

Summer 2006

# Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusion in the Regular Classroom

Rebecca J. Kaisler  
*Regis University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/theses>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kaisler, Rebecca J., "Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusion in the Regular Classroom" (2006). *All Regis University Theses*. 323.  
<https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/323>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Regis University Theses by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact [epublications@regis.edu](mailto:epublications@regis.edu).

**Regis University**  
School for Professional Studies Graduate Programs  
**Final Project/Thesis**

**Disclaimer**

Use of the materials available in the Regis University Thesis Collection ("Collection") is limited and restricted to those users who agree to comply with the following terms of use. Regis University reserves the right to deny access to the Collection to any person who violates these terms of use or who seeks to or does alter, avoid or supersede the functional conditions, restrictions and limitations of the Collection.

The site may be used only for lawful purposes. The user is solely responsible for knowing and adhering to any and all applicable laws, rules, and regulations relating or pertaining to use of the Collection.

All content in this Collection is owned by and subject to the exclusive control of Regis University and the authors of the materials. It is available only for research purposes and may not be used in violation of copyright laws or for unlawful purposes. The materials may not be downloaded in whole or in part without permission of the copyright holder or as otherwise authorized in the "fair use" standards of the U.S. copyright laws and regulations.

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION  
IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

by

Rebecca J. Kaisler

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

May, 2006

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Project.....	2
Definition of Terms.....	2
Chapter Summary.....	2
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Definition of Inclusion.....	6
History of Inclusion.....	7
Proponents of Inclusion.....	8
Opponents of Inclusion.....	11
The Improvement of Teachers' Attitudes.....	13
Conclusion.....	16
Chapter Summary.....	17
3. METHOD.....	19
Sample.....	19
Design of Instrument.....	19
Procedure.....	20
Data Analysis.....	21
Chapter Summary.....	21
4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY .....	22
Analysis of the Data .....	22
Summary.....	31
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	33
Summary.....	33
Conclusion.....	34
REFERENCES.....	37
APPENDICES	
A. Survey.....	40
B. Principal Letter.....	44
C. Teacher Participation Letter.....	46



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, individuals and members of specific groups have always been denied equality in the society in which they live. Denials for equality have been based upon a person's: (a) gender, such as women's suffrage (b) race, such as Rosa Parks and her fearless refusal to give up her seat on a bus; and (c) age, the current trend of some companies to enforce a mandatory retirement age upon employees, even if they are still productive. Currently, a similar equality issue is at stake because of the policy to include disabled students into the regular classroom with their nondisabled peers. As the practice of inclusion of disabled students in the regular classroom increases, it is evident that many teachers have both positive and negative attitudes toward it.

#### Statement of the Problem

Inclusion can pose many challenges to both teachers and students alike. There is an increasing requirement that disabled students be included with their nondisabled peers. The purpose for this is so that they can experience success in the regular classroom (Stainback, 1997). There are many regular classroom teachers who are neither prepared nor do they have the necessary skills and positive attitudes to successfully integrate disabled students into the classroom. This has a negative affect on students' attitudes and behaviors toward each other as well as their disabled peers (D'Alonzo & Giordano, 1996).

There is a need for teachers to collaborate and develop new strategies to benefit both the disabled student as well as the nondisabled student.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to assess the attitudes of classroom teachers in regard to inclusion. The focus was on teachers in regular classrooms in the Hartville, Missouri School District. A survey instrument was developed and distributed to all teachers in the district in order to identify teachers' main concerns and problems in regard to the inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom, as well as the strengths and positive aspects of inclusion.

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined.

*Inclusion:* Inclusion is the placement of disabled students into the regular classroom with their non-disabled peers.

*Disabled:* Any student with intellectual, physical, or behavioral disabilities.

*Collaboration:* Collaboration is the active give-and-take between two or more individuals who work together.

### Chapter Summary

Through obtaining the necessary teaching skills and engaging in teacher to teacher collaboration, new strategies can be developed to enhance teacher attitudes, and

therefore enable success for the learning disabled student to be included in the regular classroom.

Presented in Chapter 2 is the review of the research and related literature and it includes: (a) definition of inclusion, (b) history of inclusion, (c) proponents of inclusion, (d) opponents of inclusion, (e) improving teachers' attitudes, and (f) conclusion.

Presented in Chapter 3 are the methods to conduct this project and they will include: (a) sample, (b) design of instrument, (c) procedures, and (d) data analysis.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes are regarding inclusion. Presented in this chapter of the review of the research and related literature will be: (a) the definition of inclusion, (b) history of inclusion, (c) proponents of inclusion, (d) opponents of inclusion, (e) improving teachers' attitudes, (f) conclusion, and (g) chapter summary.

Inclusion of children with special needs into regular education has been an actively discussed and thoroughly researched controversy for several years. Despite mandates like the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act of 1997, educators differ greatly in their attitudes toward persons with disabilities as well as their ability and enthusiasm in regard to inclusion. Attitudes of teachers, as well as administrators, parents, community members, students, and other invested parties, have been suggested as key predictors of success in inclusion programs.

In an ongoing effort to improve quality of education for students with disabilities, initiatives have been made to integrate children with exceptional needs into the regular education setting. In 1998, the staff of the U.S. Department of Education reported that “the proportion of students with disabilities who spent greater than 79% of a typical school day in a general education classroom rose from 31.46% in 1989/1990 to 45.35%

In 1995/1996” (p. 203). From mainstreaming to a focus on the least restrictive environment, and then to full inclusion, the role of teachers has been altered, both in general education and special education.

Through the Individuals of Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, inclusion was transformed from a loose expectation to law, and teachers began to be held more strictly to the legalities of due process with the No Child Left Behind act. However, additional training, support, or resources did not often accompany regulations. For example, special education teachers have struggled for decades to acquire educational assistants (i.e. formerly referred to as aides), adaptive technology, and other resources for their students. However, they have been introduced to enough information and experience in regard students with disabilities to be somewhat ready to enter into a classroom and address the diverse needs of such students. On the other hand, general education teachers, who have not been prepared to accommodate the special needs of many students, have been required to address problems by attendance brief workshops, which were developed lastly, and to supplement their potentially inadequate training with continuing education courses during their free time IDEA (1997).

The Department of Education (1994, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997) cited that the system maintained a dangerous practice of leaving training up to the discretion of teachers and accommodating students inconsistently. There are many potential hazards with this concept, including how teachers vary in their professional integrity, their individual opportunities to access

training resources, the level of financial and professional support they receive from their districts, and so on. For many years, this system created a disservice not only to students with disabilities, but also to those who served them.

Idol, Nevin, and Paolucci-Whitcomb (1994, as cited in DeBettencourt, 1999) suggested that “general educators” attitudes and beliefs toward educating students with special needs are among the most critical influences, in implementing collaborative approaches” (p. 28). Therefore, it is essential to provide future educators with information and practical experience with students with disabilities in order to improve their skills and, in turn, their confidence in the facilitation of special education students. Also it is important to provide opportunities to practice the act of collaboration with other teachers and/or future colleagues on behalf of the process of inclusion.

The program of study must aim at providing knowledge, experience, practice, and self-reflection to prospective teachers before they are expected to manage a classroom independently. A knowledge base should be developed that includes knowledge of disabilities and laws, as well as specific expectations teachers will be held to in the day to day activity of their jobs.

#### Definition of Inclusion

Inclusion is the current term used by educational reformists to refer to the Placement of disabled students into the regular classroom with their non-disabled peers (Marino, Miller, & Monahan, 1997). The term, inclusion, often used in conjunction with mainstreaming, is based on the premise that all children can learn, regardless of various intellectual, behavioral, or physical disabilities (Marino, et al, 1997). Inclusion involves

the provision of instruction and activities in such a way that all students can experience success in the regular classroom (Stainback, 1997).

### The History of Inclusion

The idea of inclusion was initiated with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL94-142) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990. Currently, increased attention is given to these mandates that require all students, regardless of disability, to be given the opportunity to receive educational services in the least restrictive environment (Marino et al. 1997). The idea of inclusion is not limited to schools in the U.S.; it has received attention around the world. To resist inclusion would appear to advocate exclusion. Yet, some observers uphold that full inclusion is not always the best way to meet student's needs. Critics of full inclusion ask whether students with the most severe disabilities benefit from placement in regular classrooms. Some educators are reserved about how full inclusion is possible in the regular classroom. They maintain that it is not in the best interest of disabled students to be in the regular classroom because of their differing needs, and because their needs cannot always be met in the regular classroom environment. Educators, across the United States, face the challenge of providing children, disabled or not, the opportunity to learn in the regular classroom, with and from their peers (Stainback, 1997).

Due to parental demand, various court decisions, current research information, and successful models, proponents of inclusion call for radical changes in how students with disabilities are taught. In addition, this controversy focuses attention on how to best teach all students, whether or not they are disabled. This new attitude is a far cry from

the once held belief by many that disabled individuals should be hidden away from public view. In support of this change, the federal judge who tried the *Obverti vs. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District* was quoted as saying, "Inclusion is a right, not a privilege for a select few" (Education Week, 1999, p. 1-3).

Ultimately, the responsibility for inclusion is dependent upon teachers. As is the case with any civil rights based issue, there are volatile feelings on both sides as educators who support inclusion disagree with those who argue against it. The members of both groups approach the issue from vastly different angles. Teachers, who are critics of inclusion, claim that the inclusion of disabled students can be disruptive and detrimental to other students in a regular classroom. On the other hand, supporters argue that exclusion in the regular classroom is detrimental to disabled individuals, therefore, educators must change to meet the requirements of special students (Pearpoint, 1990). Both sides staunchly defend their stands and have valid arguments for their respective beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion.

### Proponents of Inclusion

In this new century, the current trend in education is to meet the diverse needs of all students in the least restrictive environment, ideally, in the regular classroom (Marino et al., 1997). Several organizations have embraced the idea of inclusion with apparent support from educators. The Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices (CISP) is active in all aspects of the inclusion movement and reform. They support the idea that inclusion is not just about a change in student placement, but rather it includes the meaningful provision of needed educational services in regular classrooms along non-disabled peers (Caruso, Giugno, Halvorsen, & Roach, 1997). According

to the CISP, the curriculum is the "unifying vehicle" (pg. 2) which should guarantee that all students, including those who are disabled, have an equal chance to learn the same information as everyone else. The use of creative teaching techniques can provide disabled students with the opportunity to learn the same material if the curriculum is unified and allows for diversity (Jorgensen, 1997).

According to Pearpoint (1990), "It is unethical, politically unacceptable and repugnant to write off marginalized people in our society. The cost of welfare maintenance is unbearable, either socially or economically. In short, exclusion does not work" (p. 2-4).

In 1992, members of the National Association for State Boards of Education (NASBE) released a report titled, "Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools." In this report, the states were asked to make needed changes in teacher licensure and certification rules so that new teachers would be prepared to teach children with disabilities as well as those without disabilities. It was recommended that the states provide programs to train regular education teachers and special education teachers to work collaboratively in the classroom.

Some parents of students with disabilities disagree with inclusion because they are concerned that the services that they fought to obtain for their child will eventually be discontinued, and the regular classroom teacher will be once again left with teaching their child with special needs (Cromwell, 2004).

Members of the National Association for State Boards of Education (NASBE) released a report in 1992 titled “Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools” which strongly defends the idea of inclusion. This group contends that because of PL94 – 142 the doors of public school systems have finally been opened to millions of disabled children who previously were denied access to equal educational opportunities. Recommendations from this group for successful inclusion incorporate the idea of improved instruction rather than labeling and placing students (NASBE, 1992).

An intense research project implemented by Rainforth (1992) studied the effects of the inclusion of students with disabilities on regular classroom teachers. Through interviews, surveys, and direct observation, she was able to organize her findings into 11 themes in regard to teacher attitudes and practices. One of the positive effects, noted by several participants was that “eventually the children start educating the adults” (p. 10). Often the students were able to teach and do what the adults could not. As the study progressed, the teacher participants resorted that learning about a student’s disability helped them be more understanding of certain behavior and instructional obstacles. The more experience teachers had with inclusion, the more they came to believe that inclusion was not just a simple favor they did for disabled students, but rather it was what they actually deserved.

Originally, the teachers had somewhat weak expectations at the outset of Rainforth’s (1992) program. After 5 years of being involved with inclusion, the teachers developed increased expectations that all students, disabled or not, could participate in regular activities in the classroom .

### Opponents of Inclusion

Although there is strong support for inclusion from parents, organizations, and educators alike, the overwhelming majority of regular classroom teachers do not necessarily have positive attitudes toward its implementation. Through his research, Marino (1991, as cited in Marino et al., 1997) believes that, for full inclusion to be effective, all educators and support staff must buy into the concept of inclusion (Marino et al.). According to Wilczenski (1992), although the practice of inclusion places disabled students into classrooms with non-disabled students, it does not guarantee complete integration of one group with the other.

Over the past decade, the responsibilities of regular classroom teachers have increased due to the diverse needs of students included in the regular classroom (D'Alonzo & Giordano, 1996). According to these authors, teachers are given little more, if any, in their preparation for the education and integration disabled students than they were 20 years ago. Therefore, often, regular classroom teachers lack the necessary skills and positive attitudes to successfully integrate disabled students into the regular classroom. Frequently, this lack of preparedness manifests itself in negative attitudes that teachers develop toward inclusion and the disabled in general. As a result, these attitudes affect not only relationships in the classroom but, also, they influence students' attitudes and behaviors toward each other and their disabled peers (D'Alonzo and Geordano, 1996).

Bea, Deeme, Griffin, and Minke (1996) cited the critics of inclusion who contended that "good teachers can teach all students" (p. 153) as an unrealistic

expectation. They claimed there is little evidence to support assumptions that regular classroom teachers are in favor of inclusion or are skillful enough to do it successfully. According to Bea et al., several researchers have found substantial evidence that suggests that regular classroom teachers perceive themselves as unqualified to teach disabled children. In addition, they alluded to studies that reported that teacher resistance to inclusion is not a reflection of their dislike for disabled children, or their lack of teaching ability, rather they tend to look at the big picture to calculate whether the inclusion of some students is the best alternative for all students in the class.

Albert Shanker (1993), former President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), has taken a strong stand in voicing his opinions against inclusion. He lamented that, although the term inclusion sounds democratic and forward thinking, if it is practiced in totality, it may actually put an end to some of the special education services and programs specifically designed for the handicapped. Many of these programs, which have taken countless years and dollars to develop, could be totally eliminated. He pointed out that, even though inclusion has been successful for some students, in some places, some of the time, there is not enough evidence to guarantee that success for other students and teachers particularly in cases where disabled students with violent behaviors are placed in regular classrooms. Although inclusion is the goal for all students regardless of their disability, there are still questions about whether it is the best alternative when one considers all of the other students in the class whose education might be jeopardized (Shanker, 1993).

### The Improvement of Teachers' Attitudes

Teachers play an important role in the success of inclusion programs. It is appropriate, then, to inquire as to the origin of teacher's attitudes. Although a comprehensive, complete list of variables that affect teachers' attitudes may not exist, several factors have been suggested, including, but not limited to: (a) formal training, (b) past professional experience, (c) close personal experience, and (d) continuing education. Studies of teachers have indicated that formal training up to this point has been lacking. The general consensus of individuals, who have been actively involved in the education of students with exceptional needs has called for specific training of general education teachers in conjunction with general education prerequisite instruction.

In regard to attitudes toward inclusion, Cook, Aemmel, and Gerber (1999) stated that the "previous literature has been relatively consistent in documenting that general education teachers are relatively less supportive than special education teachers". (Davis & Maheady 1991; Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Schmelkin 1981" (p. 206). This may explain why, in many cases, students continue to be better served by the special education setting rather than the mainstream, despite the long list of benefits of inclusion. It is unlikely that future teachers will enroll in many extra elective courses while they earn their initial teaching degrees. They may be unaware of the complexity of integrating diverse needs and abilities into a classroom. However, they seem to clearly understand the importance of learning some information about the education of students with exceptional needs. Sage (1992) stated that "Ninety-five percent of regular education students surveyed by Aksamit indicated that one or more required courses in special education should be taken by prospective teachers while in college" (p. 15).

Research continually supported improvement in teacher attitudes toward inclusion if adequate training and support systems were provided (Dickens-Smith, 1995).

According to Dickens-Smith, inclusion training seemed to be the “key component” (p. 6) necessary to fully integrate disabled children into the regular classroom. She cited a study conducted by Thompson (1992) who found that positive attitude changes were noted in teachers as they grew in knowledge of the needs of disabled students and what their responsibilities were to help them succeed.

Wood (1998) investigated three inclusion teaching teams and found that collaboration played a vital role in the successful implementation of inclusion programs. She noted that the use of collaboration provided the teachers with the unique opportunity to share their diverse talents with each other. Although teachers were found to be somewhat hesitant, initially, when they made role changes or shared skills and knowledge, acceptance was generally facilitated over time. Eventually, as regular, special education, and support personnel learned to work together, the attitudes of everyone improved and they achieved successful collaboration efforts.

Another area which research deemed to be necessary to successful inclusion practices is that of adequate support staff and assistance. Inclusive educational models have been developed to support specialists who work with the teacher in the regular classroom (Wilczenski, 1992). Members of the National Education Association WEA, 1999 support the provision of sufficient staff and technical assistance to support both the needs of the students and the teacher. Although the NEA is supportive of inclusion, they

stated that inclusion practices which lack appropriate training, support, and collaboration efforts “are inappropriate and must end” .

It is just as important to provide teachers with strategies for the accommodation of students with diverse needs and make adaptations in instruction and curriculum. Tapasak and Walter Thomas (1997) cited and stated that Bauwens and Horcade Downing McCormick et al. and Walther-Thomas, Bryant and Land.

Inclusive educators “employ a broad array of teaching (e.g., co-teaching, teacher assistance teams) and learning structures (e.g., peer tutoring, cooperative learning) to facilitate learning and foster relationships among students.

Experience is a characteristic that will vary among all present, as well as future educators. The provision of college courses in inclusion may offer some basic structure for a consistent, minimum opportunity for experience. Tapasak and Walter Thomas (1999) cited O’Shea and O’Shea and stated,

Clearly, pre-service programs...must provide both general and special educators with appropriate instruction and supervised experience to ensure that they develop appropriate skills and attitudes to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities and other students who are at risk for school failure (p. 223).

If special education and general education majors work collaboratively from the start, anxiety may be reduced and the relationship might become stronger. Furthermore,

Villa, Thousand, and Chapple (1996) stated by restructuring professional preparation programs in this manner, graduates no longer would get the message that they are separate systems of education. Instead, they would have the disposition and skills to work collaboratively and creatively with others to merge their unique areas of expertise in order to instruct a diverse student body (p. 43).

Ripley (1997) stated that this system will take time to be activated. “The biggest change for educators is in deciding to share the role that has traditionally been individual: to share the goals, decisions, classroom instruction, responsibility for students, and

assessment of student learning, problem solving, and classroom management” (p. 43).

Collaboration as a way to train future educators needs to be emphasized in the design of college curriculum and teacher education programs.

In addition, when they are not team teaching, future teachers should become somewhat independent in their classrooms. They will spend a great deal of time as the leader, and perhaps the only adult, in their classrooms. For this reason, they will need to continually assess their own skills and efforts to maintain inclusion. Preprofessional courses might integrate a component of how to self-reflect, especially in regard to inclusion. One way to achieve this might be to: (a) facilitate brainstorming among future educators, (b) teach them to think of ways to integrate inclusion, and to evaluate their own progress, and (c) observe the effectiveness of their own inclusion efforts until this becomes a natural process.

### Conclusion

In summary, the practice of inclusion receives great attention in the U.S. The passage of several laws which guarantee all children a free and appropriate education, regardless of their disability, has caused a split among educators. Proponents of inclusion argue that students would be included in the regular classroom to receive educational services. Others, who are critical, claim that inclusion should not be mandatory. They contend that the welfare of the whole class needs to be considered before it takes place. This disagreement over the issue has caused the development of some positive and many negative attitudes in classroom teachers. However, research shows that having adequate

active collaboration from all parties concerned can help to make inclusion a more successful experience for everyone involved.

### Chapter Summary

Research from the past 30 years consistently leads toward a common suggestion: teachers need more training in order to be prepared to include students with disabilities in their classrooms. D'Alonzo, DeBettencourt, and the U.S. Department of Education all concur that regular classroom teachers need additional training in order to best meet the needs of mainstreamed students. Success also requires collaboration among regular education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and the community. The enactment of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) omitted access to education, prompting a growing debate about the Government's continuing tolerance of discrimination against disabled children and young people. This disappointed many. Although education came under the anti-discrimination duties in the areas of employing staff, providing non-educational services to the public and publishing information about arrangements for disabled learners, access to education was left untouched. This meant that millions of disabled learners and prospective learners continued to face discrimination and exclusion. Finally, this misunderstanding has been addressed. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 made amendments to apply to the provision of education, heralding a long overdue focus on the experiences of disabled learners in schools and in post-compulsory education settings. The occurrence of institutional discrimination against disabled learners has begun to be considered unacceptable and unlawful. (Rustemier, 2005).

With the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), it is imperative that as educators, we look at the big picture and pull together to do what is in the best interest of all of our students, disabled and non-disabled, alike. Let us teach our students, whatever the extent that we must push toward, to provide learning tools that will enable our future citizens to be all that they can be.

Presented in Chapter 3 are the methods and procedures, It includes: (a) participants, (b) instrument and design, (c) procedure, and (d) analysis of data.





## Chapter 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes are in regards to inclusion. Presented in this chapter of the methods and procedures will be: (a) participants, (b) instrument and design, (c) procedure, and (d) analysis of data.

#### Sample

The sample for this study included all regular classroom teachers, grades K-12, in Hartville RII School District, totaling 66 teachers in all. This group of teachers represents the total available population, since all regular classroom teachers, grades K-12, will be invited to participate in this study. The available population is predominantly female (86%) and consist of teachers with a range of 1-32 years of teaching experience.

#### Instrument and Design

A survey was developed by the researcher to assess regular classroom teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. The survey consisted of 29 statements which are rated with a 5 point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The major areas addressed in this survey are: (a) the regular classroom teacher's

role, attitude, and knowledge of collaboration and disabilities; (b) the role of special educators play in inclusion; and (c) the impact that inclusion has on the rest of the class. Extra space was provided at the end of the survey for participants to add any additional comments they had concerning inclusion (see Appendix A).

#### Procedure

A survey was developed by the researcher and piloted with other educators who have experience with students with disabilities. Prior to the delivery of survey packets to each school, an initial contact will be made with each school principal to seek permission for teachers to participate in the study. During this contact, information will be provided about the purpose of the study and the questions to be answered. Directions for the distribution, collection, and return of the surveys will be discussed as well as the time frame for completion. Both principals were informed that all participants would remain anonymous.

Survey packets and letters of instruction (see Appendices A, B, and C) were delivered to principals. Principals distributed the surveys to 23 regular classroom teachers in the Hartville RII School District. This district includes Hartville and Grovespring Elementary Schools. A letter of explanation (see Appendix C) will accompany each survey. Participants were given 1 week to complete the survey. In addition, space will be provided for them to respond with any other comments they have about inclusion. Upon collection of the surveys, the envelope was sealed and delivered to the researcher.

### Analysis of Data

To determine teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, survey responses were tabulated for each question from all teachers. To determine the overall attitude of participants, the responses were analyzed and percentages calculated. Additional comments provided by the participants were read, categorized, and sorted according to themes. The results will be presented in Chapter four.

### Chapter Summary

The purpose of this project was determined what regular classroom teachers' attitudes are in regards to inclusion. Presented in Chapter 4 are the findings of the study, and it includes: (a) analysis of data, and (b) summary.





## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes were regarding inclusion. Presented in this chapter are findings of the study which includes: (a) analysis of data, and (b) summary.

#### Subjects

The population for this study included all regular classroom teachers grades kindergarten through seventh from Hartville and Grovespring Elementary Schools, both schools in the Hartville R-2 school system is group of 23 teachers represents the total available population, since all regular classroom teachers grades kindergarten through seventh grades were invited to participate in this research study. The available population was predominately female, 91%, and consisted of teachers who had a range of one to 32 years of teaching experience.

#### Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes were regarding inclusion. Nineteen regular classroom teachers participated in this research study. Participants completed surveys consisting of 29 statements to which they responded using a Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree

(1). Additional space was provided for individual comments. The major areas addressed were: (a) the regular classroom teachers' role, attitude, and knowledge of collaboration and disabilities, (b) the role special educators play in inclusion, and (c) the impact inclusion has on the rest of the class. The results of the survey were tabulated and the data provided was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The data collected were analyzed and summarized by related questions on the survey instrument to each research question, respectively. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the results of teacher's attitudes toward inclusion. The collected data was calculated by using SPSS predictive analytics.

Table 1

**Regular Classroom Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion****Questions 1,2,5,6,10,11,19,24****N=19****Likert Scale - 1 (strongly disagree) - 5 (strongly agree)**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
The inclusion of special needs students is a good idea, but it is met with resistance from regular education teachers.	2.57789	1.0706
Regular education teachers have the instructional skills and educational background to teach students with special needs.	2.3158	.8852
Bringing special education teachers into the regular classrooms can cause serious difficulties in determining who is in charge.	3.2632	1.0457
Regular education teachers prefer sending students with special needs to special education classrooms rather than having special education teachers deliver services in their classroom.	4.3684	.8951
Regular education teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of students with special needs while in their classroom.	3.3684	1.1648
The redistribution of special education resources and staff into the regular education classroom decreases the instructional load of the regular education teacher.	2.1053	1.1970
Students with special needs require more attention and assistance than the regular classroom teacher can provide.	4.5263	.9643

Although the inclusion of students with special needs is important, the necessary resources are not available for them to succeed.	3.3684	.9551
--	--------	-------

Teachers see families being supportive of inclusion.	3.1053	.9941
--	--------	-------

---

### Discussion

Teachers were in agreement that special needs students require more attention and assistance than the regular classroom teacher can provide and prefer to send them to special education classroom rather than have special education teachers deliver services in the regular classroom. Teachers did not feel the redistribution of special education resources and staff into the regular education classroom would decrease the instructional load of regular educational teachers.

The calculation of standard deviation of .8852 shows that most teachers agree they do not have the instructional skills and educational background necessary to teach students with special needs.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for teachers' responses to questions relating to the extent they feel they are able to collaborate with special education teachers.

Table 2

**1. Regular Classroom Teachers' Attitudes Regarding the Extent to Which They Are Able to Collaborate With Special Education Teachers**

Questions 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 26

Likert Scale - 1 (strongly disagree) - 5 (strongly agree)

Source	Mean	Standard Deviation
Special education and regular education teachers should collaborate together to meet the needs of special education students.	4.1579	.7647
The regular education teacher receives little assistance from special education teachers in modifying instruction for students with special needs.	3.5789	1.0174
Bringing special education teachers into the regular classrooms can cause serious difficulties in determining who is in charge.	3.2632	1.0457
Regular education teachers are comfortable co-teaching content areas with special education teachers.	2.2632	.8057
Special education teachers provide educational support for all students while they are in the regular education classroom.	2.8947	.9941
The redistribution of special education resources and staff into the regular education classroom decreases the instructional load of the regular education teacher.	2.1053	1.1970
Special education teachers only provide assistance to those students with special needs.	3.5263	1.0733

## Discussion

Teachers who responded to the survey agreed that special education and regular education teachers should collaborate together to meet the needs of special needs students. However, teachers indicated they received little assistance from special education teachers in modifying instruction for students with special needs.

Table 3 looks at the attitudes teachers have regarding how the inclusion of special needs students affects the education of regular education students.

Table 3

**Regular Classroom Teachers' Attitudes Regarding How the Inclusion of Special Needs Students Affects the Education of Regular Education Students**

**Questions 9, 10, 12, 16, 22, 27, 29**

**Likert Scale - 1 (strongly disagree) - 5 (strongly agree)**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
The education of regular students is hampered when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.	4.3158	.8201
Regular education teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of students with special needs while in their classroom.	3.3684	1.1648
The inclusion of students with special needs negatively affects the performance of the regular education students.	4.2105	.7873
Gifted students are neglected in inclusive classrooms.	3.4211	1.1698
Peers are accepting of students with special needs in the classroom.	3.1053	.8753
Regular education students benefit from the inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom.	2.2632	.9335
Regular education students do better academically when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.	1.7368	.5620
The social skills of regular education students are hampered when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.	2.7895	1.0842

### Discussion

When special needs students are placed in the regular classroom, teachers agree that the education of regular students is hampered and their performance is negatively affected. The standard deviation of .5620 further indicates this attitude since most educators strongly disagreed with the statement concerning regular education students do better academically when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.

Teacher attitudes toward how inclusion in the regular education classroom affects the educational progress of special needs students is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

**Regular Classroom Teachers' Attitudes Regarding How Inclusion in the Regular Education Affects the Educational Progress of Special Needs Students.**

**Questions 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23**

**Likert Scale - 1 (strongly disagree) - 5 (strongly agree)**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Students with special needs have a basic right to receive their education in the regular education classroom.	2.1053	.7873
Students with special needs improve their social skills when placed in a regular education classroom.	2.3684	.9551
Students with special needs loose the label of being "stupid," "strange," or "failures" when placed in the regular education classroom.	1.5263	.5130
Students with special needs benefit from inclusion in the regular education classroom.	2.4734	.8412
Special needs students do better academically in inclusive classroom.	2.0526	.6213
Students with special needs require more attention and assistance than the regular classroom teacher can provide.	4.5263	.9643
Students with special needs demonstrate more behavior problems than regular education students.	3.2105	.7873
Students with special needs adjust well when placed in the regular education classroom.	2.0526	.6213
The study skills of students with special needs are inadequate for success in the regular classroom.	4.0000	.8165

### Discussion

Teachers strongly agreed that students with special needs require more attention and assistance than the regular classroom teacher can provide. Responses indicated teachers did not feel the study skills of students with special needs were adequate enough for them to experience success in the regular classroom.

As is evident by the standard deviation of .5130, educators did not agree placement in the regular education classroom would help special needs students loose the label of being “stupid,” “strange,” or “failures.”

### Summary

The information shown in the analysis of data indicates regular classroom teachers agree special needs students require more attention and assistance than they can provide, in part, because special needs students do not have the study skills needed to succeed in the regular classroom. Responses show that teachers do not believe they have the instructional skills and educational background necessary to teach special needs students. Regular classroom teachers feel that there should be collaboration between themselves and special education teachers, but indicate they receive little assistance from special education teachers in modifying instruction for students with special needs. Overall, teachers agree that the education of regular education students is negatively affected when special needs students are placed in the regular education classroom.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes were regarding inclusion. Presented in this chapter of the summary of the study will be: (a) summary, (b) conclusions, (c) discussion, and (d) recommendations for further study.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes were regarding inclusion. Nineteen regular classroom teachers participated in this research study. Participants completed surveys consisting of 29 statements to which they responded using a Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Additional space was provided for individual comments. The major areas addressed were: (a) the regular classroom teachers' role, attitude, and knowledge of collaboration and disabilities, (b) the role special educators play in inclusion, and (c) the impact inclusion has on the rest of the class. The results of the survey were tabulated and the data provided was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### Conclusions

To the extent that the subjects of this study were representative of regular classroom teachers and based on the findings, the following conclusions appear warranted:

1. Regular classroom teachers prefer to send special needs students to special education classrooms. They agree that special needs students require more assistance than they can provide.
2. Regular classroom teachers agree that there should be collaboration with special education teachers, but indicate that they receive little assistance from special education teachers in modifying instruction for students with special needs.
3. Regular classroom teachers believe that the education of regular students is negatively affected when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.
4. Regular classroom teachers feel that students with special needs do not adjust well when placed in the regular classroom.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes were regarding inclusion. As indicated by similar studies (D'Alonzo & Giordano, 1996; Bea, Deem, Griffin, & Minke, 1996), regular classroom teachers do not feel that they have the instructional skills and educational background necessary to successfully teach and manage special needs students.

Studies have shown collaboration and adequate support staff is vital for inclusion to succeed (Wood, 1998, Dickens-Smith, 1995; Wilczenski, 1992). Although regular

classroom teachers agree there should be collaboration between themselves and special education teachers, participants in this study reported they received little assistance in modifying instruction for students with special needs. One teacher reported even though they had been directed to modify lessons, no specific ideas as to how, or to what extent, lessons should be modified were given.

Albert Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) claims that successful inclusion in one place cannot guarantee its success in another, nor is it necessarily the best alternative when considering an entire classroom of students (Shanker, 1994; 1993). Comments included by participants in this study echoed his sentiments. Some teachers felt that if lessons were simplified so the special needs students could succeed, then the academic education of regular students was harmed. Others felt the regular classroom was not a cure for students with special needs and suggested that special needs students who were academically handicapped to the point where they could not, or chose not to, work and learn, caused the majority of students to suffer academically and learn less.

The results of this study suggested regular classroom teachers are opposed to the practice of inclusion. Areas of concern were their lack of educational background and instructional skills necessary for teaching special needs students; lack of collaboration with special education teachers; and the negative impact inclusion of special needs students has on regular students. Teachers agree that if they are going to be expected to educate special needs students in the regular classroom then provisions must be made for them to do so successfully.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations for further study were made:

1. The sample for this study included only regular classroom teachers, grades kindergarten through seventh. It is recommended that future studies include all junior high and high school teachers.

2. The sample for this study included only regular classroom teachers from one rural school district. It is recommended that future studies include other rural and urban schools from other districts.
3. The sample for this study included only regular classroom teachers. It is recommended that future studies support teachers, parents, principals, and counselors.
4. Based on the attitude regular classroom teachers have regarding their lack of training, it is recommended that future studies be conducted to assess the needs of educators to help provide them with adequate training.

### Brief Discussion

School administrators and principals can alleviate the concerns for inclusion by providing adequate instructional skills and educational backgrounds on making appropriate modifications for special needs students in the regular classroom. This will allow success for both the regular and special needs students.

District professional development meetings or in-services would be an excellent opportunity to provide needed instructional skills and educational backgrounds to teachers so that suitable modifications can be made for special needs students. This would ensure that all regular education teachers are getting the same instructional information and therefore students would be accommodated the same in every classroom.



## REFERENCES

- Bea, G., Deeme, S., Griffin, S., & Minke, K. (1996). Teachers' experiences with classrooms: Implications for special education reform. *The Journal of Special Education, 30*(2), 152-185.
- Caruso, M., Giugno, M., Halvorsen, A., Roach, V., & Zeph, L. (1997, December). Consortium on inclusive schooling practices. Providing accurate placement data on students with disabilities in general education settings. *Issue Brief. Pittsburgh, PA: Allegheny University of the Health Sciences*. Retrieved December 14, 2005, from <http://www.asri.edu/CFSP/brochure/placeib.htm>
- Cook, B.G. (2001). A comparison of teachers' attitudes toward their inclusion of students with mild and severe disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education, 34*(4), 203-213
- Cook, B.G., Semmel, M.I., & Gerber, M.M. (1999). Attitudes of principals and special education teachers toward the inclusion of students with mild disabilities: Critical differences of opinion. *Remedial and Special Education, 20*, 199-207, 243.
- D'Alonzo, B., & Giordano, G. (1996). Improving teacher's attitudes through teacher education toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into their classrooms. *Teacher Educator, 31*(4), 304-312
- DeBettencourt, L.U. (1999). General educators' attitudes toward students with mild Disabilities and their use of instructional strategies: Implications for training. *Remedial and Special Education, 20*(1), 27-35.
- Dickens-Smith, M. (1995). *The effect of inclusion training on teacher attitude towards inclusion*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED381486)
- Education Week*. (1999, August 16). Inclusion, 1-3.
- Jorgensen, C. (1997, July). Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices. *Curriculum and its impact on inclusion and the achievement of students with disabilities*. Issue Brief. Pittsburgh, PA. Allegheny University of Health Sciences.

- Marino, S., Miller, R., & Monahan, R. (1997). *Rural teachers' attitudes toward inclusion*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED406099)
- Pearpoint, J., (2002). *Inclusion vs. exclusion, society is at a turning point*. Retrieved January 13, 2006 from Inclusion.com.
- Rainforth, B. (1992). The effects of full inclusion on regular classroom teachers. *Final report*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED365059)
- Ripley, S. (1997). *Collaboration between general and special education teachers* (ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education Washington, DC. No. ED409317).
- Rustemier, S. (2005). *Ending disability discrimination in education*. Retrieved January 13, 2006 from Inclusion.com.
- Shanker, A. (1996). Inclusion can hurt everyone. *American Federation of Teachers*. Washington, DC. Retrieved January 13, 2006 from <http://www.aft.org/>
- Stainback, S. (2005) Inclusion. *Encarta Online Deluxe*. Retrieved December 27, 2005, from <http://www.encyarta.msn.com/>
- Tapasak, R.C., & Walther-Thomas, C.S. (1999). Evaluation of a first-year inclusion Program. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20 (4), 216-225
- U.S. Department of Education. (1997). *IDEA* (1997). Retrieved January 12, 2006 from <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/Policy/IDEA/index.html>
- Vaughan, M., (2002). *Integration, inclusion and a stubborn education system*. Retrieved January 13, 2006, from Inclusion.com.
- Villa, R.A., Thousand, J.S., & Chapple, J.W. (1996). Preparing teachers to support inclusion: Pre-service and in-service programs. *Theory into Practice*, 35(1), 42-50

APPENDIX A

Survey of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion

**APPENDIX B**

**Letter to Principals for Approval**

APPENDIX C

Teacher Participation Letter

**APPENDIX D**

**Research Project Proposal**

**Approval Notification**

## SURVEY OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION

Please check the appropriate items below.

Current level of teaching: \_\_Elementary    \_\_Middle School    \_\_High School

Years of experience: \_\_1-5    \_\_5-10    \_\_11-15    \_\_more than 16

Gender: \_\_Female    \_\_Male

Please circle the appropriate response below.

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

1. The inclusion of special needs students is a good idea, but it is met with resistance from regular education teachers.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
2. Regular education teachers have the instructional skills and educational background to teach students with special needs.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
3. Special education and regular education teachers should collaborate together to meet the needs of special education students.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
4. The regular education teacher receives little assistance from special education teachers in modifying instruction for students with special needs.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
5. Bringing special education teachers into the regular classrooms can cause serious difficulties in determining who is in charge.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
6. Regular education teachers prefer sending students with special needs to special education classrooms rather than having special education teachers deliver services in their classroom.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
7. Regular education teachers are comfortable co-teaching content areas with special education teachers.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
8. Special education teachers provide educational support for all students while they are in the regular education classroom.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---
9. The education of regular students is hampered when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.  

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

10. Regular education teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of students with special needs while in their classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
11. The redistribution of special education resources and staff into the regular education classroom decreases the instructional load of the regular education teacher.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
12. The inclusion of students with special needs negatively affects the performance of the regular education students.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
13. Students with special needs have a basic right to receive their education in the regular education classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
14. Students with special needs improve their social skills when placed in a regular education classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
15. Students with special needs lose the label of being “stupid,” “strange,” or “failures” when placed in the regular education classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
16. Gifted students are neglected in inclusive classrooms.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
17. Students with special needs benefit from inclusion in the regular education classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
18. Special needs students do better academically in inclusive classrooms.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
19. Students with special needs require more attention and assistance than the regular classroom teacher can provide.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
20. Students with special needs demonstrate more behavior problems than regular education students.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
21. Students with special needs adjust well when placed in the regular classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
22. Peers are accepting of students with special needs in the classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
23. The study skills of students with special needs are inadequate for success in the regular classroom.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
24. Although inclusion of students with special needs is important, the necessary resources are not available for them to succeed.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1
25. Teachers see families as being supportive of inclusive programs.  
5                      4                      3                      2                      1

26. Special education teachers only provide assistance to those students with special needs.
- 5                      4                      3                      2                      1
27. Regular education students benefit from the inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom.
- 5                      4                      3                      2                      1
28. Regular education students do better academically when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.
- 5                      4                      3                      2                      1
29. The social skills of regular education students are hampered when special needs students are placed in the regular classroom.
- 5                      4                      3                      2                      1

\*\*In the space below, please feel free to add any additional comments, statements or suggestions that you have regarding the inclusion of special needs students into the regular classroom.

## Letter to Principals for Approval

[Copy sent to each of the four principals of the four schools]

Rebecca J. Kaisler  
11205 Claxton Rd.  
Falcon, Missouri 65470  
January 28, 2006

Principal  
Hartville RII School District  
175 N. School Ave.  
Hartville, Missouri, 65667

Dear Principal,

As part of the research component for my master's degree at Regis University, I am conducting a research study to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes are toward inclusion. I would appreciate the participation of your classroom teachers in this project.

Enclosed you will find a packet containing enough surveys to be distributed to all regular classroom teachers in your school. Each survey has a letter of explanation attached. If possible, these surveys need to be distributed at the beginning of the week and turned in at the end of the same week. I have enclosed an envelope which can be placed in a convenient location for participants to place their completed surveys in. Upon collection of the surveys, please seal the envelope and return it to me.

All participants in this survey will remain anonymous. All data collected from this instrument are for my use, only, for the research project at Regis University.

Thank you for your help and cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call. My telephone number at home is 668-8300.

Sincerely,

Rebecca J. Kaisler

January 28, 2006

Dear Teacher Participant,

As part of the research component for my master's degree at Regis University, I am conducting a research study to determine what regular classroom teachers' attitudes are toward inclusion. I would greatly appreciate it if you would take a few minutes of your time to complete the attached survey.

The survey consists of demographic items as well as 29 statements concerning inclusion. Please mark the appropriate response as described on the survey. In addition, on the back of the survey form, you may add any additional comments, statements, or suggestions you may have regarding inclusion. When you have completed your survey, please return it to the principal's office where an envelope will be placed for your convenience.

All participants in this survey will remain anonymous. All data collected from this instrument are for my use, only, for the research project at Regis University. Thank you for your time and help.

Sincerely,

Rebecca J. Kaisler

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION  
IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

by

Rebecca J. Kaisler

has been approved

May, 2006

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_, Faculty Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_, Associate Dean, Teacher Education Program