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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF  
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

by  
Lee E. Phillips

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the  
master of art degree of The Graduate School

At  
Rowan University  
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Approved by

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## ABSTRACT

Lee E Phillips

### PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

2008/08

Dr. Roberta Dihoff and Dr. Klanderman and the Late Dr. Frank Epifanio  
Master of Arts in School Psychology

Inclusion in today's classrooms is, on the most part, widely accepted as an appropriate placement for students with differing arrays of disabilities.

Although inclusion is often mandated by law, general education teachers more often do not have the proper training or positive attitudes toward its use. This study looks for specific characteristics, traits or differences from those who have negative attitudes or positive attitudes toward inclusionary classrooms in the next generation of teachers. The main hypothesis is pre-service educators will have more positive attitudes after taking the Human Exceptionality class. Finally, implications are made regarding the kind of training general education teachers should receive in collaborative and inclusive practices, and the need to strengthen pre-service education teachers and professional development in order for teachers attitudes toward inclusion to become positive.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Need

The way we educate our children today affects tomorrow's future educators within the public and private school systems. Society's standards, expectations and values toward education are constantly changing for better or worse, depending on whose opinion it is. Practitioners are using past research to produce today's methods of teaching. This means we are consistently researching for better ways to teach and are noticing areas that need or can be improved.

The legislation and the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the educational system were meant to improve education for those who have physical, cognitive and social deficits. IDEA made full inclusion of students with disabilities a directive because research found it to be beneficial to many able and disabled learners. Yesterday's idealists proposed the idea of inclusion and today's researchers gave rise to its implementation because research has shown it is beneficial and effective. However, not all in academia agreed on this new method. At the time of the passing of the IDEA and prior to it, the majority of administrators and educators did not agree on inclusion in general or could not agree on how it should be implemented (Coates, 1989; Daniel & King, 1997).

Educators today are constantly striving to improve the quality of education for all children within the public school system. In the past, school systems in the United States



(US) used specialized curriculum in a non-inclusive setting for someone with a disability; those disabled students were most likely in a self-contained special education class. Because inclusion is somewhat new and considerably different from the way education has been implemented in the past, it is pertinent to look at the preparation of K-12 schools, teachers and colleges in the implementation of this method. If administrators, educators and future educators have not been instructed on the various methods of inclusion, then a negative view toward its use might appear by mere lack of knowledge. If teachers do not agree with inclusion or how the school uses it, they might be counter productive, and the child's needs may fall upon the deaf, who will hear nothing of their cause and end up doing more harm than good. The study of inclusion will go on for a long time, because as the old administrators, teachers, counselors and school psychologists' retire, the newly trained will have different views, methods and strategies of how they will implement the IDEA.

## Purpose

The opinions and views of future teachers, administrators and parents are very important for the inclusion of students with disabilities because they might need to deal with, teach or take care of students with disabilities one day. In addition, the future educators enrolled in college now might have first-hand knowledge of inclusion, and how they feel about its use is very important for its future. The opinions of future teachers and administrators are important because they are going to be educating the students with disabilities who are placed in regular education classrooms. In addition, the students who have first-hand knowledge with inclusion in their K-12 schooling experiences might

affect their view on how they deal with inclusion when they become a teacher, administrator or parent.

## Hypotheses

Future educator's views and attitudes toward inclusion will differ based on college experience, specific information relating to individuals with disabilities, and personal experience dealing with inclusion in the classroom. Hypothesis one is students with more general experience/education will have higher positive attitudes towards inclusion than those that do not. Hypothesis two there would be changes in attitudes towards inclusion depending on the grade level that they intend to teach. In the lower grades, (K-5) they will have more a positive attitude towards inclusion. Hypothesis three there will be changes in the attitudes towards inclusion depending on their major. The future educators that have majors in Education will have a more positive attitude toward inclusionary classrooms than those with without an Education major. Hypothesis four there will be positive attitudes towards inclusion if the future educator has experience with inclusive classrooms in their K-12 grades. Those participants who have had experience with students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom in their K-12 grades will have a more positive attitude than those that did not have experience. Hypothesis five the Human Exceptionality class will affect the attitudes of the Pre-service teachers views toward the use of inclusive classrooms. Hypothesis six political affiliations will have no effect on views of future educators towards inclusion.

## History

The history of segregation and discrimination of individuals, groups and religions for specific services or innate rights has plagued the past of US history, and sadly continues for some today. In the past, people with obvious disabilities were segregated from the time they were born; it took viewing the perspective of many with and without disabilities to influence the passage of the various federal laws, and to ensure that rights are afforded to everyone, including those that differ from the rest. The federal enactment of IDEA in 1990 was a major provision for individuals with disabilities relating to their education. The IDEA included multidisciplinary and non discriminatory assessments of those with educational needs, the right for parental involvement in developing their child's educational program, free and appropriate public education (FAPE), education provided in the least restrictive environment, and the development of an individualized educational program (IEP) (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 by US Congress was a key building block in the fair treatment of people with exceptionalities (Shanker, 1995). Although there was an act in 1973 called the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, it did not encompass the language needed to command schools to appropriate the required time, money, resources and staff to teach and include our exceptional people. Through the years since the original act was put in place, several changes and adjustments have been made, such as the IDEA act. This newer legislation is a plan written to level the playing field among the children that qualify as disabled. The changes implemented since the original act makes the process much easier to define and include the students who need the Act's protection so they can receive the education they deserve and are entitled to. As

special education programs increased, a stigma was attached to students placed in those settings. Thus, educators conducted various studies to determine if disabled children could be placed in a regular educational environment. These experiments proved to be relatively successful, sparking a movement toward the inclusion of children with disabilities into general classrooms (Banerji & Dailey, 1995).

Today's schools are mandated to follow the specific guidelines laid down by the IDEA regarding students with disabilities. IDEA states students with disabilities must be placed in a "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE) (Pijl & Hamstra, 2005) and provided the needed supports. The IDEA has been amended several times since its inception, once in 1997 and 2004, and there are plans to amend it again in 2011. The following section gives the current terms under the recently amended version.

### Operational Definitions

Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) - This act states that every school system in the nation must provide an appropriate free public education for every child aged between 3 and 21. This applies to all children regardless of disability.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) - Additional guidelines added to the IDEA. This act added some methods on how to carry out IDEA and clarified some ambiguous verbiage used in the original act and its additional amendments.

Inclusion - a method of placing disabled students into general educational classrooms with the appropriate supplemental support to give the disabled equal

opportunity. The practice of simply integrating disabled children with children who are not disabled.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) - this term is used when referring to the fact that children with disabilities must be educated in a setting as close to a regular classroom as possible. The placement is based on severity of the disability and the individuals' safety.

Regular Class - a classroom that does not have children with disabilities and does not have any students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Special Education Class - refers to a classroom committed to a group of individuals that have unique needs and special ways of learning. Most students have an IEP.

Mainstreaming - refers to the placement of a child with special developmental, physical, emotional, or educational deficiencies or challenges into a regular classroom setting for part or all of the school day, with the long-term goal of helping the child make a gradual adjustment into regular class. The slow process gives the student time to adjust. For the school, it helps make sure the student is academically able for a permanent placement.

Full Inclusion - Educating students with disabilities in a general education classroom. It involves bringing the support services to the child rather than bring the child to the services.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) - A plan put together at the school by a team of various educational professionals, parents, teachers, and occasionally the student.

The goal of this team is assess the student's needs, and provide the adequate accommodations in the student's academic areas.

### Assumptions

In this experiment, it is assumed that students in the Human Exceptionality class will become teachers, administrators and/or school psychologists or counselors in a school setting. Another assumption is that all students will honestly answer on the demographic survey, and that their answers on the Rucker-Gable Educational Programming Scale (RGEPS) will accurately assess their opinions and views. Finally, it is assumed that there will be enough students with personal experience with inclusion in their K-12 education and remember their occurrences.

### Limitations

This study samples a relatively small number of pre-service educators in various majors at the undergraduate level. This number is representative of the pre-service education majors at the university.

Due to the population selected, one can assume this study is an accurate measure of the professional opinions of pre-service teachers at an undergraduate university. The studies are convenience samples. The sample is not a true pre-post cohort.

### Summary

The focus of this study is to determine the opinions and views of pre-service K-12 teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education

classrooms. Pre-service teachers need to consider many factors before accepting a teaching position. In light of laws, such as the “No Child Left Behind Act” enacted in 2002, inclusion is a factor for consideration for pre-service teachers. In the next chapter we will review the extensive literature on and research on inclusion and the important methods for academic success for our students with disabilities, as well as the school system as a whole. In chapter three we analyze two groups of responses to the same survey, one for pre-service teachers prior and post taking a mandatory Human Exceptionally class, we reveal their paraprofessional opinions and educational views regarding including students with disabilities in their classrooms. In chapter four the data from the RGEPS might also reflect the usefulness of the mandatory Human Exceptionally class for Education majors.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The results of research on the use of inclusion in classrooms range dramatically. A plethora of research has been conducted on inclusion. This research has been concerned with teacher training, and the experience of teachers with inclusion, including its effectiveness, usefulness, approval, and implementation. The literature will reveal the history of special education to the present day IDEA and summarize the past research regarding the views on inclusion, the methodologies produced for inclusion, and its use in public schools.

The idea of inclusion classrooms has been around at least 30 years, but its implementation is in its infancy and sparks huge debate as to how it should be used. Research on inclusion and attitudes toward it are discussed in chronological order and the majority of the discussion is prior to the passing of the IDEA amendment of 1997. A synopsis of the most current research is discussed, as well as what the hypotheses are regarding what the future holds on what the methods of inclusion could be.

In 1896, the Supreme Court decided on a Massachusetts mandate concerning children that were of minority groups, immigrant status, and children with disabilities (*Plessey vs. Ferguson*). The High Court decided that the above were to be educated in a separate system. Many times, academics were not provided for these groups and this was a major step for the recognition of these groups of students. Attendance was vaguely obligatory and the students being educated in a separate system were allowed to exit



school early to begin to work.

The segregation of students with special needs was viewed by the population as helpful to both groups of students, which protected children from what parents viewed as an “unsafe situation” (Zigmond & Baker, 1996). Initially, it was believed that students with special needs possessing moderate to severe disabilities required individualized attention and instruction.

In the 20th century, the case of Brown versus Board of Education was the benchmark decision that promised to eliminate inequities in public schools. This case was a product of trying racial integration (Stephan, 1978). The Supreme Court decided all individuals had equal rights regardless of the color of their skin. The Supreme Court’s decision raised more questions than it answered concerning what civil rights were and who else they could be applied too. This case paved the way for more legislation for equalities in public schools.

Recent seg-ways for inclusion have been legislation, such as Public Law 94-142 that was passed in 1975 for the Education of All Handicapped Children in Public Schools (EAHCA); a landmark case that set precedence for children with disabilities. EAHCA set “mandates that all children with handicaps be educated in the least restrictive environments to the maximum extent possible” (Banerji & Dailey, 1995). The EAHCA of 1975 also gave rise to the method of including students with disabilities in the “Least Restrictive Environment “(LRE), a term that was redefined several times in the 30 years after it proposal. After the passage of EAHCA, special education grew tremendously due to the increased funding from the federal government.

In 1990, EAHCA was redefined to what we now all know as the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA act, sets mandates for schools to place students with disabilities in,

an environment that constitutes a least restrictive environment: All handicapped children have available to them... a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs in the least restrictive environment, parents' rights, as well as the rights to due process, appropriate assessment, and fair hearing and appeal (Kendall & Demoulin, 1993, pg45).

The IDEA gave rise to the terms Full Inclusion, Mainstreaming and the Least Restrictive Environment.

In 1997, the federal government changed the IDEA and it received some important and numerous amendments. The definition of disabled children expanded to include developmentally delayed children between three and nine years of age. It also required parents to attempt to resolve disputes with schools and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) through mediation, and provided a process for doing so. The amendments authorized additional grants for technology, disabled infants and toddlers, parent training, and professional development (Pub. L. No. 105-17, 111 Stat. 37).

In 2004, IDEA was amended into the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, now known as IDEIA. Several provisions aligned IDEA with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The amendments authorized 15 states to employ three year IEPs on a trial run if the parents agreed. Several requirements were also put in

to the new amendments; an example of a change pertains to specific guidelines for the disciplining of special education students (Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647).

#### Research prior to IDEA amendment of 1997

Past research has documented various differences in teachers' attitudes towards inclusion classrooms that contain children with certain kinds of disabilities. Alexander and Strain (1978) looked at variations of attitudes towards physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, speech impaired and the mentally retarded (MR). They concluded that teachers are more negative toward certain disabilities than others were. In addition, Alexander and Strain found that teachers are more negative toward students being mainstreamed if they are emotionally disturbed and or MR students.

Johnson and Cartwright (1979) did research pertaining to whether education and/or knowledge of special need individuals or experience was more likely to improve teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classrooms. The study contained an experimental group of 29 potential teachers who were studying Educational Adjustments for Exceptional Children and Experience with Exceptional Children, a class that gives real life experience. These classes were meant to inform pre-service teachers on the practice of mainstreaming and giving them experience with disabled students. The pre-service educators completed a RGEPS before taking and upon completion of the classes. The study also had two other groups, which the authors called "Contrast Groups" (Johnson & Cartwright), one with 27 future educators, who were only in enrolled in an information course and the other group with 28 different future educators in an experience only course.

The before and after data from the RGEPS was measured using an analysis of variance and with repeated measures (ANOVR). The results concluded that neither experience nor information alone was effective in improving attitudes. The interpretation of the results showed that there were no dissimilarities in the “information and experience group, the information only group, and the experience group” (Johnson & Cartwright, 1979) in the data collected from the pre-classes and experience work. However, the study did find that attitudes did improve with the combination of information and experience with special need groups. The data from this study speculates that future educators can benefit from the use of experience and knowledge when practiced and learned at the same time and setting (Johnson & Cartwright).

In another study that analyzed the effectiveness of Class Wide Student Tutoring Teams (CSTT) in an inclusive environment produced improvements, not only in student confidence but also in teachers’ views toward mainstreaming/inclusion methods (Maheady, Sacca & Harper, 1987). Maheady et al.’s findings were significant, because they used regular educators as the main implementers. The CSTT findings were positive in many respects to the use of inclusion; the attitudes of the teachers improved, as well as regular students and classified ones. Not only did the regular education student grades improve but also their classified counterparts, and with larger percentages of improvements. The positive “Performance increments were readily apparent to both teachers and students” (Maheady, Sacca, & Harper), and this two-way feedback could have led to the improvement of the affected attitudes in this study. This study reinforces Johnson and Cartwright’s (1979) conclusion that information and experience improve the attitudes of teachers.

Fifteen years after Congress passed Public Law 94-142, (Education of All Handicapped Children in Public Schools (EAHCA)) researchers noticed in a real sense, Legislation 94-142 that was the catalyst for what we now know today as inclusion (Guralnick, 1990). Critical issues standing out from the early days of inclusion are implementation, effectiveness, and “the nature of the skills, attitudes and abilities [that are] necessary for teachers to be effective in [inclusion] settings” (Guralnick). The most significant achievement Guralnick postulated was that research showed “that mainstream[ing] programs can be implemented effectively.”

A study conducted by Stoler and Dennis (1992) evaluated regular education high school teachers views on the inclusion of handicapped students in the classes they taught. Stoler and Dennis’s sample size was 182 responding teachers out of 235 surveyed and they were from “from nine high schools in six school districts in a large suburban county [that was neighboring] a large urban area”. The survey was used to assess four factors: learning capability, inclusion, traditional limit disability, and classroom factors.

Stoler and Dennis (1992) concentrated on variables they thought would effect teachers’ views. These variables revolved around the degree of education, in-service training, and the amount of special education classes that were taken during the teacher’s college or post college education. The majority of teachers that participated in the survey held master degrees in an array of fields. In addition, no significant difference was found in teachers views’ based solely on the level of education received.

Stoler and Dennis (1992) found that the perceptions and views of teachers could be improved upon. The results concluded that special education classes were the most effective in positively affecting teachers’ attitudes toward the implementation of

inclusion in regular education classrooms. Surprisingly, the higher the teachers' degree was the less positive their attitude was on the use of inclusion in the regular education settings. The researchers also noted that short-term workshops and mere information on inclusion was not enough to have positive affects on educators' views. In addition to the results, the authors also thought the

Regular education initiative and least restrictive environment are synonymous with inclusion. Regardless of the name, the concept is the same. Unfortunately, as with some other new concepts in education, there is a tendency for the higher-level administration to encourage or require local school districts to adopt policy before adequate research or training has been completed. This concept should be adopted only after extensive teacher training and evaluation of pilot programs have been completed. (Stoler & Dennis, 1992, pg45).

Jobe, Rust and Brissie (1996) conducted another research project directed toward assessing the attitudes of classroom teachers. They used various demographic factors to correlate the dynamics that influenced teacher's attitudes toward inclusion. The research contained 182 regular classroom teachers from 44 states. Originally, 500 surveys were sent out to all 50 states, but Alaska, Maryland, Rhode island, South Dakota Vermont and Wyoming were not represented. Surprisingly, the results were neutral in respect to the attitudes regarding inclusion of handicapped children in classrooms.

Jobe et al. (1996) noted that the participating teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classrooms differed in respect to the type of disability of the children. This study of the

“attitudes of teachers with less than [six] years of teaching” did not change in any significant amount from “[the] more experienced teachers”. The researchers did notice a significant difference in attitude from the teachers with more in-service training but it was only slightly more positive.

Using focus group interviews, Vaughn, Schumm, Jallard, Slusher and Saumell (1996) examined inclusion and special education teachers’ attitudes on inclusive classes. The majority of interviewed educators not teaching in an inclusive classroom had unenthusiastic attitudes about the use of inclusive classrooms and their effectiveness. The teachers expressed some concern that inclusive classes may be more successful if they were based on class size, ample resources and preparation of the teachers.

The IDEA was changed in June of 1997, and it received significant amendments from Washington, DC, but these still have not yet swayed all the opponents. The definition of disability under IDEA was expanded to include developmentally delayed children between three and nine years old. These recent changes also required parents to attempt to resolve disagreements with schools through the Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) mediation, and for LEA to provide a process for doing so. The amendments authorized additional grants for technology, disabled infants and toddlers, parent training, and professional development.

Post research of the IDEA amendment of 1997

Lipsky and Gartner (1998) noted, that Congress is asserting that educating students with exceptional abilities “would be more effective by having high expectations [to] ensure their success” in regular education classrooms.” The writers also

stated that special education teachers did not have adequate “general education curriculum” and regular classroom teachers were in need of more training when it came to IEPs. The authors stipulated that change should occur in the way we train our teachers in the colleges first, before implementing changes in the schools.

Following Lipsky and Gartner (1998), a study assessed the training and education of teachers at the college level. Kirk (1998) looked at the effectiveness of a college class called *The Psychology of Learning Encompassing the Exceptional Learner*, which dealt with the majority of children that would be considered for inclusion classrooms. The study consisted of 59 teachers that completed the courses, and assessed their attitudes before and after the class. The data from the pre and post surveys, showed no noteworthy difference in the means from either test responses. Kirk did note that the responses in the post class did have differing instructional adaptations and awareness for the various learning styles demonstrated in exceptional learners.

The attitudes and opinions of teachers and teachers in training vary greatly when it comes to the subject of inclusive classrooms. The majority of teachers that have been teaching over 15 years are unwavering in their ways of teaching and are less likely to support inclusive classrooms. Given that teacher’s demographics vary as much their students do, a closer look within specific demographics would be prudent before implementing any changes, let alone a radical one such as inclusive classrooms, without assessing the faculty’s opinions and attitudes (Snyder, 1999).

Snyder (1999) conducted a qualitative study to assess the attitudes and concerns of faculty members about special education in their schools and in their classroom. The participants consisted of several counties, with varying different school districts, and one



university. The surveys were given to the participants during an unrelated education workshop that all administrators and teachers had to attend. The head researcher and workshop facilitator, Rebecca F. Snyder divided the subject's surveys into six different groups: Elementary School, Middle School, Secondary School, Tech-Prep and Career Schools and Administrative/Support Personnel. In the study, she decided to convert the data into percentages for each group, stating it would make communicating the quantitative data easier.

The surveys from all the groups of educators had the same overarching theme centered on insufficient education and lack of faculty support. Snyder (1999) reported that 86% of the general education teachers had at least one college class or work shop dealing with students with special needs, but 84% of them did not have the "confidence in working with students with special needs". Snyder points out that this study implies that a deficit exists in the confidence of general educators' abilities and their knowledge base of special needs students. This research also implies, for inclusive education to work, a more aggressive approach is needed, implying a more in-depth training method needs to be implemented in the understanding and experience of educators to come.

To accommodate more inclusive classes or students than the school has space for, some have to place their special needs students in regular education classrooms. In a study by Chris Forlin (2001), he identified potential stressors for regular education teachers concerning inclusive classes. He speculates that it is "not the actual stressor that induces stress in a teacher, but the way they react and adapt to [the] demands and threats that determine," the degree to which stress affects them.

The focus of Forlin's (2001) study was to assess general education teachers'

stressors in three general cluster categories: administrative, classroom based and personal. The study also recognized a fourth stressor that is involved in teachers, but not assessed in his study – organizational stressors. Forlin measured teachers stress by using the Teacher Stress and Coping Questionnaire (TSC). The questions are contained into four different areas: demographics, information about special needs children, potential stressors, and coping strategies. This study contained 571 general education teachers from various population climates and used their location as a variable in assessing what those teachers' stressors were.

In Forlin's (2001) research, he notices several variables that ameliorate the effects of stressors on general education teachers. The research concludes that "being able to identify the specific issues that are causing teachers stress during" inclusionary classes can enable researchers to equip future teachers with the right training and support in order to be more effective teachers(Forlin, 2001). Reducing educators' stress by educating them in more depth about understandings of students with special needs can give inclusion more momentum in being accepted by today's teachers, as well as the ones to be.

The idea of inclusive classrooms and their practice have taken many forms, shapes and sizes since their genesis, but the reality is that an effective implementation has not been found. Although, the idea of LRE has immense political support, general educations, "requisite attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations for [exceptional] students are still not in place" (Kavale, 2002, pg56). A study done by Marshall, Ralph and Palmer (2002) looked at postgraduate students doing their student teaching and examined their views on a narrow set of disabilities. The researches were trying to assess

the attitudes, experiences of student teachers and if their views had implications for inclusive classrooms. In addition, they were also trying to consider if the findings have a relevant influence on inclusive education policies.

Marshall, Ralph and Palmer's (2002) study used two different questionnaires with a sample size containing 154 subjects with 64 males and 90 females. Around 70% of the sample was born after 1970. The researchers noted that only 10% felt competent to teach students with language deficiencies, with 33% saying that they would not feel competent. Overall, the responses to the cohort group born after 1970 gave cause for concern about the implications for inclusion. Majority of these future educators did not feel competent nor have positive notions for LRE.

Educator's attitudes for inclusion have slightly increased since the 1997 IDEA amendments. However, were these positive increases from increased knowledge content or from increased experience working in inclusive atmospheres? A study by Karen Burkes and Candra Sutherland assesses "whether or not a relationship exists between pre-service and in-service teachers' experiences with disabled students and their attitudes towards inclusion". Johnson (2001) noted that, "teachers' attitudes can have a detrimental effect on [exceptional students] and can therefore prevent an inclusion program from thriving".

Burke and Sutherland's (2003) study used surveys to assess the relationships that do or do not exist within teachers and pre-service teachers. The survey consisted of 12 items and used a Likert type scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' The data from the survey reflected that preservice teachers' knowledge content was greater, with more positive attitudes about inclusion, with the researchers speculating that current

teacher training programs go more in-depth into inclusionary issues than the previous generation of teachers' programs. The data also suggests that in-service teachers rely on what has worked for them using their own education, and the lack of education on students with special needs contributes to their less than positive attitudes relating to inclusionary classrooms.

Burke and Sutherland (2003) contribute to the already immense myriad of research that has been conducted on inclusion. This added research only confirms that experiences and subject knowledge enhance the quality of and acceptance of inclusionary programs in the public education domain.

#### Summary of findings

The process of integrating students with disabilities in the general classroom will have positive and negative aspects for the teachers, students and administrators. In many respects, it may be a trial and error process. It will be the combination of the special and general education teachers to facilitate this change. Teachers' opinions and philosophies will be integral to this process, and the more positive opinions there are, the better chance for inclusion to work. Teacher, parent and administrator support will be the heart of the inclusionary movement to include special needs students. This support, if started early, will make the process of integrating inclusion a lot easier. For the older teachers' that are willing to change teaching styles for the betterment of their students will also influence the betterment of inclusion programs for the future.

Inclusion is affected by many different factors, including that of teachers attitudes, but one factor that has not been researched as much as teachers is the attitudes

of parents toward inclusion of students with disabilities. A study by Leyser and Kirk (2004) examined the various different attitudes of parents in various circumstances. The study looked at the parents of an inclusive child and the parents of children that are in an inclusive classroom with exceptional children, and the differing educational levels of both. The participants included 437 parents that took the survey Parent Opinion About Inclusion/Mainstreaming questionnaire (Leyser & Kirk). The results indicated that a majority of parents gave support to the concept of inclusion/mainstreaming from a theoretical and legal standpoint. These findings confirmed results of previous studies that showed a positive standpoint toward inclusion by parents of children that are involved in inclusionary classrooms.

The main findings from Leyser and Kirk (2004) were the benefits that inclusive settings have on children with exceptional abilities. The main benefits recognized by the parents were the social and affective outcomes that their children could have, and the encouraging effects students receive concerning their views of individuals that have disabilities. The researchers concluded that there still are implications needing to be considered. Leyser and Kirk state that more knowledge training needs to be offered to in-service teachers, and for pre-service teachers to receive more experience training, so that they can understand the perspectives of parents with children that have disabilities. The improved empathy by the teachers can improve the understanding by the parents for the implementation of inclusion

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Design

#### Introduction

The focal point of this research was to determine pre-service teacher's attitudes and opinions toward inclusive classrooms in K-12 grade. This chapter describes the methodology in order to complete the goals and purposes of this research study. A description of the methodology, sample, research questions, design, and data analysis is discussed in this chapter.

#### Sample

The population sample was taken from Rowan University's College of Education's students and consisted of those whose major is Education and/or those whose future goal is to be an educator. All participants were taking the Human Exceptionality class. Four Human Exceptionality classes were surveyed and they were split into two contrasting groups. One group took the survey prior to completing the Human Exceptionality class and the second group took it after completing the class. The participants' major is not relevant for this study given that that they were in the class, so it is assumed that they were interested in education. All participants were asked to participate in the study, told it was not mandatory, and that it would not affect their grade. Out of the four classes surveyed, only one student declined to participate.

Of the 96 surveys distributed, 95 were returned that were clear and concise enough to score but only 90 returned their demographic information. The 99% response rate is typical with convenience samples collected from college students (Alexander & Strain, 1978). The participant's demographics were predominantly in the age group of 18 to 23 years, with large percentage of the participants having inclusive classroom experience in their K-12 grades. Sixty percent of pre-service teachers indicated their desire to work with K-5 grade students.

## Measures

The Rucker Gable Educational Programming Scale (RGEPS) used 30 Likert questionnaire items, was used in this study with a custom made demographic scale written by the researcher. The custom-made questionnaire included questions regarding demographic information pertaining to age group, college level, desired grade level to teach, political party preference, and a question asking if the participant had any experience with students with disabilities in their K-12 experience, specifically if they were ever in an inclusive classroom. The RGEPS consisted of brief vignettes of grade school student situations and a list of options for educational placements of those students. The RGEPS was created by Chauncy N. Rucker and Robert K. Gable 1974. Rucker and Gable did have an early version of the RGEPS that contained 52 items also in 1974. In the selection of the final question items, Rucker and Gable used 65 field experts in the selection of those 30 items. The field experts consisted of 20 general experts on learning, 15 experts on mental retardation, 15 experts on emotional disturbance and 15

experts on learning disabilities. Originally, Rucker and Gable had more specific experts, but some had to be eliminated because their place decisions were more than one “standard deviations beyond the mean attitude or knowledge score for their respective group” (Rucker & Gable, 1974).

The participants in this study were assessed either pre or post taking the Human Exceptionality class. Four separate classes were surveyed; two classes were assessed prior to taking the class and the other two were assessed at the last class, prior to taking the final exam.

The RGEPS scores are based on the respondent’s placement choices of the students described in the vignettes and the scores were looked at in two ways. The first score viewed was the Attitude Score; this score represents the attitudes of the respondents toward including disabled children in public school or not at all. The participant’s attitudes are based on their answers to the questions concerning the placement of mildly, moderately or severe handicapped children. Knowledge scores were the second way the data was analyzed. These are the degree to which the participants are in agreement with the expert’s scores in the RGEPS manual.

## Design

The design for this study is correlational and is so because the results can not imply direct cause and effect. The questionnaire contains 30 self-report measures with differing scenarios based on inclusion. The future educator’s scores are correlated with eight different variables. Six of the variables are from the demographic survey, one is



from the future educators at the end of the Human Exceptionality class, and one is from future educators at the beginning of the class.

### Tested Hypotheses

The hypotheses in this study were:

Hypothesis I there would be changes in the future educator's attitudes depending on the college credits attained. Those that have more college credits would have a more positive attitude.

Hypothesis II there would be changes in attitudes towards inclusion depending on the grade level that they intend to teach. In the lower grades, (K-5) they will have more a positive attitude towards inclusion.

Hypothesis III there will be changes in the attitudes towards inclusion depending on their major. The future educators that have majors in Education will have a more positive attitude toward inclusionary classrooms than those without an Education major.

Hypothesis IV there will be positive attitudes towards inclusion if the future educator has experience with inclusive classrooms in their K-12 grades. Those participants who have had experience with students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom in their K-12 grades will have a more positive attitude than those that did not have experience.

Hypothesis V the Human Exceptionality class will affect the attitudes of the Pre-service teachers views toward the use of inclusive classrooms.

Hypothesis VI political affiliation will have no effect on views of future educators towards inclusion.

## Analysis design

To test the hypotheses, the use of independent group T-Tests and a one-way between-participants experimental design was adopted from the original RGEPS study. A RGEPS was used to attain the relationship, if any between future educators and the various variables. The one-way between-participants experimental design was used on the future educators prior to taking the Human Exceptionality class and after completing the class. The RGEPS manual provides expert measures to compare the pre-service educators' placement choices. This is in order to gauge attitudes by "employing the Euclidean distance formula" (Rucker & Gable, 1974). The knowledge of pre-service educators is also compared to the expert scores in the RGEPS manual.

## Summary

Ninety future educators were given a RGEPS questionnaire relating to their views and opinions toward inclusive classrooms. The questionnaire used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1= "Not for public education" to 7= recommend "Regular classroom." The future educators answered various questions that pertained to their planned future in education and situational aspects. The answers were evaluated to ascertain if any relationship exists between future educators and their age, grade planning on teaching, college level, political affiliation, their own K-12 inclusive experience, and before and after taking the mandatory Human Exceptionality class.

The Human Exceptionality course has a diverse and abundant amount of information to relay to its participants. The classes core issues discussed revolve around special education and the general treatment of exceptional individuals. "The course focuses on

the identification, education, and accommodations for disabled as well as gifted/talented citizens across their lifespan. The Human Exceptionalities course adheres to and reinforces the conceptual framework, “The Learning Community in action” (Services, 2009). The class also requires a unique kind of field component that each student must complete. This imaginary field experience component that each student must complete is done online using virtual visits to facilities that serve individuals with exceptionalities. All the knowledge, skills and dispositions in this class follow the Council for Exceptional Children and the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers guidelines.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Introduction and Restated Hypotheses

The principle reason for this study was to ascertain the attitudes of future educators toward the use of inclusionary classrooms. The hypotheses are outlined in the methods sections and this section describes the results with respect to each one.

#### Results

ANOVA was used to analyze pretest and post RGEPS scores. Since the participants were already enrolled in Human Exceptionality classes, random assignment was not possible.

For the hypothesis one that the degree of college credits will have an effect on attitudes, was analyzed two different ways. A one way ANOVA using five different group levels that was based on current college level yielded insignificant results (Hypothesis I). These five levels consisted of freshman, sophomore, juniors, seniors and other. The statistic analysis of the participants that had an inclusive experience in their K-12 grade, age group of the participant, political affiliation and the grade the pre-service teacher wanted to teach all yielded insignificant results (Hypothesis IV). An independent samples test was run on the pre and post samples of those students taking the Human Exceptionality class (Hypothesis V). The results are shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1 Pre and Post Differences

	Levene's Test For Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(two tailed)
	5.468	0.022	2.824	93	0.06
Equal Variances assumed			2.837	80.015	0.06
Equal Variances Not assumed					

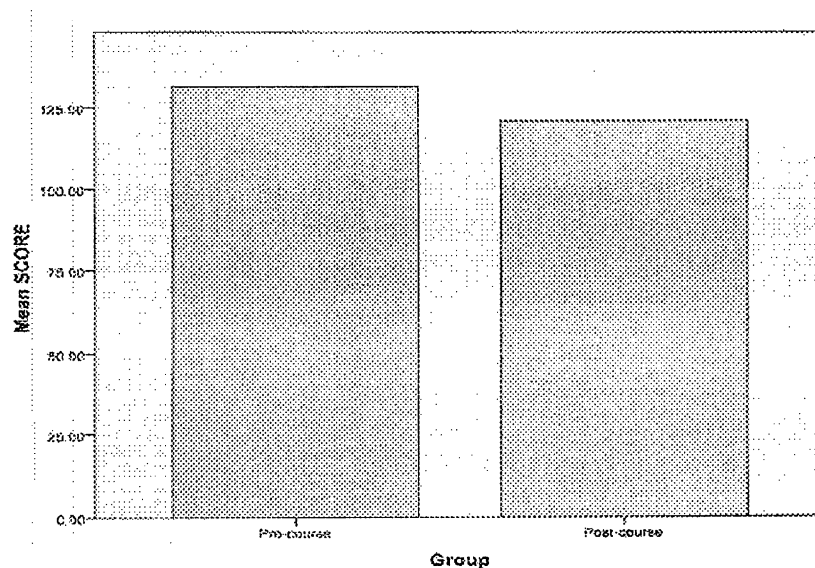
In table 4.1 the p-value is 0.022 and, therefore, the difference between the two means of the Pre course participants and the Post course participants is statistically significant, different from zero at the .05 level of significance (Hypothesis V).

Table 4.2 Pre and Post Differences

Group		N	Mean	STD Deviation	STD Error Mean
Score	Pre-Course	48	131.0417	20.70662	2.98874
	Post-Course	47	120.9574	13.19743	1.92504

The lower scores on the RGEPS (see table 4.2) by the Post-course participants that took the questionnaire implied, that the attitudes have changed (see graph 4.1). There is an estimated change of 7.12% (SE = 3.56%). However, there is insufficient evidence ( $p = 0.06$ ) to suggest that the Human Exceptionally class does change the mean (see table 4.1) of the attitudes of pre-service teachers.

Graph 4.1 Pre and Post Differences



### Summary

This chapter has served to outline the results that were found in the study. Hypothesis Five, which the Human Exceptionality class will affect the attitudes of future educators, was found to be correlated with more positive attitudes after taking the class. While the

other five hypotheses did not yield significant results, we discuss the implications for further studies in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

#### Description of Findings

This research was motivated by the desire to improve the environment in inclusive classrooms and promote its use in more learning environments. Since teachers, as well as administrators' attitudes are a major factor for furthering the implementation of its use and how effective it is, understanding educators' attitudes towards inclusion and what factors affect their attitudes is paramount. Several factors were evaluated to ascertain if any one had a positive or negative effect on pre-service educators: grade level, desire to teach, level of education, the pre-service educators' major, experience with special needs in the participants' K-12 grades, age group, political affiliation, and a class that revolved around teaching preservice educators about the disabilities population.

The available research on attitudes towards inclusion implies a diversity of factors that influence positive and negative attitudes towards inclusionary classes. Some relevant previous studies revealed that teachers with differing educational levels have different perceptions of inclusion. One study found a positive correlation with teachers with master's degrees or above that had less positive attitudes of the use of inclusion (Stoler & Dennis, 1992). In their research, they also found the educators who had more classes centered toward students with disabilities also had more positive attitudes towards inclusion than those who did not take the special education classes.



In this study of “Pre-service educators’ attitudes towards the use of inclusive classrooms,” 90 pre-service educators participated. The use of convenience samples was used and all were from a specific class that Education majors were required to take. The classes were surveyed four separate times; the first two times were from the first or second time the class met. The other two times the class was surveyed was right before the class took the final exam. The surveying of the classes before and after was to see if the class had any effect on the attitudes of the pre-service teachers. The Human Exceptionality class did in fact have a positive effect on the views of the post class participants, as can be seen from the results from Graph 4.1.

In one study conducted on the effects of student teachers attitudes, after having experiences with individuals with disabilities, correlated a positive increase in the respondents attitudes, which is similar to this researchers findings with pre-service educators, even before their student teaching (Avramidas, Elias, Bayliss, Phil, Burden, & Robert, 2000). In this research, the positive attitude gain was smaller than that of Avramidas et al. but the experiences of the participants in their study in real world settings compared to the student teachers’ experiences could explain the difference.

### Limitations

The study’s limitations were the size of the sample and the method used for data collection. While the students in the four classes totaled 96 participants, only 90 returned both the survey and demographic data sheet completed. In addition, two of the four classes of participants were slightly rushed to finish the RGEPS due to time constraints, and all of them were convenience samples contained within one specific area.

One other limitation was that the study relied solely on the pre-service educators self-report and honesty on both the RGEPS vignettes and the participant's answers on the demographic data sheet. Although confidentiality was assured, and an explanation that this survey would not affect their class grade, some participants might have felt obligated to participate due to the classroom environment.

## Conclusions

The results of this study did find one significant correlation between the pre-service educators' attitude scores among the varying different variables tested. The participant's attitudes before the Human Exceptionality class were less positive than those of the contrast group tested after completion of the class. The researcher was surprised that the attitudes of the individuals that had inclusive classroom experience in their K-12 grades did not have a more positive attitude than any other subgroups. In addition, on the RGEPS, no significant difference was found between age and attitude score. This result may have been due to the small sample size of older age groups of 24 and up. Another interesting non-significant result was that college level did not result in a factor that contributed to pre-service teachers' positive attitudes, but the mean score between college seniors and juniors did show that college seniors had slightly more positive attitudes. Further research is needed to assess more accurately the effects of the Human Exceptionality class, specifically between college levels. This is to assess at which level the student is more influenced by the class.

## Implications for Further Research

Further research should be conducted on all college student attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Considering the ever-increasing amount of inclusive classrooms and workplace's with individuals that have disabilities, even non-education majors should be required to take this class. In preparation for the real world, "the college aims to prepare reflective practitioners who are able to develop partnerships with diverse constituencies. In the workplace, graduates must be effective as planners, communicators, users of multiple strategies and technologies for diverse workers and clients" (Services, 2009). Studying the factors that result in more positive attitudes toward exceptional individuals would not only help those that are affected with disabilities but will help the people that will one day be the parents of a disabled child or work with disabled co-worker.

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## Appendix A

### Rucker-Gable Educational Programming Scale



## **RUCKER-GABLE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING SCALE**

### **Directions**

Teachers are ordinarily faced with a wide variety of problems arising from the many different kinds of students they work with each day. On the following pages are brief descriptions of children actually referred for special education services. For each student you are to indicate what **you** feel would be the best educational setting at this time.

You would actually need more information before placing most of the students, but please make your best judgments based on the information provided. Assume that all of the programs are available and competently staffed. Also assume that placements within the continuum are flexible and that it is possible for a student to be moved up or down the scale after treatment.

**PLACE EACH STUDENT IN ONE OF THE SEVEN PROGRAMS FROM THE  
CONTINUUM BELOW**

**REGULAR CLASSROOM** – with no basic change in teaching procedures.

**CONSULTATION** – regular classroom with socialists available for consultation with teacher (or parent) whenever needed.

**CONSULTATION & DIRECT SERVICE** – regular classroom with specialists available in the school to consult with teacher and provide short-term direct services to student.

**RESOURCE ROOM** – regular classroom with resource room services (special education teacher providing supplemental instruction) provided on a continuing basis in which the student can participate for as much as two hours each day.

**PART-TIME SPECAIL CLASS** – student enrolled in a special class for the majority of each day, but enters regular classroom for certain subjects.

**FULL-TIME SPECIAL CLASS** - student assigned to a self-contained special class on a full-time basis.

**NOT** – student placed in a residential school, hospital program, treatment center, etc. because he or she cannot reasonably be handled within the context of regular or special public education,

If you choose:

**Regular Classroom**, circle number seven

⑦ 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Consultation**, circle number six

7 ⑥ 5 4 3 2 1

**Consultation & Direct Service**, circle number five

7 6 ⑤ 4 3 2 1

**Resource Room**, circle number four

7 6 5 ④ 3 2 1

**Part-Time Special Class**, circle number three

7 6 5 4 ③ 2 1

**Full-Time Special Class**, circle number two

7 6 5 4 3 ② 1

**Not for public education** circle number one

7 6 5 4 3 2 ①

**PLEASE RESPOND TO EVERY ITEM**

1. Nancy is a third grader who has difficulty keeping her place during oral reading. Her handwriting is labored, the letters are very large and irregular, and she cannot write on the lines. Her work is disorganized. She gives up easily and needs a lot of attention.
2. Jim's achievement is approximately two years below expectation for his age of nine. He has great difficulty understanding and following directions and forgets them quickly. He seems to lack any social skills.
3. Clifford, a nine year old, is very alert and imaginative; he is able to discuss a variety of topics intelligently, but is unable to read.
4. Myron is a sixth grader who often becomes aggressive in class. His relationships with other children are usually quarrelsome and he is prone to get into trouble when left alone.
5. Ed repeated kindergarten because of his immaturity and is now having trouble doing his first grade work. If he is included in a group activity, he constantly teases the smaller children. He has to be watched constantly or he will destroy their work in a sadistic manner.
6. Jason, age six, occasionally prints letters backwards, writes from right to left, and is restless in class. His parents are concerned that he is still on reading readiness material rather than in a reading group like his classmates.
7. Herb has made a poor adjustment to his first grade class despite his capability for learning. He has difficulty participating in group functions because he is so mischievous. He often fails to respond to discipline.
8. Ray, age twelve, is a two time repeater with above average potential; he has great difficulty remembering material presented in a visual manner and in spite of a great deal of remedial reading instruction, remains a non-reader.
9. Kenny is a ten year old with a history of late development. He sat up at age two, he had no recognizable speech until age seven, he learned to walk at age nine, and he is still not toilet-trained.
10. Frank's achievement is below that of his fifth grade classmates. He is moody, and a loner who is continually seeking attention and testing adults to see if they like him. At home he has displayed physical violence, but never at school.

11. Leroy beat another first grader so severely that minor surgery was required. He has bitten a number of his classmates and had to be supervised constantly.
12. Charles is an eight year old who has not yet sat up, crawled, or walked. He is unable to communicate in any way. He has no bowel or bladder control, can't feed himself, and is very susceptible to upper respiratory infections.
13. Jose seems unable to perform the academic requirements of his fifth grade class, particularly in mathematics and language. He has a cheerful, compliant personality. He works best on a concrete level.
14. Virginia is an eight year old who does little work in school. She is capable of verbal and physical attacks on anyone when angry. She doesn't seem to care about any school relationships and neither threat nor praise are effective in dealing with her.
15. Tom, age eight, doesn't seem to acquire new skills, as quickly as most; he needs to have instructions repeated several times. He has difficulty working individually and needs a great deal of encouragement and supervision.
16. Annalou is new to her present fifth grade class. She seems anxious while she is in school, but is much calmer as soon as she leaves the school grounds. Her schoolwork is slightly below average, but she is quite responsive if encouraged.
17. Jesse, an eight year old, has difficulty keeping up with his class in all subjects. He is very large for his age and quite immature socially. He has a noticeable speech problem.
18. Stan is a twelve year old of average ability who wants desperately to learn to read, but even though he has had remedial instruction, he is virtually a non-reader. He disturbs other children by humming to himself much of the time. Although he is frustrated in most academic endeavors, he does very well in experiments and class discussions in science and on all oral tests.
19. Jerry is a seven year old who disrupts group tasks and refuses to go with his class to lunch or gym. At recess he plays with older children from other classes since his own classmates won't play with him. Although he seems to like his teacher and has above average potential, he seldom completes his work in a satisfactory manner.
20. Dan is a six year old who is extremely immature in all areas. He is not able to do any of the tasks that are expected of a kindergartner. His speech is primarily limited to word utterances. He has a negative approach to school.

21. Paula is a soft spoken nine year old. She has trouble understanding even the simple directions and often chooses to ignore them. She usually cannot do assigned work and reacts by crying or distracting other children.
22. Noel is a second grader who was retained in first grade. His performance is low in all subjects, but he appears fairly capable. He is lethargic, passive, and non-reactive, seeming to lack emotional responsiveness. He still checks each letter when copying a word and often confuses letters and whole words.
23. Bob is a third grader who wants friends, but his classmates continually make him a scapegoat. Although he is apparently bright, he is very forgetful and seems unaware of what is expected by his teachers.
24. Vance, age seven, is a good student in all areas except mathematics which is a constant frustration to him; he is unable to deal successfully with the most basic arithmetic concepts.
25. Bill is a very friendly ten-year old who has recently learned to write his name. His speech skills are on a very immature level. He has mastered a few simple self-help skills.
26. Mel continually disrupts his fifth grade class. He seems to be angry much of the time and often bullies other children. Although he is of average potential, he doesn't have much interest in his studies.
27. Christopher is a very articulate second grader with many interests. He works very slowly, particularly in reading. He is weak in phonetic analysis, can't seem to retain reading skills, and any academic growth on his part depends on a great deal of drill.
28. Don, age ten, is only slightly slower than his average classmates but he is clumsy and other students have nicknamed him "Don the Dunce."
29. Jimmy Lee is an eight year old whose academic performance is well below what is expected for his age. He has difficulty feeding himself, he is not completely toilet trained, and he has very poor motor coordination skills.
30. Fred is an eight year old fourth grader who was retained in first grade. His attention span is very short and many of his interests are immature. His motivation for classroom work is very low, but improves markedly in a one-to-one relationship. He has difficulty with reading, spelling, and arithmetic concepts. His oral performance indicates that he is far more able than his written work would indicate.