using sand trays, and manipulatives, fine motor all of that.

Some teachers reported that they used strategies that emerged while applying the insights they gained about their students from daily experiences in working with them within the classroom. Although one high school teacher shared, "a lot of times, just getting some of your better students to help – students relate better to students than teachers all the time" as a strategy that she had used, other teachers related strategies that were specific to particular experiences with individual students.

> [I thought] I would like to separate them and see how that works. And it really benefited the children because then they really, truly were included. They weren't at their own separate table, they were with the other children. And the children, like I said, did a lot of peer tutoring. The children modeled the way I talk to all children and they modeled when

they helped the other, the special needs children. There was a real
connection there.
Then when I shared that with the resource teacher, she got three different
desks and let them have kind of some independence, and I do feel like
they really all got better when they had some independence.

For instance, I teach science in junior high, and last year I had a Down
Syndrome girl in my class who would come in…she was about maybe on
a first grade level and she was in the seventh grade. So she would come
in for all experiments and any activities that we did, but I also had her in
the first grade science book and she would do the first grade curriculum
in the life skills when we weren't doing something that would stimulate
and be interesting to her.

Overall, comments about strategies used within the classroom were not frequent

within the interview, most likely due to the semi-structured format of the interview itself.

However, these comments were included as part of the strategies theme because they

provided some insight into the ways in which teachers actually practiced inclusion in the

schools.

Views Themes

Teachers shared a variety of comments that indicated their ways of thinking

about students, parents, and current issues facing them as a result of inclusion. These

statements were included under the "views" theme, and were indirect discussions that

took place when the teachers were given the opportunity to openly comment about their

experiences with inclusion. Although some teachers commented extensively about their

views in each of the three categories as a result of the actual open-ended question, some

voiced their opinions and concerns elaborately throughout many parts of the interview.

Students. Over one half of the teachers (68%) made comments related to how

they perceived their students. Teachers' views regarding the students they taught

included descriptions about the many facets of human behavior, and the complex practice of meeting student needs so that all students experience success in the classroom. Many teachers expressed concern over the low self-esteem that students with disabilities generally experience as a result of the demands placed on them in the general education setting, while others focused on the diverse issues that faced their students as a result of the changing home and family structure. Teachers described their students in terms of the needs that the students brought with them to school, or discussed views in terms of the expectations that were set for their students. Additionally, teachers contained opposing viewpoints in how they perceived students both with and without disabilities when implementing the practice of inclusion. Although varied somewhat, teachers' views of their students were generally expressed as a function of their experience with individual students in particular situations.

Some teachers commented generally on the diverse needs of their students with disabilities, and the extent to which these needs affected the environment of the classroom. Views that related to student needs reflected a wide range of concerns, from feelings of helplessness on the part of the students themselves to perceptions of excessive demands on the teacher in trying to meet these needs. Teachers were concerned with how the needs of their students with disabilities affected the learning process of their other students as well.

> Some are so severe that it can cause others not to learn because of distractions.

> There are some kids that have needs beyond what a regular classroom teacher can do. It either disrupts the other kids, or the teacher just doesn't have the training or time to meet their needs.

I don't know what the answer is…because I've had so many in the past
that really struggle, and because of no intervention other than education, I
just see them getting further and further behind, and they look at you like
"help me"…I have one in particular this year…I mean they feel helpless,
they truly feel helpless.

Oh yes, that was very heart wrenching for me because I had never dealt
with that, nor had I even understood what that was until he was placed in
my classroom. He was placed in my classroom and I was told that this is
what he...but I had never been around it, so it was a learning process
every day.   But yet there was a bond that he and I formed with one
another…

Really, they're very intelligent children, but they do have special needs
and those needs need to be met just like a physical need. This child had
to be placed by my desk because he would just frustrate the other
children. I mean teaching a lesson was a major ordeal because that was a
constant, I would have to stand by his desk, put my hand on his desk,
constant just to keep him calm during that time.

However, some early elementary grade teachers related experiences in which students

with disabilities had brought out the natural "helping" nature of young children within

the classroom environment.

The one's that I've had are just precious and they're so willing to help
and they get so excited to do something different. They're just excited so
that's been fun.

It's amazing to me what little tutors they become, and helpers…and if we
can…this is like changing society, not educating children.…she [a parent]
said that her daughter had had a positive experience to the point where
her daughter wanted to be a first grade teacher when she grew up.

Along with the issues involved in meeting the needs of students, some teachers

commented on a wide range of behavior patterns exhibited by their students with special

needs. Comments ranged from actual situations in the classroom to possible reasons why

students with disabilities might engage in inappropriate behavior, as typified by the

following statements:

> I had a perfect example of that…when my son Charley was in third grade they had a student with special needs whose behavior was that he would crawl under his desk and scream…he might do that for 30 or 40 minutes, whatever his mood was that day, and no one, no one could learn.

> What I feel…the kids don't want to be different from the other kids.

One teacher considered inappropriate behavior to be an end result of educational needs not being met, while another attributed certain types of behavior to the placement of students with disabilities together in special education settings.

> You know the behavior is the problem with so many of these inclusion kids, I know that's sad to say, but usually they're in the program for some reason – either they have a medical problem or they have an attention deficit problem, or they have a family problem and their educational needs are not getting met.

> Sometimes, depending on the student mix…the kids that come out of special ed - they have been together so long they know each other, they know what to key each other with, or how to key into the other person who can get them to act out.

Another very experienced teacher also commented on the effects of traditional models of special education services delivery on her students' behavior.

> And that is something I have learned over the years, is that kids who work very closely with a special ed teacher in her environment, they become very attached and a lot of times unproductive for another teacher…not in every case, but I have noticed that there are some children who have a real hard time transferring to another teacher if they have been working predominately with just their special ed teacher…

Some comments regarding student behavior indicated that teachers perceived this behavior to be related to the self-esteem of students with disabilities. In some cases, they further commented that the self-esteem could be increasingly damaged over time, and relayed concern as to whether or not their students would continue to experience success at any level throughout their school years.

I also had one in a wheelchair and he started making fun of…the one that had a disability was making fun of another one, and that was real frustrating…the whole emotional turmoil – how come I'm different started – and that's kind of heartbreaking and frustrating because then he just starts turning on people.

Right…because a lot of times they come into your classroom and they've been unsuccessful. Their confidence is gone, they feel like they can't learn. I've had them tell me that they're stupid and dumb because either someone has told them that or they have felt that way.

But when it's beyond them it's real frustrating for them, and so they tend to act out. And so you know that's not fair to them. Well, If you have a student that's not successful – then you gotta change something. Because until they feel good about themselves they can't do it.

In addition, two teachers considered student behavior not to be the result of family or educational issues. They saw the behaviors as the actual need or area of disability itself.

…because they're not physical disabilities, we don't see those as a disability. Because they're emotional and mental disabilities, we don't really see that as, oh, they have a special need. We see that as oh, this is just a behavior problem.

I have had a couple, that simply do not have a conscience, and will do the wrong thing just for the fun of it, and to me that is a special need. They have no sense of guilt, they have no sense of, this is wrong because it hurt somebody, this was wrong because it's going to hurt my own future.

Some teachers described views of their students from the standpoint of the characteristics that they perceived children with special needs possessed. Comments were sometimes general references to personality traits observed in many or all students with special needs, but at other times they were gleaned from specific experiences with individuals. In addition, the comments were quite varied with respect to their negative or positive content.

…He's extremely unmotivated, under the table, does not even care or want to learn anything.

I did have a little boy a couple of years ago and he was in the resource room, but he was mainstreamed…and had a lot of home problems and was on quite a bit of medication. He was just a very sweet and loving child, and all of the children loved him. He had a very hard time staying on task, and did most of his academics in the resource room, but the children all liked him a lot.

Well, they realize that we're all working together to help them, and so I think they pick up a lot more of the responsibility that they've got to do what they need to do too.

Sometimes…I want to say this and I don't want to sound cruel or crude…but sometimes special ed kids, they really ride that and milk the system, you know what I'm saying? They use that as a crutch.

Additionally, two teachers from both early elementary and secondary levels

chose to describe their ways of thinking about students with special needs by alluding to

the expectations placed on the students, and by describing how these students met or did

not meet those expectations.

Every child would benefit from one on one, but especially a child when in the first place it doesn't make sense because he's seeing it differently than everybody else is seeing it –
One of mine was on the border and they pulled him out and worked with him on a much lower level, and he did actually grasp concepts, but it was just like what we would have done on the first day of school and he was doing it the last day of school – he finally caught on you know…

I had one that as soon as he was put in special ed all of a sudden hated it and seemed extremely depressed…What to do when that starts happening and it's just because he had to work hard and he didn't want to, so he didn't want to go. …because from what I saw he changed as soon as that happened…kind of like "I'm different" now, and then misbehavior started.

You know when we were talking about the web cycle, you know she was like hello! You know underneath the table and filing through her, rifling through her binder and completely had no idea what was going on. [But] when we did dissection, she was in there, she loved it, she talked about it for weeks afterward. She was on top of what she wanted, she was not in the least at all handicapped in that area.

This latter teacher presented a counter point of view by commenting about another student that she had had in her classroom.

> He is very, very smart and still can't communicate very well, and it's very frustrating for him I'm sure.

Overall, teachers' views about their students were positive in nature and were varied in terms of the context in which they were reported. Although teachers presented their ways of thinking about their students in a variety of manners as well, the spectrum of comments appeared to embody the diverse nature of the students themselves.

Parents. In addition to their perspectives on the role of the parent in educating children with disabilities, 56% also made additional comments that expressed their ways of thinking about parents. Most of the comments that teachers made regarding their views of parents were also positive in nature. However, while some teachers expressed that parent involvement was truly beneficial, others considered the involvement of parents as a barrier in working toward the success of their students with disabilities. In addition, some teachers commented on the circumstances under which parent involvement in the education of their child could be both a benefit and a hindrance.

Most teachers viewed the involvement of parents as beneficial when they detected that parents were accepting of their child's disability and participated in their child's ARD committee meeting with an open-mind to suggestions on the part of educators.

> Multiple times they always said, "whatever you feel is best"…they were real nice about that and real just open to whatever you feel is best, but we would also ask them [in the ARD meeting]…[Parent participation is] very helpful.

…their being there [in the ARD meeting] is the most important thing…we have had parents who've seemed very concerned about their children. I think we have a lot of parents who want their children to be successful.

[In the ARD meeting] they tell about their child at home and that kind of gives you an insight about…sometimes we as educators don't see the whole picture, because we don't know what home life's like.

I love it when they come to the ARDs because you get to connect a face with the students. It's not in a big situation like an open house or a meeting time that's too large, too big to really get to know the person. When you're focusing on that child in that meeting you really get to hear what's going on in the parent's mind about the child. So, I think it's the best way, I like that…

One teacher generally stated that:

For the most part I can say that I've had parents that were just extremely supportive and helpful…and to not include them would be a crime.

This latter teacher also reported the reactions that she received from parents of her students without disabilities once she informed the parents that a child with a disability would be included in her classroom.

I've had children that I worried when I pursued with parents…that they were going to be upset that I had that child in my class, but I found the reverse to be true…Parents were very pleased that their children were getting to have that experience and felt like it would benefit them…when people argue that it's not fair to the other children, I've had pretty severe situations that ironically enough the parents were very accepting of.

In addition, one teacher reported the positive response she received from parents when she kept the lines of communication open.

Oh definitely. I had this one mother that we kept talking to her…and she realized that her little girl…needed to [be taken] back down to the hospital [in order to] get her medication changed…because she was becoming really disruptive in class, so evidently she wasn't on the right medicine. And it made all the difference in the world when she came back.

Teachers reported parent involvement as being less beneficial when the parents did not accept their child's limitations as a result of the disability, or when they were not actively involved in ARD meetings and in discussions about their child.

> I think that's the sadness…is when parents don't accept the limitations of their children, or on the other hand…that's what you mostly see is that they don't accept the limitations…every once in a while…on the other hand, you don't want them to think their child can't do anything either. I think it's really more on the other side, that we see that they're wanting their kids to not have a problem…

> There are a lot of the students that have needs that, I don't know why, but the parents don't [participate], because of the language barrier, or they don't realize they're an important part [of their child's education].

> We had one parent that she can't accept the fact that her child needs special help. I've had parents flat refuse to have their kids served and wouldn't sign off on the papers.

Furthermore, some recounted instances in which the parents were bothered by the disability, or cases in which they believed that their child's disability was a stigma. Under these circumstances, parent involvement was not seen as helpful. For example, one teacher lamented, "You know who we have more problems with are with the parents…I had a parent once that the little boy with autism – it bothered her", while another reported, "you know with the parents it's a stigma".

Some teachers explained both circumstances under which parent involvement and participation on the ARD committee was both a hindrance and helpful. Many comments reflected the same elements that influenced teachers' positive views, namely, the importance of open-mindedness and acceptance on the part of the parents.

> For some…it's like an eye opener for them to realize something is wrong, and that hurts. But then those who are more educated and open to things, that something's going on with their child, it's great.

> Most of the time [parent involvement is helpful], if the parents are truthful with themselves and with me then it's very helpful.

> There's some…that's just a general thing about schools in general I think. You get some parents that are really, really involved and then you get a lot of parents that aren't. Sometimes they don't know or they just don't care. There's a lot of parents that just don't care. I think this is just such a sign of the times that we have so many kids that are on medication and so many students that are being raised by the television that I think that a lot of that is getting in touch with the parents and making sure that the parents realize you care, so that they'll care, so that their student will be successful.

As suggested in the teacher perspectives concerning the role of the parents in educating their child with disabilities, teachers viewed the support of parents as beneficial when they were actively involved in the educational process and when they approached teachers with open-mindedness and mutual respect. For the most part, these views combined with the perspectives indicated that teachers prefer the participation of parents rather than the lack thereof.

Specialists. Although most comments concerning teachers' views about the specialists with which they worked were captured within the perspectives and strategies involving collaboration, four teachers made noteworthy remarks about these specialists in general. Similar to their perspectives on special education and related personnel, these teachers commented on the attributes of specialists that made working with them an invaluable part of their experiences with successful inclusion.

> And I really credit it with our special ed staff, because we're so into what we're doing, that they have to set up ways in regular meetings and still be

> respectful of what we're doing with all of our other kids. So, I really credit that with our special ed staff.
>
> I have a great respect for special ed teachers, because I do know that they…it takes a great deal of patience…to be honest with you, I would rather face 35 regular ed kids than 10 special ed kids…they are very demanding, and I really do have a high regard for special ed teachers because I think they need to have the patience of saints.

In addition, one teacher's positive comments suggested that the leadership of the administration and the support of other teachers and specialists in her school provided the environment necessary for student success. This success was additionally attributed to a sense of value and self-efficacy on the part of the general education teacher, as she felt that all stakeholders genuinely listened with an open mind and valued what she had to say.

> Now I'm in a school with a principal who has set the tone with a staff that could not be more caring…I mean lots of teachers going the extra mile constantly…and there's such an overwhelming desire for student success, it just makes all the difference in the world…I've been fortunate enough to work with principals and assistant principals and specialists within my building who valued my input, and have always been able to express my feelings very openly within an ARD. I do know people who feel like they don't have situations like that, but I have felt very fortunate that my input as a teacher was very valued.

Although these teachers were all three at the elementary level, comments throughout the interview indicated that teachers valued a "caring" and collaborative community in their schools. Additionally, teachers views about specialists were closely associated with their perspectives on the collaborative process. The same mutual respect and openness was shared as an important aspect in working with administrators and specialists. One teacher finely summarized many of these views about specialists by relating her observations of how special people are able to help children who are special.

> And when you have special needs, when we come to reach that cycle,
> which we probably already have, you know where we have special needs
> grown-ups helping special needs children, then there's a level of
> understanding that the rest of us might not have. Empathy rather than
> sympathy…and not even sympathy, that's not what I mean, but you
> know…to really understand.

Key Issues. Comments were made by 52% of the teachers regarding their views on the key issues facing them as a result of including students with special needs in the general education classroom. These key issues and concerns included ways of thinking about both the educational and social systems, and the underlying demands of these systems in meeting student needs. In some cases, teachers discussed differing points of view from the philosophies of school administration and how leadership in the schools also reflected the demands of the system. Teachers also commented on their concerns regarding the nature of students included in the general education classroom in contemporary times.

The comments of some teachers reflected great concern over issues that related to school administrators and/or the system. Just as some teachers were very positive in their views of specialists and administrators if they were supportive and showed genuine interest in teacher input, teachers were generally not positive about support from administration if their observations and recommendations did not appear to be valued. One teacher with extensive experience discussed such issues when explaining why she thought her school had moved from a full inclusive philosophy to more restrictive placements for their students with disabilities.

> I really do not know exactly what they were looking for. I think they felt
> that IEPs were not being met properly, although like I said everything
> was monitored and they still had access to the special ed teacher, she still

had IEPs written for every child. My supposition would be that they felt
we were not following IEPs properly. I don't agree with that but I think
that's why they were unhappy. Unfortunately, it was one of those
circumstances where the classroom teacher and the kids didn't count.

In addition, some teachers felt that the educational and social systems placed excessive

demands on them with the myriad of student needs they were expected to meet every

school day. Comments included thoughts about systems at both the state and local levels.

But we need people that are making the criteria of what's a success and
what is not, we need to have educators in there, not lawmakers that have
never taught in the classroom because it's not like a business - they want
to treat it like a business well it's NOT a business.

Many school districts just tend to push the students through, and they
don't have the reading skills they need. So, a lot of times we get students
who really just can't function. Then they're usually the discipline
problems, they just have so many needs that are not being met. That's
probably not something that…I don't know how the school system's
going to be able to deal with that…

…it bothers me that they expect teachers in some districts to be health
care professionals, you know, put catheters in and stuff like that…it's too
much.

Teachers also commented on the changes in the expectations of the educational system

that have occurred throughout the years.

I think that we're more concerned with philosophical studies and lesson
plans and curriculum guides than we are with the actual educating
specific students in specific ways.   We're more concerned with test
scores and looking good.

…I realize what a real responsibility I have then…Teacher's do have this
responsibility. Even though [the students] have biological parents,
they're not getting parenting. I don't feel like we have time to do it all.

I know there are privacy issues, but when that student is coming into my
classroom I need to know if something like this could happen. I think
teachers need to know information that is relevant to the student before

the student is placed in the classroom, even though there are privacy issues…

While most teachers described ways in which current expectations have become too extensive, one secondary teacher reflected on the way in which the previous structure of the system had been more effective in meeting student needs.

And way before that, many, many years ago, I used to teach pre-algebra and of course in that…we don't offer that any more in this state, I wish we did, the classes were geared towards, you know you have to teach to all levels, you have everybody in the classroom…so you teach to levels that are high and in between…

Another fifth grade teacher lamented about the issues involved in administering the statewide assessment. Interestingly, these comments came from an elementary teacher and reflected some of the pressure that other teachers felt in being able to meet student needs while also rising to the expectations of the system.

And also just uh, I would like to really understand… You know we give them this state test and it's nothing like…it doesn't really accurately test them for what they're expected to do and be successful in school. [Items on the TAKS are] very valid…I think too many teachers that would not teach anything if they didn't have it. It's like a no win situation [because] at the same time – we all need to be accountable for something.

This same teacher further commented about the affects of the assessment on many of her students.

We're phasing these kids out because the state says we cannot have that many kids you know in resource, and you know it's those kids that are just getting zapped on that test - it's just really sad to me, it's really sad to me.

Some teachers relayed personal experience stories as a way to express their thoughts about the key issues involved in inclusion. Many of these teachers mused over

whether or not a solution might be found to some of the problems facing their students

with disabilities.

> I think that that seems to be the biggest struggle for me with the inclusion program. Like last year I had a 15 year-old boy in my class who couldn't care less…reaching him – he's on a whole different plane than these little 5th graders that are coming in…and reaching him and getting him…and if I can reach him I've got the whole class, but reaching him takes so much effort…he's just interested in totally different things than what's going on in the classroom.

> I had this past year two kids that almost failed with just the mods only and it was kind of frustrating for both the kids and for me because I felt like they needed more attention than I could give them. I don't think modifications are the answer either, I really don't. You modify, modify, and modify…but what does that say to the student – "Well, you just can't make it, so we're going to have to just change all of the rules for you". So I don't really think that's the answer…it's got to be somewhere else…

Others suggested that training could possibly be a means through which some of

the problems could be addressed.

> It's very hard for the little ones to be tested and then something done for them because of that discrepancy. And they're so young, and it's so sad…that's why we need training.

> If the counselor is not available and a student is calling out I feel like every teacher should have some training there, certainly some training where we can help a child, talk through something with a child. …some children that are beyond that (talking with teacher).

> Maybe some of this training earlier on would make us appreciate it earlier on, and be better prepared for these kids when we get there.

Similar to the student views, some teachers commented on concerns about the

characteristics of their students and what's expected of them in meeting their needs in

the general education classroom. Issues revolving around children who were labeled

with or who were perceived as having Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD / ADHD) were

of particular concern to some teachers.

> Oh definitely…I feel like all of us…You know I have a special needs
> child and I get frustrated a lot of times because we don't get the training,
> and kids that are ADHD and ADD and some of these things a lot of
> teachers don't see those as disabilities.
> I really believe that we have got to get teachers educated on the
> disabilities that are most prevalent today – that we're dealing with so
> much in the schools.
>
> One of the biggest concerns I have truly is the ADHD child. Especially
> when they're not on medication. I'm not saying that every child needs to
> be on medication, but the children that, you know through parent decision
> or whatever, they just truly struggle and it just breaks my heart. And I've
> often wondered why their seems to be so many children with either the
> ADHD diagnosis or something similar to it. Maybe it's always been
> there and it just wasn't recognized…

In discussions about the key issues involved in the nature and characteristics of their

students, teachers additionally expressed concerns about their students who were

generally at-risk for failure. Although these students were not considered as having a

disability as such, teachers definitely saw these students as having special needs.

> I have, I don't know if there's a classification for this type of student, but
> I have students who are lower socioeconomic – move to three or four
> different schools in a year, have no parental support at home for their
> studies… It's hard to catch them, help them, and then they're gone…I'm
> not saying that these are the majority of my kids, but these are the kids I
> have a hard time with.

Two other teachers described concerns about the emotional stability of children who

were generally at-risk as well. These comments reflected not only concerns about the

system's ability to address their needs. They also indicated growing concerns about the

home environment from which these children were coming, and the impending

consequences that family system flaws could have on society as a whole.

They're not afraid of much, and (not that fear's a wonderful thing, but) for some students there needs to be consequences that will actually take place for those students, and it's really hard to separate them from the rest of the class and get the learning going that you need when they're a constant interruption.…They don't have the support that they need from other sources to get what they need, so it's very hard for them to come to school and function and think about social studies when there may be 10 things tearing them apart inside.

I think that we have a lot of children out there without a conscience. And, I would like to do something…I would like to know what to do about that, and I'm very, very serious about that. It's a very special need and I'm…wondering how we reached this impasse, and I think there's more and more of these children who are doing things wrong without caring. And, to try to reach them in a way that you would reach a normal person isn't working.

Although not all teachers discussed their ways of thinking about key issues in education today, concerns related to both the educational and social systems, the characteristics of students, and the ability of the general education teacher to meet the needs of all students seemed to be reflected across grade levels and across years of experience. Teachers were fairly adamant in their opinions about these key issues, and generally expressed a desire to find a way to ameliorate their concerns.

Summary

Teachers discussed an overall definition of the concept of inclusion. They provided descriptions of inclusion programs in their schools, commented on the training they had received and any additional training perceived to be necessary, and expressed their perceptions about the nature of the practice of inclusion. While some teachers perceived inclusion as part of the earlier concept of "mainstreaming", some perceived that inclusion involved the education of all students in all settings. All teachers reported

some experience with the practice of inclusion, with most teachers describing programs based on a partial inclusion model.

The majority of the teachers were in agreement that they received the related services necessary to help their students be successful. Teachers reported these services in terms of various levels of availability. Related services were more frequently reported as being provided by specialists within the classroom at the elementary level. However, teachers perceived that for the most part, the provision of related services was beneficial to them and their students.

Overall, about two-thirds of the teachers reported having had some type of pre-service or inservice training, with most reporting that they had received training through staff development and related conferences once their teaching careers began. Teachers perceived that applicable training in working with children with disabilities was necessary, and would be beneficial as well. In addition, over three-fourths of the teachers agreed that they would like more training in working with students with special needs.

Many teachers held both positive and negative views of inclusion. Although teachers generally perceived inclusion as positive, their comments reflected a challenging component to inclusion that imposed hardships on the teacher in either managing behavior or in providing effective instruction. The positive orientations toward inclusion were characterized by the rewards of being challenged as a teacher and the value of observing students with disabilities experience growth and success.

All teachers shared perspectives about collaborating with other teachers, parents, and special education personnel. Teachers considered collaboration to be an ongoing, supportive process that required mutual respect and open-mindedness from all involved. In addition, teachers perceived collaboration as a necessary practice to ensure success of students with disabilities.

All teachers that commented on the role of the general education teacher perceived that the function of the teacher on the ARD committee was very important. In addition, teachers who perceived that parents were also actively involved in ARD committee meetings viewed the parent role as a critical element in the success of students, especially given the significant information that the parent could provide about the background of the student and successful strategies used at home that might be applied to the school setting. Teachers also perceived that special education personnel served as part of the necessary support system for student success.

Most teachers believed that all children should be included into the general education classroom to some extent while, at the same time, they supported the continuum of services within the traditional model. Many teachers commented on the equality and "fairness" of educating children along with their non-disabled peers, but they tended to qualify their reasons by suggesting circumstances under which this placement would not be the best alternative for a variety of reasons.

The vast majority of the teachers considered themselves active members in ARD committee meetings, and thereby involved with developing the Individual Education Plans (IEP) for their students with disabilities. Teachers from both elementary and

secondary levels indicated that they were more directly involved in developing the IEP through pre-ARD preparation and staff meetings, and through reporting interventions tried in the classroom in the ARD meeting itself.

For the most part, teachers who mentioned applying instructional adaptations in the classroom as part of their teaching strategies followed the suggestions for curriculum modifications made by the special education teacher. Teachers also reported that they incorporated strategies that had proven to be successful in the past through diverse experiences in working with all students in the classroom.

Teachers' views regarding their students focused on their concerns over the low self-esteem that students with disabilities experienced as a result of the demands placed on them in the general education classroom, and on the diverse emotional issues that their students had as a result of changing home and family structure. Views that related to student needs included feelings of helplessness on the part of the students with disabilities, the effect of student needs on the learning process of other students, and perceptions of excessive demands on the teacher in trying to meet these diverse student needs. Comments that teachers made regarding their views of parents were positive in nature, as most teachers perceived that parents served a critical role as part of the support system for their students. Teachers suggested that parent involvement was especially beneficial when parents participated in their child's ARD committee meeting.

Teachers' views regarding the key issues facing them presently included ways of thinking about both the educational and social systems and the underlying demands of these systems in meeting student needs. Concerns related to the excessive demands of

the system included changing expectations that have become too extensive, and concerns about meeting student needs while simultaneously being held accountable to the requirements of the system.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Presented in this chapter is a summary of teacher perspectives of their own experiences with the practice of inclusion in Texas schools. The conclusions drawn from the study will be discussed, as well as the answers to the four research questions with implications for further research and practice.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research was to (a) identify the perceptions that teachers in Texas public and private schools hold about including children with special needs in the general education classroom, (b) to examine relationships among teacher perceptions, years of teaching experience, grade level, and type of institution, (c) to identify beliefs about the critical issues involved in inclusion, and (d) to present implications for future research and practice. The study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Texas general and career and technology education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?

2. To what extent are these perceptions related to grade level, years of teaching experience, and type (public or private) of institution in which these teachers are employed?

3. To what extent are these perceptions related to each other?

4. What additional insights were gained from the follow-up telephone interviews regarding teacher perceptions of inclusion?

Summary

In order to determine existing teacher perceptions, the relationships involved among the perceptions, and additionally to gain further insight into these perceptions, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used. Thus, the study was divided into two research phases.

Phase I involved a large sample of teachers who were currently teaching in private and public schools throughout the state of Texas. The teachers were independently selected by undergraduate students to participate in a survey regarding their experiences with students with disabilities. The survey contained nine statements and one open-ended request regarding teacher perceptions of (a) inclusion philosophy and practice, (b) previous training received and future inservice training needs, (c) teacher participation and parent participation in ARD committee meetings, (d) frequency of communication with special education teachers, (e) the helpfulness of suggestions for curriculum modifications provided by special educators, and (f) perceptions about experiences in working with children with disabilities. Teacher perceptions were assessed from these survey items using a five-item Likert-type scale. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each survey item. Descriptive statistics were also calculated for demographic variables, including number of years teaching experience, grade level or teaching field, and the type of institution (public, private, or experience in both settings) in which the teacher was employed. The open-ended request was coded according to the negative, neutral, or positive context of the teachers' comments, and descriptive statistics were then calculated for this item as well. In order to describe the

relationships involved among the teacher perceptions, the data were further analyzed by calculating Pearson product-moment correlations between the 10 survey perception statements. Correlations among these variables were then also examined across the three demographic groups (type of institution, years of teaching experience, and grade level). These data provided the information to answer the first three research questions.

In Phase II of the study, a subsample of 25 teachers participated in a follow-up telephone interview to provide additional insight into the perceptions of teachers in Texas schools regarding inclusion. Elementary and secondary educators with teaching experience ranging from 1 – 28 years were represented in the subsample, as well as teachers with both public school and private school teaching experience. Teachers in the telephone interview responded to an expanded version of the initial survey which probed the rationales behind the participants' initial survey responses. Participants were also asked to provide their own definition of inclusion and described the level of implementation of inclusive programs in their schools. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and context codes were developed from the transcript statements according to the emergent category designation method (Erlandson et al., 1993). Four general themes emerged and each theme contained underlying categories. These data provided the information to answer the fourth research question.

"Situation" themes involved teachers' general definition of inclusion and a description of how inclusion was implemented at each teacher's school. Categories under this theme also included (a) teacher perceptions of previous training received, (b) additional training needs, (c) related services and supports, and (d) general orientations

toward inclusion. "Perspective" themes covered general ways of thinking about the components of inclusive practices that might be shared by some or all of the teachers. Underlying categories for this theme were teachers' perspectives on (a) collaboration with special education personnel and parents, (b) the roles of the general education teacher, parent(s), and specialists in educating students with disabilities, and (c) teachers' perspectives regarding their philosophies of full and partial inclusion. The "strategies" theme included particular techniques that teachers used to accomplish their goals of meeting the needs of students. Categories under the strategies theme included (a) purposeful collaboration with specialists, (b) involvement in the development of the IEP, and (c) classroom adaptations that teachers reported they had tried. The "views" theme involved unique viewpoints that reflected understanding about other people and / or events associated with inclusive practices. Categories under this theme included perceptions about students, parents, and specialists, along with key issues that teachers believed were part of their experiences in implementing inclusion.

Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of Texas General and Career and Technology Education Teachers Regarding the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms? Over two-thirds of Texas teachers who participated in this study did not support the philosophy of full inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Although 29% of these teachers indicated that they did believe that all children should be educated in general education settings, results indicated that teachers believed special classes should also be provided.

A large majority (92%) of teachers responded in agreement that special classes for special students should remain in place. The considerable support for the provision of special classes for students with disabilities appears to coincide with studies that have found that teachers prefer the cascade of services and options provided within the more traditional models of service delivery (Coates, 1989; Kauffman et al.,1988; Lombard et al., 1998; Minke et al., 1996; Semmel et al., 1991).

On the other hand, teachers were somewhat positive when they related personal experience stories involving working with students with special needs. Overall, 42% reported positive experiences with children with disabilities, and described situations in which "the system", the students involved, or the teacher was affirmed in some way. A much lower percentage (24%) of the teachers reported negative experiences. Although this finding appears to support the notion that experience in working with students with disabilities can have a positive effect on teacher attitudes toward inclusion (Bennett et al., 1997; Villa et al., 1996), the level of implementation of inclusive practices for any of the teachers reporting positive experiences in this study was not known.

Almost two-thirds of the teachers agreed that they had received some training in working with students with disabilities at some point in their careers. However, a larger majority of them (72%) responded that additional inservice training in working with students with disabilities was desired. This discrepancy in the data did seem to support previous research findings that teachers perceive they do not have enough training to implement inclusion effectively (Lombard et al., 1998; Scott et al., 1998; Semmel et al., 1991), as more inservice was perceived as necessary.

Teachers (80%) generally considered themselves as active participants in ARD committee meetings, indicating compliance with federal mandates (IDEA, 1997) that general education teachers be members of the IEP team and participate in the educational planning for their students with disabilities. On the other hand, fewer teachers (68%) viewed parents as active participants in the ARD meetings, another requirement also set forth by the IDEA (1997). However, 73% of the teachers who agreed that they themselves were active participants in the meetings also agreed that parents were actively involved.

Three-fourths (73%) of the teachers in the entire sample reported that they received the related services necessary for their children with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom. In addition, about two-thirds (66%) of the teachers in the sample agreed that special educators and general educators communicated on a frequent basis. However, the percentage for frequency of communication was somewhat lower than the percentage of teacher agreement with the perception that special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications (79%). This finding indicated that special educators collaborate with general education teachers to some extent, despite infrequent communication. Further examination of the data indicated that 88% of the teachers who perceived that general and special educators communicated on a frequent basis also agreed that suggestions for curriculum modifications were helpful. Thus, results indicated that if teachers perceived that both general and special educators communicated on a frequent basis, they were more likely to agree that suggestions from special educators were helpful.

Research Question 2: To What Extent are These Perceptions Related to Grade Level, Years of Teaching Experience, and Type (Public or Private) of Institution in Which These Teachers are Employed? About two-thirds of public school teachers (62%) responded that they had received training in working with children with disabilities at some point in their careers. Interestingly, slightly more teachers practicing in private institutions (65%) indicated that they had also received training, while only 59% of teachers with public and private school combined experience indicated previous training. Additionally, teachers with 1-5 years experience were more likely to agree that they had received training, perhaps indicating a general trend that both pre-service programs and school districts are making concentrated efforts to comply with the mandates of the IDEA 1997. However, the discrepancy in agreement responses was not particularly large, and lends some support to the assertion by Scruggs and Mastopieri (1996) that teacher education programs are "no more effective at preparing teachers for mainstreaming/inclusion now than they were more than two decades ago" (p. 71). Training did not appear to be related to grade level, as a slight majority of teachers who agreed that they had received training was consistent across groups. However, since a larger percentage (72%) of teachers agreed that more inservice training was warranted, findings appeared to support previous research in that teachers do not believe that they have adequate training in working with students with disabilities and implementing inclusion (Lombard et al., 1998; Scott, et al., 1998; Semmel, et al., 1991).

A large majority (80%) of the teachers agreed that they were active participants in ARD committee meetings, indicating that public institutions appear to be complying

with legal mandates at some level. However, the extent to which general education

teachers participate in ARD meetings and are involved in educational planning was not

inherent in these data. As suspected, the percentage of teachers practicing in private

schools and participating in ARD committee meetings was much lower and did not

constitute a majority (34%). This lower percentage rate of ARD committee participation

for private school teachers was also evident in the group that had both public and private

school teaching experience (71%). However, these percentages did indicate that there is

at least some participation in ARD committee meetings even when the teacher is

practicing in a private institution. Large discrepancies in percentages for number of

years teaching experience (range = 78% - 86%) were also not observed, which indicated

that ARD committee participation is not particularly a function of experience, rather it is

contingent upon the required role of the general education teacher in the educational

planning of students with disabilities.

The majority in agreement with ARD committee participation was fairly

consistent across grade level groups as well, with a slight decrease (range = 68% - 74%)

in participation among secondary general education teachers. The decrease in

percentage of participation at the secondary level could most likely be due to the

structure and organization of secondary schools, or to the probability that higher level

content area courses have a lower number of students with disabilities enrolled in them.

The decrease in percentage of participation at the PreK/Kindergarten level (74%) could

be attributed to the fact that students with learning disabilities are not identified as

having disabilities until they are older and beginning to read, a presumption which may

also account for the increase in participation of grade 1 teachers (87%) despite equal representation in the sample. Another factor influencing the decrease in participation at the PreK-Kindergarten level could have been the larger representation of teachers at this level teaching in private schools, in which ARD committee meetings are generally not held as a regular practice. Also with respect to grade level, teachers practicing in specialized areas such as Title I programs at the elementary level were less likely than their counterparts to be active participants in ARD committee meetings, again indicating curriculum planning for students with disabilities primarily lies with the general education teacher.

Responses to the survey regarding full inclusion (statement 3: "I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms.") indicated that this philosophy was not supported regardless of the type of institution in which general education teachers were employed. With respect to years of teaching experience, the data indicated a tendency of agreement with the philosophy of full inclusion to decline with respect to years of experience teaching, with the lowest percentage (21%) of agreement occurring for the 26+ years teaching experience group. In addition, 92% of the teachers agreed that "special classes for special children should be provided". This could be a function of the level of familiarity that teachers with more experience have had with traditional service delivery models, and appears to coincide with both the Semmel et al. (1991) and Bennett et al. (1997) studies in which the researchers concluded that lack of support for full inclusion could be due to the general resistance to change when roles or altered, or when repeated attempts at implementing inclusion have been unsuccessful.

Trends in the data did indicate that agreement with the full inclusion philosophy appeared to be associated with grade level, with elementary teachers showing more agreement with the philosophy than secondary teachers. These results appear to reflect the findings in the Villa et al. (1996) study, in which elementary education teachers were generally more supportive of the full inclusion philosophy than secondary teachers, and earlier studies that concluded elementary teachers responded more positively to instructional adaptations in the classroom (Ysseldyke et al.,1990, Schumm & Vaughn, 1992; Schumm et al., 1994).

An overall majority (73%) of the teachers reported that they received the related services necessary for their children with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom. Percentages did not vary greatly across the years of teaching experience group, and no apparent trend was observed that indicated response agreement was influenced by years of teaching experience. However, agreement response frequencies were understandably lower for teachers practicing in private schools (55%) in which special education services are not generally provided by the school district. A majority of teachers at the elementary level (78.6%) indicated that they received the related services needed for students with disabilities to be successful in the general education classroom, but percentages had a tendency to decline as grade level increased, especially with respect to career and technology education teachers. Career and technology teachers responded similarly to teachers in private schools, with 55% of the teachers perceiving that related services were available to them. This percentage appears to correspond with findings from the Lombard et al. (1998) study in which 58% of tech

prep teachers believed that no assistance was provided to them by special education personnel.

A large majority (92%) of teachers indicated agreement that special classes should be provided for children with disabilities. These percentages did not vary greatly across all three groups. The lowest percentage in agreement for the provision of special classes occurred for teachers practicing in private schools (87%), and this discrepancy in agreement could be attributed to the fact that teachers in private schools have less experience with children with severe disabilities, a factor that previous research has indicated influences teacher philosophy to a great extent (e.g., Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Soodak et al.,1998).

Discrepancies in percentage of agreement were even smaller (range = 91% - 94%) for years of teaching experience, the lowest percentage occurring for the teachers that had 26+ years experience (91%). Teacher philosophy regarding the provision of special classes also did not appear to be affected by grade level (range = 87% - 97%; M range = 4.28 – 4.63) . The frequency of responses and their corresponding means indicated considerable support for the provision of special classes for students with disabilities across demographic groups, a view that is aligned with support for more traditional service delivery models and continued availability of the cascade of services (Coates, 1989; Kauffman et al. 1988; Lombard et al. 1998; Minke et al. 1996; Semmel et al. 1991).

Frequencies of responses to statement 6 ("Regular educators and special educators do *not* communicate often.") ranged from 19% - 38% in agreement for the

grade level group, with frequencies of responses for the teaching experience group and type of institution group falling within this range. Although the means across groups generally clustered around the mean for the entire sample, frequencies of responses indicated that secondary teachers were more likely than their elementary education counterparts to agree that general and special educators did not communicate often. In addition, one-third of the career and technology teachers (38%) also agreed with the statement. Teachers practicing in private schools indicated that they generally disagreed with this statement (41%), suggesting that there is communication to some extent between general education teachers in private schools and special education personnel, or that private school teachers perceive that the communication exists in public institutions even though they may not be directly involved.

A substantial number (79%) of teachers were in agreement that special education teachers made helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications. This percentage followed the same general trend with respect to grade level in that results indicated a decrease in agreement at the secondary levels. With respect to type of institution, teachers did not vary greatly from the whole sample in how they perceived the suggestions of special educators in making curriculum modifications. Although there was a slight tendency for responses in agreement to increase as years of teaching experience increased, this trend only involved a slight percentage discrepancy and the means remained about the same as the mean for the entire sample. Percentages indicated a steady decline as grade level increased with career and technology teachers again at the lower end of the frequency response percentages (67%). At the elementary grade levels,

percentages for each grade, with the exception of grade 5, were above the percentage of agreement responses for the entire grade level demographic group.

About two-thirds of the teachers (68%) agreed that parents of children with disabilities were involved in ARD committee meetings. Frequency of responses did not differ much among groups, but the same general pattern of decrease in agreement as grade level increased was apparent for this statement as well. Percentages of responses indicating agreement with parent involvement were below one-half of the teachers surveyed at grade 12 (44%) and for career and technology teachers (49%), thus substantiating a typically held principle that parental involvement decreases in general for all children as they get older and move into young adulthood. Teachers of the early elementary grades tended to respond that parents were involved with the highest frequencies of responses in agreement (range = 76% - 78%). For type of institution, public school teachers responded similarly to the entire sample (69%) and over half of the teachers with public and private school experience indicated agreement with the statement. For those teachers practicing in private schools only, the percentage of agreement responses decreased somewhat (55%).

Although over half of the teachers agreed that they had received some training in working with students with disabilities, even a larger percentage overall (72%; M = 3.79) indicated that they would like more inservice training in working with children with disabilities. Compared with the response frequencies for previous training, these percentages were somewhat higher across all groups, with the frequencies of agreement tapering off yet again toward the secondary grade levels and decreasing with years of

experience teaching. A higher frequency of response in agreement that additional

training was desired was observed for teachers in private schools (85%). This could

indicate that private school teachers are experiencing changes in classroom composition

and that their student populations are also becoming more diverse, necessitating training

programs on serving the needs of students in special populations.

For the years of experience teaching group, a large discrepancy in comparison

with the total sample occurred for teachers with over 26 years experience. Again, this

percentage could be reflective of the perceived usefulness of previous training, but it

could also indicate a higher comfort level overall in working with students with

disabilities as a result of experience, a factor that has been identified as affecting teacher

perceptions (Bennett et al., 1997; Downing et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993; Scruggs

& Mastopieri, 1996).

Teachers of the early grade levels had the highest means and agreement response

percentages, possibly indicating that these teachers are experiencing children with a

variety of learning problems in their classrooms and are being held more accountable for

their progress. On the other hand, a smaller number of secondary teachers agreed that

more inservice was warranted, even though fewer of these teachers also reported that

they had received previous training. This disparity in response rates regarding more

inservice training for secondary teachers could be due to factors such as a decrease in

enrollment of students with disabilities in higher level content area subjects, or teacher

expectations about how student learning should be assessed in high school. However,

this lower percentage could be interpreted as teachers at the secondary levels are not

inclined to believe that previous training has helped them meet the needs of their students with disabilities, thus perceiving that any future inservice will not be useful.

Although not a majority, teachers responded somewhat positively to the open-ended statement inviting them to relate a story about having a child with a disability in the general education classroom at any point in time in their teaching career. For the whole sample, 42% reported positive experiences, 34% of the sample reflected neutral experiences, and 24% stated that their experiences with students with disabilities had been negative. For type of institution, the highest percentage of positive experiences was reported for teachers in the public schools (44%). Interestingly, two of the trends from previous statements were reversed when teachers were asked to respond freely. First, 48% of the teachers with 26 or more years of experience responded with a positive reflection of their experiences, suggesting that despite disagreement with previous perception statements, teachers in this group have actually experienced inclusive practices in a positive manner. In addition, the lowest percentage of negative experiences was reported at the twelfth grade level, while some of the highest percentages of negative experiences with inclusion were reported at the PreK/Kindergarten and early elementary grade levels. Of the teachers in the career and technology teaching field, 46% described positive experiences with students with disabilities, a much higher percentage than the early elementary grade level teachers.

Research Question 3: To what extent are these perceptions related to each other? Relationship trends involving perceptions about full inclusion and the provision of special classes reflected the general tendency for teachers to respond to opposite sides of the scale for the two survey statements, but not to a large degree. This low magnitude in the negative relationship could be attributed to the large majority of teachers (92%) responding in agreement to both statements.

Very few relationships were identified between teacher philosophy of full inclusion and the nature of the experiences with students with disabilities that teachers reported, and no significant relationships were found between the perception that students should be provided with special classes and reported classroom experiences. This lack of relationship could be due to the fact that perceptions of experiences with students with disabilities are not affected by the type of inclusive setting in which the students are educated. As Giangreco et al. (1993) suggested, perceptions could be attributed more to external factors or the innate teacher characteristics involved in describing such experiences.

The majority of the correlation coefficients for teacher perceptions about previous training and the need for additional training were negative, which indicated an overall inverse relationship between the two perceptions. However, very few relationships were observed. This lack of relationship was perhaps telling of itself, as it indicated that teachers perceive that more training is necessary regardless of previous training received.

Correlation coefficients for teacher participation in ARD meetings and perceptions about parent participation in ARD meetings tended to be in the expected positive direction, but they were lower in magnitude than the coefficients between teacher participation and frequency of communication. The data indicated that teachers who perceived they were active participants in ARD committee meetings also perceived that there was more frequent communication with special education teachers. The correlation coefficients indicated a steady increase in magnitude with respect to years of experience teaching, and were also greater at the middle school grade levels. However, the low magnitudes in the observed coefficients between teacher participation and parent participation indicated that, although teachers perceived that they were active participants in the meetings, the perception was not strongly related to the way they perceived involvement of parents.

Very few correlation coefficients of even slight magnitude were found between teacher communication and the three statements involving teacher philosophy, or teacher participation in ARD committee meetings and the three philosophy statements to suggest any relationships among the perceptions. Teacher perception of involvement in ARD meetings, perceived parental participation, and teacher communication appeared to be more related to one another than to any philosophies that teachers might hold about inclusion, either perceptually or through actual experiences in the classroom.

Relationships between teacher perceptions of the provision of related services and teacher suggestions for curriculum modifications appeared to be stronger and more frequent than relationships between any of the other perception statements. Obtained

correlation coefficients for teacher perceptions about provided related services and their perceptions of the "helpfulness" of special education teachers' suggestions for instructional modifications were statistically significant and above r = .30 for public school teachers and teachers with private and public school experience. For private school teachers, however, the coefficient was much smaller in magnitude, a finding which is not surprising given the lower percentage of private school teachers that agreed they received related services. All coefficients were statistically significant for the years of teaching experience group and were large enough in magnitude to conclude that a relationship between perceived provision of related services and helpful suggestions on the part of the special education teacher exists to some degree across years of experience.

Correlations between teacher perceptions regarding the provision of related services and teacher philosophy of inclusion yielded a number of statistically significant coefficients. With the exception of a few, coefficients were generally in a positive direction across the three philosophy statements, and were more frequently related to the perception that all children should be educated in regular classrooms, rather than perceptions regarding partial inclusion or actual experiences with students in the classroom.

The highest correlation coefficient for the entire sample among any of the perception statements was obtained for the provision of helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications (statement7) and perceived frequency of communication between special and general educators (statement 6). These two perceptions appeared to

be more related for those teachers with the least number of years teaching experience, however coefficients were all above r = .20 for the years of teaching experience group. All coefficients for the grade level group were above r = .20 as well, with the exception of grade 7. For private school teachers, helpful suggestions provided by special educators appeared to be more related to parent involvement in ARD committee meetings, suggesting a general trend that ARD meetings are perceived as "collaborative" in nature by private school teachers. Overall, teacher perceptions of helpful suggestions given by their special education colleagues appeared to be associated with the frequency of communication between them. No observed trend was identified for relationships between special educator suggestions for curriculum modifications and teacher philosophy of inclusion.

Research Question 4: What Additional Insights Were Gained From the Follow-up Telephone Interviews Regarding Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion? The telephone interviews yielded additional insight into how the teachers perceived themselves in relation to the various and complex factors associated with inclusion. Teachers discussed perceptions related to their overall view of inclusion (situation theme), shared points of view about educating children with disabilities (perspective theme), reported methods used to meet the needs of their students (strategies theme), and shared ways of thinking about the people and events that made up their "world" (views theme).

Situation Theme. All teachers in the sample described their "world view" of including students with special needs in the general education classroom. Teachers discussed an overall definition of the concept of inclusion, provided descriptions of how

they experienced inclusion programs in their schools, commented on the training they had received and any additional training perceived to be necessary, and finally they expressed both shared and unique orientations about the nature of the practice of inclusion and how they saw themselves within that practice.

Overall Definition. Teachers defined the concept of inclusion as involving children with special needs in the general education classroom to various extents. While some teachers perceived inclusion as part of the earlier concept of "mainstreaming", some perceived that inclusion involved the education of all students in all facets of the educational system, including the curriculum. Some teachers described the types of student characteristics that constituted special needs, such as students with "additional learning needs" or "students who needs extra help in the classroom". Others explained the concept in terms of the setting or context in which inclusion was applied, such as "giving them all the same opportunities to learn" and allowing children of "all learning abilities in one classroom to learn together". Although very few teachers described inclusion using the terminology set forth in the IDEA, some indicated that inclusion should enable children to be educated in the environment in which they would receive the most benefit. Additionally, one teacher suggested that the practice of inclusion should reflect how the students will eventually function in society.

Program Description. All teachers reported some experience with the practice of inclusion as well. Although most teachers described programs based on a partial inclusion model, some teachers mentioned that they had had experience with the full inclusion models. Programs tended to be more fully inclusive in the early grade levels,

especially for students with mild disabilities. However, teachers at these elementary

levels also reported the availability of PPCD classes, resource and content mastery

classes for younger children. Upper elementary teachers reported various levels of pull-

out for their students, with content area emerging as a factor in determining the extent of

access to the general education curriculum. Students were more often included in the

general science and social studies curricula, rather than in the basic skills areas of

language arts and math. Furthermore, the use of paraprofessionals and other support

staff within the classroom to assist students with special needs seemed to be fairly

predominant at the elementary levels.

  Level of Implementation. Students at the secondary levels were more likely to be

pulled from content area classrooms to attend special resource and/or life skills classes.

However, several teachers reported combined systems of resource and content mastery

support along with co-teaching methods in content area classrooms for their students

with less severe disabilities. More teachers also reported actual instructional assistance

from paraprofessionals and special "inclusion" or "helper" teachers within the

classroom, rather than other types of support. Although secondary teachers were less

likely to be involved with students with disabilities on a regular basis within their

classrooms, inclusion of students within the general education setting appeared to be

related to the content of the subject being taught and the level of severity of students'

disabilities. At this level as well, teachers more often mentioned student modification

sheets as part of having students with special needs in their classes. However,

modifications sheets were not considered to be of equal benefit across the teachers that

reported using them. The secondary career and technology teachers were particularly involved with students with special needs, as they confirmed working with students with disabilities who were enrolled in their courses to a greater extent than any of the other teachers at the secondary level. These teachers also mentioned a wide range of supports used in the classroom for their students with special needs, as well as frequent use of modifications and classroom adaptations.

Related Services. The majority of the teachers were in agreement that they received the related services necessary to help their students be successful, but the use of these services varied to some extent. A large portion of the variation was most likely due to the diverse levels of understanding that the teachers had regarding the types of services that were considered "related". Some teachers perceived that related services not only meant specialists such as physical and occupational therapists, but that they included classroom materials and information about modifications. In addition, some teachers considered special education teachers and paraprofessionals working with the students both in and outside of the classroom to be related services. Related services were more frequently reported as being provided by specialists within the classroom at the elementary level, although one career and technology teacher mentioned such on-site availability.

Contrary to the viewpoints expressed by the majority of teachers, some teachers commented that the services were not provided for them. While the teacher in a private school explained that most related services were obtained by parents outside of the school, public school teachers reported that the services were not provided in their

particular classrooms for reasons such as students did not need the skills, special materials were brought into the classroom by the students, or the students were pulled-out for such specialized instruction.

Most teachers perceived that related services were provided according to student needs as determined by the decisions of the ARD committee, and for the most part, they perceived that the provision of related services was beneficial to them and their students. Some teachers commented that they were especially helpful when applied to the general classroom setting, while others expressed that the benefits of related services were manifested in the increased self-esteem and success of their students.

Training Received. Overall, about two-thirds of the teachers reported having had some type of training, either at the pre-service undergraduate level or as part of their districts' staff development programs. More experienced teachers tended to report less pre-service training, but indicated that they had received training through staff development and related conferences once their teaching careers began. Some teachers indicated that they disagreed with having had training either in college or from their districts. They attributed the lack of training to staff development priorities, the separate general education and special education programs in their schools, and the applicability of the little training that was received. However, these teachers perceived that applicable training in working with children with disabilities was necessary, many further noting that it would be beneficial as well.

Teachers who commented that they had received pre-service training primarily identified learning about the different disabilities as the predominant aspect of this

training. The type of teacher education program and the requirements for earning teaching certificates did appear to have somewhat of an influence over the level of pre-service training. However, the majority of teachers also reported inservice / staff development training within their districts.

Teachers reported various degrees and levels of training received solely within staff development seminars and inservice workshops. Hours of training per year given by the school districts ranged from six to 20, with additional hours added by attending conferences and personally researching topics of interest. The development and implementation of modifications along with suggestions for general instructional adaptations appeared to be the predominant types of staff development training. However, teachers also reported training in working with emotionally disturbed children, addressing behavior issues, understanding learning styles, and addressing common problems in the classroom as frequent topics for the training as well. Even though the extent of inservice training appeared to vary across grade level and years of teaching experience, all teachers reported that the training was ongoing throughout the year, and that most of it was both applicable and beneficial.

Additional Training Needs. Over three-fourths of the teachers agreed that they would like more training in working with students with special needs. Some teacher perceptions about the type of training needed included training in effective strategies that could be applied to common problems that arise in the classroom as a result of inclusion. Other teachers focused more on the understanding and insight into the nature and characteristics of students with disabilities.

Generally, teachers in the early elementary grades were concerned with understanding developmental levels and learning processes of students with disabilities, and were more likely to comment on needing training that would help them create an optimal learning environment that facilitated the emotional health of their young students. Upper elementary teachers were also concerned with developmental levels and ways to optimize the classroom learning experience, as well as in research findings about techniques for ensuring success of students with disabilities in the general education setting.

Teachers at the middle school and high school levels were concerned with understanding how children with disabilities processed the information being taught to them, and in specific ways to use instructional adaptations to meet the needs of their students. Secondary teachers were also more likely to report needed training in classroom management and discipline.

Orientation Toward Inclusion. Many teachers made comments that reflected a general orientation toward inclusion that included both positive and negative views. Early elementary teachers were more likely to share affirming comments about the age and nature of their students and essential characteristics of teachers that facilitated success in young children with disabilities. About one-half of the teachers across the remaining grade and teaching experience levels reported both positive and negative orientations. These teachers generally perceived inclusion as positive, but their comments reflected a challenging component to inclusion that imposed hardships on the teacher in either managing behavior or in providing effective instruction. The positive

orientations toward inclusion were characterized by the rewards of being challenged as a teacher and the value of observing students with disabilities experience growth and success.

Perspectives Theme. Many teachers included perspectives that reflected "shared ways of thinking" about certain aspects of inclusion within their comments. General ideas about collaboration, the variety of roles that teachers, specialists, and parents serve in educating students with disabilities, and general points of view about the practice of both full and partial inclusion were included.

Collaboration. All teachers shared perspectives about collaborating with other teachers, parents, and special education personnel. Although there seemed to be a difference in the extent of communication between general and special education teachers, five shared points of view about the collaboration process seemed to emerge as a result of teachers' reflections. Teachers considered collaboration to be an ongoing process that required mutual respect and open-mindedness from all involved. In addition, teachers perceived collaborating with special education teachers and others to be a supportive process, although dependent upon the accessibility of special education teachers. Finally, teachers perceived collaboration as a necessary practice to ensure success of students with disabilities.

Role of Teacher. All teachers that commented on the role of the general education teacher perceived that the function of the teacher on the ARD committee was a very important role. Most teachers considered this role as a primary means of communicating both the academic and social/emotional progress students were making

in the classroom, and as an opportunity to get input from parents regarding the home and family life of the child with a disability. In addition to their role on the ARD committee, some teachers shared insights into their roles as the general education teacher outside of the committee meetings. Teachers described additional roles as "facilitator" of learning and "advocate" for their students in helping their students solve problems both in and outside of school. Many teachers again described the diverse emotional needs of their students with special needs, and generally perceived themselves as a positive influence in their students' lives.

Role of Parent. About three-fourths of the teachers responded with perspectives about the nature and role of the parent in educating children with disabilities. Teachers who perceived that parents were actively involved in ARD committee meetings viewed the parent role as a critical element in the success of students, especially in the significant information that the parent could provide about the background of the student and successful strategies used at home that might be applied to the school setting. Teachers who considered parents not to be active in the meetings elaborated on the invaluable assistance that parents could provide if they were in attendance. Although several teachers commented that uninformed decision-making and unreasonable demands by parents could actually hinder student success, more often than not they believed that successful inclusion was highly dependent upon the supportive role of the parent.

Role of Specialist. Similar to their perspectives about parents, most teachers perceived special education personnel as part of the necessary support system for student

success. Teachers perceived that special education teachers primarily provided suggestions and ideas as to how to modify assignments or implement instructional adaptations in the classroom. These teachers described the role in terms of the expertise that special education teachers provided. Teachers that were involved in co-teach situations perceived that the special education teacher served as encourager, observer, and provider of necessary information in the classroom. Generally, teachers viewed this role as most supportive when the special education personnel were perceived as having as being committed to the success of students with disabilities placed in the general education setting.

Full and Partial Inclusion. All of the teachers responded to some extent with their perspectives about the circumstances under which students should be either fully or partially included into the general education classroom. Most teachers believed that all children should be included into the regular classroom to some extent while, at the same time, special classes should be provided under certain circumstances.

Many teachers commented on the equality and "fairness" of educating children along with their non-disabled peers, but they tended to qualify their reasons by suggesting circumstances under which this placement would not be best for the child with the disability. Teachers preferred the provision of special classes in situations that required too much time taken by the classroom teacher in order to address the needs involved, or for those children whose primary instruction needed to target life skills. In addition, teachers viewed special classes as a necessary provision if the child with the disability was perceived as "taking away" something from the other children's

education, or if the child with the disability or other children were jeopardized in some way by a general education placement. Secondary teachers agreed that general education placements were beneficial for students with disabilities in terms of their socialization, and generally agreed that students should be placed in the general education classroom if the placement did not interfere with the learning of both the student with the disability and their other students. In addition, the functional level of students as well as their behavior appeared to be more of a concern at the secondary level.

Strategies Theme. Teachers also commented on the techniques and methods they used to help their students be successful in the general education setting, and to enable the teachers themselves to accomplish the goals they had set for their students. Strategies included collaboration, involvement in the development of the IEP and curriculum, and classroom strategies applied as a result of working with specialists.

Collaboration with Specialists. Most teachers who made comments relating to collaboration indicated that they used the collaborative process as a means for acquiring information on their students and specific suggestions for how to help them in the classroom, to monitor progress, and to find out about other teaching techniques that might be applied for more effective instruction. The two teachers who did not agree that special education teachers were helpful in providing ideas discussed strategies that they would like to employ as a result of collaboration with a specialist.

Collaboration between special and general educators appeared to occur on a frequent basis, usually when students were having difficulty grasping a concept or when

there was a sense that learning was not taking place. Most teachers used collaboration as a means for obtaining specific suggestions for revising modifications or for making specific adaptations to lessons within the classroom. At a more general level, some teachers exercised collaboration by actively seeking out other teachers, parents, and related services specialists to gain a better understanding their students' needs and to obtain information about previous successful strategies that might have been used. In addition, many teachers used pre-ARD planning meetings and/or the ARD meeting itself as opportunities to exchange information and revise students' educational plans if needed. Furthermore, teaching strategies used by the special education teacher in co-teach situations were taken and applied to the general education curriculum as well.

Development of IEP. The vast majority of teachers considered themselves active members in ARD committee meetings, and thereby involved with developing the Individual Education Plans (IEP) for their students with disabilities. Teachers who were more likely to be indirectly involved in developing the actual IEP for students tended to participate by discussing general goals for students in all areas of development, based on assessment of their needs and performance in the classroom. Teachers from both elementary and secondary levels indicated that they were more directly involved in developing the IEP through pre-ARD preparation and staff meetings. In addition, teachers reported being directly involved in the IEP development through reporting observations and interventions tried in the classroom and through providing suggestions for instructional modifications in the ARD meeting itself.

Classroom Adaptations. For the most part, teachers who mentioned applying instructional adaptations in the classroom as part of their teaching strategies followed the suggestions for curriculum modifications made by the special education teacher, or they used the interventions indicated on their students' modification sheets. A few teachers mentioned that they employed strategies learned as a result of training or of working with a specialist within the classroom, as typified by comments made by teachers who reported that knowledge about learning styles had enabled them to develop individual strategies for addressing particular student needs. At a more practical level, teachers reported that they simply incorporated strategies that had proven to be successful in the past through diverse experiences in working with all students in the classroom.

Views Theme. Teachers shared comments the reflected their ways of thinking about the various people in their world as an educator. Comments about students, parents, and current issues facing them as a result of inclusion were included.

Students. Teachers' views regarding the students they taught were as diverse as the students themselves. These views included comments on the complexities of behavior as well as on the characteristics of students within the contexts of both the educational and social systems. Some teachers expressed concern over the low self-esteem that students with disabilities experienced as a result of the demands placed on them in the general education setting, while others focused on the diverse emotional issues that their students had as a result of the changing home and family structure. Teachers expressed a variety of viewpoints in how they perceived students both with and without disabilities when implementing the practice of inclusion.

Views that related to student needs included feelings of helplessness on the part of the students with disabilities, the effect of student needs on the learning process of other students, and perceptions of excessive demands on the teacher in trying to meet these diverse student needs. Teachers also commented on the wide-range of behavior patterns exhibited by their students as a result of these needs. While some attributed inappropriate behaviors to the inability of the teacher to meet student needs or to the effects of traditional special education models, others commented on the effects of low self-esteem and fragmented family structure as reasons for the behaviors. In some cases, emotional instability of students with the accompanying behaviors were considered the actual need or area of disability itself.

Some teachers described views of their students from the standpoint of the characteristics that they perceived children with special needs possessed. Comments were sometimes general references to personality traits observed in many or all students with special needs, but at other times they were gleaned from specific experiences with individuals. In addition, the comments were quite varied with respect to their negative or positive content.

Parents. Teachers made additional comments that expressed their ways of thinking about parents. Although most of the comments that teachers made regarding their views of parents were positive in nature, some teachers expressed that parent involvement could hinder student success under certain circumstances. Most teachers perceived that parents were an important part of the support system, and that parent involvement was especially beneficial when parents were accepting of their child's

disability and when they participated in their child's ARD committee meeting with an open-mind to suggestions on the part of educators. Teachers reported parent involvement as being less beneficial when the parents did not accept their child's limitations as a result of the disability, or when they were not actively involved in ARD meetings and in discussions about their child.

Specialists. Most comments reflecting teachers' views about the specialists with which they worked were included within the perspectives and strategies involving collaboration. However, teachers made additional comments on the attributes of specialists that made working with them an invaluable part of their experiences with successful inclusion. These views were closely associated with perspectives regarding the collaborative process, in that the same mutual respect and openness was shared as an important aspect in working with administrators and specialists. In addition, comments throughout the interview indicated that teachers valued a "caring" and collaborative community in their schools.

Key Issues. Teachers' views regarding the key issues facing them in contemporary times were both directly and indirectly related to inclusion. Ways of thinking about both the educational and social systems and the underlying demands of these systems in meeting student needs were among the top issues, along with concerns regarding the nature of students themselves who were included in the general education classroom.

Concerns related to the excessive demands of the system included changing expectations that have become too extensive, and concerns about meeting student needs

while simultaneously being held accountable to the requirements of the system. Situations in which teachers identified a lack of support by administrators in valuing their input also emerged as a concern.

Many of the teachers commented on the myriad of problems facing their students with special needs. While some focused on understanding the possible rationales behind these issues and the question of whether or not solutions could be found to ameliorate the problems, others suggested that training could possibly be a means through which some of the problems could be addressed. Similar to the student views, some teachers commented on concerns about the characteristics of their students and the expectations involved in meeting their needs in the general education classroom. In addition, they expressed concerns about their students who were generally at-risk for failure, as they considered these students as having special needs as well. They also indicated growing concerns about the home environment from which these children were coming, and the impending consequences that lack of intervention could have on society as a whole.

Implications for Further Research

The applicability of these findings can be generalized to the current inclusive practices in Texas schools. Further research in teacher perceptions of inclusive practices is warranted in identifying the extent of implementation of inclusive programs in Texas and the factors that contribute to making these programs successful. Therefore, implications for further research as a result of this study include the following ideas:

Ideally, participants within each of the three demographic groups should be as equal as possible in order to avoid over-representation of a specific group, such as PreK private school teachers. For example, the private school group was small enough for this study and results could have been influenced by the large number of early childhood teachers in private schools, or alternatively, the small number of secondary educators in private schools. In addition, including information about gender and/or ethnic background of the respondents would increase generalizability.

Efforts should be made to identify the location of the school district in which the teachers are employed, so that a representative sample of schools may be selected. In addition, sample checks could be made to ensure that teachers are not surveyed twice and that the data obtained from the teacher is truthful and accurate.

It would be beneficial to seek out school districts with model inclusive programs if possible, so that comparisons between levels of implementation can be made, and the extent to which teachers have been exposed to inclusive practices can be determined. Respondents were not asked about the extent of exposure to inclusive classrooms, and experiences with inclusive settings appear to affect teacher perceptions (e.g., Bennett et al., 1997). This would also facilitate a more robust experimental design.

Although purposeful sampling should be retained, the selection process for determining participants for the telephone interview subsample should be strengthened to ensure representation. A defined process for this selection should be developed.

The experience story on the survey contains valuable information that should be qualitatively analyzed in some way, rather than coded. Although the information was not

always in the teachers own words, the total "world view" was lost when the experience story was considered separately from the telephone interview. Teachers usually reported a different experience story in the telephone interview than they did on the original survey. In most cases, teachers reported positive experiences with children with disabilities regardless of the nature of their initial experience story.

In some cases, the "no opinion" response appeared to affect the mean response rate for certain groups. Although frequencies rather than means were most often used to describe teacher responses, rationales for the "no opinion" responses could not be determined.

There was some confusion regarding the meaning of "related services", and this ambiguity was not discovered until the telephone interviews were being conducted. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the confusion affected the responses to the survey item involving related services. Perhaps examples of related services can be added to the survey.

It may be beneficial to conduct the survey with the telephone respondent again, instead of telling the teacher what he or she previously indicated to ensure that perceptions have not changed over time, due to ongoing experiences with inclusion. Also, an additional researcher may be needed in categorizing text and verifying context codes in order to further ensure the accuracy of the qualitative data. Member checks could also be used in order to verify that the respondents' true perceptions were represented in the study and to ensure trustworthiness of the data.

Although teachers primarily reported positive experiences in working with students with disabilities, very few were willing to suggest that ALL students should be educated in regular classrooms. This suggests that they still have some reservations and fears about teaching students with disabilities, and further research should be conducted to identify the factors underlying these fears. Perhaps the undergraduate students could briefly list the circumstances in which teachers believed special classes should be provided on the survey instrument itself.

Implications for Practice

During the past 25 years, educators have experienced a steady flow of change in the composition of their classrooms and in the responsibilities required to meet the needs of their students both with and without disabilities. Shifts in sociopolitical ideology and subsequent legislation have generated ongoing debate about the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom. Although results of previous research have indicated that the majority of teachers have favored inclusive classrooms (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Minke et al., 1996; Villa et al., 1996), teachers' perceptions of inclusion "seem to be related to their success in implementing inclusion, to student characteristics, and the to availability of financial resources, instructional and ancillary supportive services, training, administrative support, and time to collaborate and communicate with others" (Salend & Duhaney, 1999, p. 123). Therefore, the findings from this study are applicable in that they explore teacher perceptions as they exist within the current educational system, an important element to consider as the movement toward fully inclusive practices evolves, since teachers are the people who

will ultimately be responsible for the success in implementing inclusion for children with disabilities. The following implications for practice are recommended as a result of this study.

Both public and private school teachers indicated that there was a need for additional training on working with students with disabilities, and the need for training appeared to be desired from teachers in all grade levels. The high percentage of agreement that additional training was needed for private school teachers could indicate that they are experiencing changes in classroom composition and that their student populations are becoming more diverse as well. Therefore, these results indicated that additional training on serving the needs of students in special populations in private and public schools is warranted. However, teachers indicated that training was needed in the areas of (a) applying effective classroom adaptations, (b) understanding developmental levels and learning processes of students with disabilities, and (c) effective methods for optimizing the classroom experience and ensuring success. In addition, teachers who had experience in co-teaching situations or who were familiar with on-site related services delivery indicated that they preferred these collaborative approaches to traditional inservice training. Therefore, training should be designed around interactive practices and strategies in a variety of modes that can be directly applied to the general education setting, either with the aid of support personnel or with the students themselves.

Results also suggested that teacher perceptions of involvement in ARD committee meetings, perceived parental participation in the meetings, and teacher

communication appeared to be related to teachers' perceptions of success for their students with disabilities. Teachers who perceived that parents were actively involved in ARD committee meetings viewed the parent role as a critical element in the success of students. In addition, teachers who considered themselves active participants in ARD committee meetings were more likely to perceive that parents were actively involved, and were more likely to perceive that special educators and general educators communicated on a frequent basis. Results from this study indicated that secondary teachers reported being isolated from the special education teachers to a certain extent, and suggested that contact and collaboration with resource and content mastery teachers was on more of a reactive, problem intervention basis rather than attempted as a proactive process. Comments made by these teachers indicated that the lack of communication interfered with effective teaching strategies and student success. Therefore, the opportunity for teachers to communicate on a frequent basis with parents and with each other, and for teachers to be provided with opportunities to collaborate with special education personnel is warranted.

The capability of the system to address all of the needs for students both with and without disabilities seemed to be a pervasive theme throughout the interviews. Just as some teachers were very positive in their views of specialists and administrators if they were supportive and showed genuine interest in teacher input, teachers were generally not positive about support from administration if their observations and recommendations did not appear to be valued. Research suggests that teachers express "favorable expectations regarding shared responsibility, decision making, and

instructional partnership among general and special education personnel" (Villa et al., 1996, p. 42), and that a critical role of the administrator is to reinforce and support school reform efforts that emulate the basic assumptions of inclusion philosophy. Both survey and telephone interview results indicated that teachers perceived special education personnel as supportive in providing suggestions and ideas as to how to modify assignments or implement instructional adaptations in the classroom. However, comments throughout the interviews indicated that teachers valued a "caring" and collaborative community in their schools.

Additionally, teachers' views about specialists were closely associated with their perspectives on the collaborative process. The same mutual respect and openness was shared as an important aspect in working with administrators and specialists. Similar to the findings from previous research (Downing et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993; Villa et al., 1996), the need for collaboration and communication among educators and administrators within a school that fosters a sense of community is essential if inclusive practices are to be successful.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

A. Teacher Information:

Current Subject _____ Current Grade _____

Total # of years as a teacher _____

Private School _____   Public School _____

Teacher Certification areas _____

B. Please circle the appropriate response: 1 = strongly disagree;   2 = disagree;
3 = no opinion; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

1. I received training on how to work with students with disabilities   1   2   3   4   5

2. I am an active participant in ARD committee meetings   1   2   3   4   5

3. I believe that ALL children should be educated in regular classrooms   1   2   3   4   5

4. I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class   1   2   3   4   5

5. I think that special classes for special children should be provided   1   2   3   4   5

6. Regular educators & special educators do not communicate often   1   2   3   4   5

7. Special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications   1   2   3   4   5

8. Parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings   1   2   3   4   5

9. I would like more inservice training on working with children with disabilities   1   2   3   4   5

10. Please give one example of a situation where you had a child with a disability
in your class. The story may be positive or negative or neutral.

* Additional Information:

Would you be willing to be contacted again to further discuss your ideas/opinions regarding
       students with disabilities?
       (you will be contacted by INST 210 Teaching Assistant Jane Finegan) _____ Yes _____ No
If so – when would be a good time for you?
       _____ May   _____ June   _____ July   _____ August   _____ September

Telephone Number where you can be reached   _____
E-Mail Address (if you prefer to be contacted via e-mail)   _____

THANK YOU

APPENDIX B

Telephone Interview

Introduction:

Hello, I'm Jane Finegan a graduate student in education at Texas A & M. You participated in an interview with a Texas A & M undergraduate student by the name of _____ in May of 2001 (fall 2001), and said that it would be okay for me to interview you at a later date regarding the education of students with special needs.

Is this a good time to speak with you for a few minutes?
If it's not, what would be a better time for you? (get date and time to contact again)
Thank you very much.

Consent:

   First, I need to explain the purpose of the interview and to ask you a few yes/no questions about your consent to participate.
   This interview is part of a study involving 1341 teachers in private and public schools throughout the state. From this interview, I expect to be able to describe some of the existing beliefs about educational practices for students with special needs. The interview should take about 15 minutes.
   You are one of a subgroup of 50 teachers (for May 2001 subgroup) or you are one of a subgroup of 171 teachers (for fall 2001 subgroup) who have agreed to be interviewed further. These supplementary interviews will be conducted over the next 9 months, and all participants will answer the same interview questions. Interviews will be conducted via telephone.
   All of the information obtained in this interview will be strictly confidential – but you may refuse to answer any question should you choose to do so, and you can decline to participate in the interview at any time.
   This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research, Texas A & M University. For any problems or questions regarding your rights as a participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley at 979-458-4067.

I would like to audiotape the interview so that we can proceed in a timely manner. The tapes will be used only by me to ensure that I am accurate in the information I have obtained from you, and will be erased within the next 12 months. You may still participate in the study without the audiotaping.
Do you agree to the use of audiotaping?   Do you have any questions at this time?
Okay – we're ready to begin unless you have further questions.

Interview Questions

A. Generally - How would you define the term or concept of inclusion?
   a) How is inclusion being implemented in your school?

   b) In what ways have you been involved with inclusion?

❖ The following questions pertain to your responses on the original interview.

1. You indicated that you (a, sa) with the statement, "I received training on
   how to work with students with disabilities".
   a) How many hours of training would you say you have received so far?

   b) When did this training begin?

   c) What type of training did you receive?

   d) What aspects of working with students with special needs did the training address?

   You indicated that you (sd, d, no) with the statement, "I received training on how to work
   with students with disabilities".
   a) Do you believe there is a reason for the lack of training in the area of working with

      students with disabilities?

   b) Do you believe that training is necessary?

2. You indicated that you (a, sa) with the statement that you are an active participant in
   ARD committee meetings.
   a) For what purpose do you attend ARD committee meetings?

   b) In what ways are you involved in developing the Individual Education Plan (either

      prior to or during ARD meetings)?

   You indicated that you (sd, d, no) with the statement that you are an active participant in
   ARD committee meetings.
   a) Since you are not active, what is the reason (if any) that you are not involved?

3. You indicated that you (sd, d, no, a, sa) with the statement "I believe that ALL children

   should be educated in regular classrooms"

   AND
   You indicated that you (sd, d, no, a, sa) with the statement, "I think that special classes for
   special children should be provided".
   a) Under what circumstances do you believe students should be educated in the regular

      classroom?
   b) Under what circumstances do you believe students should be educated in special

      classrooms?

4. You indicated that you (sa, a) with the statement, "I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class."

    a) What related services are you receiving for your students currently?

    b) How have these services helped your students be successful?

You indicated that you (sd, d, no) with the statement, "I receive the related services that children need to be successful in my class."
    a) What services do you believe you need to help your students be successful?

5. You indicated that you (sd, d) with the statement, "regular educators and special educators do

not communicate often".
a) Under what circumstances do you as the **regular education** teacher

    communicate with the special education teacher?
You indicated that you (no, a, sa) with the statement, "regular educators and special educators do not communicate often".
    a) What role do you believe that you have as the **regular educator** to be

    involved in the education of children with special needs?

6. You indicated that you (a, sa) with the statement, "special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications".

    a) Under what circumstances does the special educator make suggestions for

    curriculum modifications?

    b) When do you believe these suggestions are most necessary?

You indicated that you (sd, d, no) with the statement, "special educators make helpful suggestions on curriculum modifications".
    a) Do you believe that such suggestions (if given to you) would be helpful?

    b) Under what circumstances?

7. You indicated that you (sa, a) with the statement, "parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings".

    a) In what ways do parents participate in the meetings?

    b) Do you believe that parent participation is helpful?

You indicated that you (sd, d, no) with the statement, " parents of children with disabilities are active participants in the ARD meetings".
    a) In what ways would you like to see parent participation?

    b) Do you believe that parent participation would be helpful?

8. You indicated that you (a, sa) with the statement, "I would like more inservice training on working with children with disabilities".

   a) What type of inservice training do you believe would be helpful to you?

   b) What aspects of working with students with disabilities do you believe future inservice training needs to address?

   You indicated that you (sd, d, no) with the statement, "I would like more inservice training on working with children with disabilities".
   a) Could you clarify your position on this?

9. Under what circumstances has working with children with special needs been either a positive or negative experience for you?

10. These are all of the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

11. Given your experience and all of the information that we have covered, do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to add?

12. Would you like to know the results of the final study? (find out the preferred method of getting the results to the respondent).

This concludes our interview. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me and for all that you do for children.
Take Care

APPENDIX C

FREQUENCY TABLE FOR PERCEPTION STATEMENTS

TABLE C – 1

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 1: "I Received Training on How to Work with Students with Disabilities."

| | | | | % Responding | | | | |
| | | *Strongly Disagree* | | | | *Strongly Agree* | | |
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	13	21	5	43	18	3.33	1.32
Public	1148	13	21	5	43	19	3.33	1.34
Private	67	8	22	6	57	8	3.34	1.14
Pub & Priv	126	12	23	6	41	18	3.29	1.32
Exp 1-5	312	8	18	5	48	21	3.57	1.22
Exp 6-10	225	12	24	6	42	16	3.25	1.31
Exp 11-15	232	11	24	8	42	14	3.24	1.28
Exp 16-20	196	19	18	3	43	16	3.20	1.41
Exp 21-25	199	14	20	4	42	21	3.38	1.37
Exp 26+	177	16	23	5	38	19	3.20	1.40
PreK-Kin	132	8	24	5	48	15	3.39	1.22
Grade 1	131	14	23	2	45	17	3.28	1.35
Grade 2	108	12	17	7	45	19	3.44	1.31
Grade 3	126	12	18	3	41	27	3.53	1.37
Grade 4	114	9	17	7	48	19	3.53	1.23
Grade 5	72	17	21	7	33	22	3.24	1.44
Other	75	13	16	5	40	25	3.48	1.38
Grade 6	88	13	23	8	39	18	3.27	1.34
Grade 7	65	8	20	5	51	17	3.49	1.21
Grade 8	80	18	32	1	44	5	2.86	1.29
Grade 9	93	18	20	3	43	15	3.16	1.40
Grade 10	82	17	20	7	42	15	3.17	1.37
Grade 11	78	9	24	5	44	18	3.37	1.28
Grade 12	41	15	20	5	44	17	3.29	1.36
Career Tech	56	13	21	14	38	14	3.20	1.29

TABLE C – 2

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 2: "I am an Active Participant in ARD

Committee Meetings."

| | | % Responding | | | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	7	8	5	29	51	4.10	1.22
Public	1148	4	7	4	30	54	4.22	1.11
Private	67	39	13	13	24	10	2.54	1.47
Pub & Priv	126	13	7	9	25	46	3.85	1.40
Exp 1-5	312	7	8	6	34	46	4.04	1.20
Exp 6-10	225	9	7	6	32	47	4.01	1.27
Exp 11-15	232	7	8	7	25	53	4.11	1.23
Exp 16-20	196	8	8	3	30	51	4.07	1.27
Exp 21-25	199	5	5	5	29	57	4.27	1.09
Exp 26+	177	6	10	4	23	57	4.15	1.24
PreK-Kin	132	9	9	8	25	49	3.96	1.33
Grade 1	131	5	7	2	31	56	4.27	1.09
Grade 2	108	13	2	4	22	59	4.13	1.37
Grade 3	126	5	6	5	30	55	4.25	1.09
Grade 4	114	3	7	3	24	64	4.39	1.02
Grade 5	72	7	3	4	21	65	4.35	1.15
Other	75	9	13	7	36	35	3.73	1.32
Grade 6	88	7	7	0	30	57	4.23	1.19
Grade 7	65	3	6	6	40	45	4.17	1.01
Grade 8	80	6	4	8	36	46	4.13	1.12
Grade 9	93	11	12	3	29	45	3.86	1.39
Grade 10	82	5	16	4	31	45	3.95	1.26
Grade 11	78	9	10	8	35	39	3.83	1.29
Grade 12	41	10	12	10	34	34	3.71	1.33
Career Tech	56	4	2	18	25	52	4.20	1.03

TABLE C – 3

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 3: "I Believe That ALL Children Should be Educated in Regular Classrooms."

	N	Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	M	SD
All Data	1341	22	42	8	22	7	2.51	1.25
Public	1148	20	43	8	22	8	2.53	1.24
Private	67	25	42	3	27	3	2.40	1.22
Pub & Priv	126	34	32	9	18	8	2.33	1.32
Exp 1-5	312	19	42	9	22	8	2.59	1.25
Exp 6-10	225	23	38	7	25	7	2.54	1.27
Exp 11-15	232	19	44	3	26	7	2.57	1.26
Exp 16-20	196	25	40	8	22	6	2.45	1.24
Exp 21-25	199	18	45	11	18	9	2.53	1.22
Exp 26+	177	29	43	8	12	9	2.28	1.24
PreK-Kin	132	15	40	9	27	9	2.74	1.26
Grade 1	131	20	40	10	24	6	2.57	1.23
Grade 2	108	16	37	5	31	12	2.86	1.34
Grade 3	126	18	41	6	23	13	2.72	1.34
Grade 4	114	15	42	11	23	10	2.70	1.25
Grade 5	72	18	46	8	29	8	2.54	1.23
Other	75	28	37	5	27	3	2.39	1.23
Grade 6	88	23	46	9	19	3	2.35	1.14
Grade 7	65	25	46	6	22	2	2.29	1.11
Grade 8	80	26	49	6	18	1	2.19	1.06
Grade 9	93	29	43	9	12	8	2.26	1.21
Grade 10	82	28	44	2	20	6	2.32	1.25
Grade 11	78	31	46	8	10	5	2.13	1.12
Grade 12	41	32	29	7	24	7	2.46	1.36
Career Tech	56	20	41	11	16	13	2.61	1.32

TABLE C – 4

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 4: "I Receive the Related Services that Children Need to be Successful in My Class."

| | | | % Responding | | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	3	15	9	45	28	3.79	1.10
Public	1148	3	14	9	47	28	3.82	1.07
Private	67	13	19	13	36	19	3.31	1.32
Pub & Priv	126	2	21	10	35	32	3.72	1.19
Exp 1-5	312	4	14	9	48	25	3.75	1.11
Exp 6-10	225	4	13	12	47	24	3.73	1.08
Exp 11-15	232	1	16	10	42	31	3.87	1.05
Exp 16-20	196	5	19	8	38	29	3.67	1.23
Exp 21-25	199	3	11	7	50	31	3.95	1.01
Exp 26+	177	4	14	10	45	28	3.78	1.12
PreK-Kin	132	2	10	9	47	32	3.96	1.01
Grade 1	131	4	15	9	43	29	3.78	1.14
Grade 2	108	3	14	6	43	35	3.94	1.10
Grade 3	126	2	15	2	50	31	3.92	1.07
Grade 4	114	0	8	7	49	36	4.13	0.86
Grade 5	72	3	17	3	50	28	3.83	1.10
Other	75	3	9	11	36	41	4.04	1.07
Grade 6	88	2	11	10	56	21	3.81	0.97
Grade 7	65	1	22	12	46	19	3.58	1.07
Grade 8	80	10	20	10	39	21	3.41	1.30
Grade 9	93	4	15	18	37	26	3.65	1.15
Grade 10	82	4	23	12	44	17	3.48	1.14
Grade 11	78	5	14	8	51	22	3.71	1.12
Grade 12	41	5	10	17	59	10	3.59	0.97
Career Tech	56	7	21	16	30	25	3.45	1.07

TABLE C – 5

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 5: "I Think that Special Classes for Special Children Should be Provided."

| | | % Responding | | | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	2	2	4	33	59	4.46	0.81
Public	1148	1	2	4	33	60	4.47	0.80
Private	67	5	2	8	33	54	4.30	1.00
Pub & Priv	126	2	2	2	37	57	4.45	0.80
Exp 1-5	312	1	2	5	32	60	4.49	0.74
Exp 6-10	225	1	2	4	37	55	4.42	0.79
Exp 11-15	232	4	2	2	37	55	4.37	0.93
Exp 16-20	196	1	4	3	30	62	4.49	0.79
Exp 21-25	199	1	2	4	35	59	4.51	0.69
Exp 26+	177	3	2	5	25	66	4.48	0.91
PreK-Kin	132	2	5	5	36	51	4.28	0.95
Grade 1	131	0	2	6	28	65	4.56	0.68
Grade 2	108	1	3	2	31	64	4.54	0.75
Grade 3	126	2	2	3	28	65	4.52	0.81
Grade 4	114	2	3	3	28	65	4.52	0.82
Grade 5	72	0	0	4	36	60	4.56	0.58
Other	75	1	1	1	25	71	4.63	0.71
Grade 6	88	5	3	2	32	58	4.35	1.02
Grade 7	65	5	3	5	37	51	4.26	1.02
Grade 8	80	1	3	4	43	50	4.37	0.79
Grade 9	93	2	1	0	42	55	4.46	0.76
Grade 10	82	2	1	7	34	55	4.38	0.87
Grade 11	78	0	0	4	37	59	4.55	0.57
Grade 12	41	0	5	5	29	61	4.46	0.81
Career Tech	56	0	2	9	36	54	4.41	0.73

TABLE C – 6

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 6: "Regular Educators and Special Educators Do Not Communicate Often."

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	27	39	7	21	6	2.40	1.25
Public	1148	29	39	6	20	6	2.36	1.25
Private	67	8	33	25	28	6	2.93	1.08
Pub & Priv	126	23	37	8	25	6	2.55	1.27
Exp 1-5	312	29	35	8	22	5	2.40	1.26
Exp 6-10	225	25	40	6	23	6	2.46	1.26
Exp 11-15	232	27	38	7	23	6	2.43	1.27
Exp 16-20	196	20	42	8	21	8	2.54	1.25
Exp 21-25	199	31	42	5	17	6	2.23	1.21
Exp 26+	177	30	36	11	18	6	2.34	1.24
PreK-Kin	132	27	42	6	22	3	2.33	1.18
Grade 1	131	34	40	8	14	5	2.18	1.19
Grade 2	108	26	49	9	8	7	2.22	1.15
Grade 3	126	33	33	6	23	6	2.38	1.32
Grade 4	114	33	37	4	17	9	2.31	1.32
Grade 5	72	40	33	4	21	1	2.10	1.19
Other	75	25	36	5	24	9	2.56	1.35
Grade 6	88	26	50	5	16	3	2.20	1.11
Grade 7	65	23	37	6	26	8	2.58	1.31
Grade 8	80	24	31	11	30	4	2.59	1.25
Grade 9	93	22	33	11	27	8	2.66	1.29
Grade 10	82	20	48	4	21	9	2.51	1.26
Grade 11	78	28	28	10	27	6	2.55	1.33
Grade 12	41	17	46	7	27	2	2.51	1.14
Career Tech	56	14	32	16	27	11	2.88	1.27

Note: % Responding spans columns 1–5.

TABLE C – 7

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 7: "Special Educators Make Helpful

Suggestions on Curriculum Modifications."

| | | | | % Responding | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	3	10	8	45	34	3.97	1.05
Public	1148	3	10	8	45	34	3.98	1.04
Private	67	2	8	15	43	33	3.99	0.96
Pub & Priv	126	5	12	10	41	33	3.85	1.15
Exp 1-5	312	3	15	9	44	33	3.92	1.08
Exp 6-10	225	2	10	11	44	33	3.97	1.01
Exp 11-15	232	4	9	9	47	32	3.95	1.05
Exp 16-20	196	4	10	6	45	35	3.97	1.08
Exp 21-25	199	2	10	7	47	35	4.04	0.99
Exp 26+	177	3	10	7	42	38	4.01	1.07
PreK-Kin	132	2	9	6	44	39	4.11	0.97
Grade 1	131	2	9	8	41	40	4.07	1.02
Grade 2	108	0	7	7	50	36	4.16	0.82
Grade 3	126	3	10	5	41	41	4.08	1.06
Grade 4	114	5	4	4	46	40	4.11	1.05
Grade 5	72	6	10	10	44	31	3.85	1.13
Other	75	1	8	11	40	40	4.09	0.98
Grade 6	88	2	5	6	49	39	4.17	0.90
Grade 7	65	1	11	12	42	34	3.95	1.02
Grade 8	80	4	14	8	54	21	3.75	1.06
Grade 9	93	4	13	7	48	28	3.83	1.11
Grade 10	82	2	15	11	46	26	3.78	1.07
Grade 11	78	8	15	13	40	24	3.58	1.23
Grade 12	41	2	17	10	46	24	3.73	1.10
Career Tech	56	4	14	16	38	29	3.73	1.14

TABLE C – 8

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 8: "Parents of Children with Disabilities Are Active Participants in the ARD Meetings."

		Strongly Disagree	% Responding			Strongly Agree		
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	3	14	15	41	27	3.75	1.10
Public	1148	3	15	14	41	28	3.77	1.09
Private	67	6	3	36	39	16	3.57	1.00
Pub & Priv	126	5	17	16	36	27	3.63	1.18
Exp 1-5	312	2	21	16	40	22	3.58	1.10
Exp 6-10	225	3	14	21	40	22	3.65	1.05
Exp 11-15	232	6	12	14	41	28	3.74	1.15
Exp 16-20	196	3	15	12	42	28	3.77	1.11
Exp 21-25	199	3	9	10	44	35	4.01	1.01
Exp 26+	177	2	13	15	37	33	3.86	1.09
PreK-Kin	132	4	8	12	38	38	3.98	1.09
Grade 1	131	3	12	8	47	31	3.92	1.06
Grade 2	108	4	8	12	37	39	3.99	1.09
Grade 3	126	2	12	9	40	38	4.01	1.05
Grade 4	114	2	16	11	42	30	3.82	1.08
Grade 5	72	3	13	19	38	28	3.75	1.08
Other	75	3	9	13	44	31	3.91	1.03
Grade 6	88	3	18	13	47	19	3.60	1.10
Grade 7	65	2	25	14	35	25	3.57	1.16
Grade 8	80	4	25	20	36	15	3.34	1.12
Grade 9	93	3	16	18	43	19	3.59	1.08
Grade 10	82	2	16	21	48	13	3.54	1.00
Grade 11	78	3	12	21	41	24	3.73	1.04
Grade 12	41	5	17	34	34	10	3.27	1.03
Career Tech	56	5	21	25	29	20	3.36	1.18

TABLE C – 9

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 9: "I Would Like More Inservice Training on Working with Students with Disabilities."

| | | % Responding | | | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
	N	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
All Data	1341	4	12	12	45	27	3.79	1.10
Public	1148	4	12	12	45	27	3.78	1.09
Private	67	3	9	3	42	43	4.13	1.04
Pub & Priv	126	9	12	9	46	25	3.66	1.22
Exp 1-5	312	3	8	12	47	29	3.92	1.00
Exp 6-10	225	3	16	11	42	28	3.76	1.12
Exp 11-15	232	3	10	9	48	30	3.91	1.04
Exp 16-20	196	6	13	10	41	30	3.76	1.18
Exp 21-25	199	6	11	12	51	21	3.70	1.10
Exp 26+	177	6	18	16	38	23	3.54	1.18
PreK-Kin	132	2	5	5	48	40	4.18	0.91
Grade 1	131	4	9	7	45	35	3.98	1.07
Grade 2	108	0	10	15	51	24	3.89	0.89
Grade 3	126	3	10	14	52	21	3.78	1.00
Grade 4	114	2	11	11	50	27	3.90	0.98
Grade 5	72	4	14	14	40	28	3.74	1.14
Other	75	4	16	5	41	33	3.84	1.17
Grade 6	88	5	9	11	50	25	3.82	1.06
Grade 7	65	0	29	9	42	29	3.80	1.08
Grade 8	80	8	11	14	49	19	3.60	1.14
Grade 9	93	9	12	11	39	30	3.70	1.26
Grade 10	82	9	18	16	42	16	3.38	1.20
Grade 11	78	10	15	14	39	22	3.46	1.28
Grade 12	41	7	17	12	42	22	3.54	1.23
Career Tech	56	2	18	27	30	23	3.55	1.09

TABLE C – 10

Response Frequencies for Survey Statement 10: "Please Give an Example of a Situation Where You Had a Child with a Disability in Your Class."

| | | % Responding | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | Strongly Agree | | |
	N	1	2	3	M	SD
All Data	1341	24	34	42	2.19	0.79
Public	1148	23	34	44	2.21	0.79
Private	67	24	39	37	2.13	0.78
Pub & Priv	126	32	36	33	2.01	0.80
Exp 1-5	312	27	38	35	2.08	0.78
Exp 6-10	225	24	36	40	2.16	0.78
Exp 11-15	232	22	32	46	2.23	0.79
Exp 16-20	196	26	30	44	2.19	0.82
Exp 21-25	199	22	33	45	2.24	0.78
Exp 26+	177	19	33	48	2.29	0.77
PreK-Kin	132	27	33	40	2.13	0.81
Grade 1	131	27	40	34	2.07	0.78
Grade 2	108	25	38	37	2.12	0.78
Grade 3	126	21	29	51	2.30	0.79
Grade 4	114	21	35	44	2.23	0.78
Grade 5	72	26	33	40	2.14	0.81
Other	75	23	29	48	2.25	0.81
Grade 6	88	22	32	47	2.25	0.79
Grade 7	65	17	34	49	2.32	0.75
Grade 8	80	25	28	48	2.22	0.83
Grade 9	93	26	36	39	2.13	0.80
Grade 10	82	27	35	38	2.11	0.80
Grade 11	78	24	35	41	2.17	0.80
Grade 12	41	10	54	37	2.27	0.63
CareerTech	56	23	30	46	2.23	0.81

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