Primary concerns for successful inclusion

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PRIMARY CONCERNS FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION

By
Ellen M. Ward

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Masters of Arts Degree of The Graduate School at Rowan University May 2005

Approved by
Proféssor

Date Approved 4/20/05

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Research on inclusion was important in order to develop successful inclusion practices, which could then be utilized in new inclusion classrooms. The purpose of this study was to learn about successful inclusion practices which included, but were not limited to, positive attitudes, supports, collaborative teaching, team-teaching, teacher training, materials and resources, and curricular modifications.

The subjects of this study were a purposive sampling of the regular and special education teaching staff, as well as teaching aides and administrators who were directly involved in an inclusive classroom setting in the Galloway Township Public School District during the school year 2003-2004. Data for this research was gathered by creating an inclusion survey using a Likert scale format as well several unstructured questions. The surveys were then sent to the buildings in the district having had inclusion during the school year 2003-2004.

Thirty-five surveys were sent and twenty-nine surveys were returned. The majority of respondents felt that teacher compatibility was the most essential component for successful inclusion. Teacher compatibility was followed by positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and teacher training. When participants had the opportunity to select all the components listed on the survey, the majority felt all were equally important.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank some very influential people in my life. First and foremost, I wanted to acknowledge my parents, Eileen and Ed who have both guided me with love and support for all my years. They have been the strength that bonds our large family together and more specifically, the strength and encouragement that has enabled me to continue my education throughout my life.

Another extremely influential person in my life steered me into the field of special education merely by her birth. She was my niece and goddaughter Rachel who happened to have an extra chromosome on the 21st cell division, hence Trisomy 21 or Down Syndrome. As this research report was compiled and completed, Rachel was beginning her teen years. However in her short life to date, Rachel has surmounted many obstacles that would prove insurmountable to many individuals with or without Down Syndrome. I have dedicated this research to Rachel and other people with disabilities who have strived to do their best, whatever their respective and personal best may be.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Linda Thomas, my assistant principal at Roland Rogers Elementary School in Galloway Township, and my field mentor. Linda was always available to me and willingly shared her daily responsibilities, strategies, and perceptions of her assistant principalship position. My university mentor, Dr. Dennis Hurley, was also extremely helpful in guiding me through the many hoops and mazes that was my internship. And lastly, I would like to thank Rowan University for offering this advanced course in education.
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Primary Concerns for Successful Inclusion

Introduction

Focus of the Study

According to the New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council (Hunsberger, 2004), the definition of inclusion is… “The opportunity for all students, regardless of their disability, to be educated in age-appropriate regular classes, in naturally occurring proportions, in their neighborhood school. All necessary supports are provided to the students and educators to ensure meaningful participation in the total community.”

Research on inclusion was relevant given that an increasing number of students with learning disabilities were receiving their education within the regular education classroom environment. The majority of students with disabilities were already attending regular classes and spending increasingly more time in regular education classrooms. Perhaps more importantly, research has consistently revealed that these students with disabilities have benefited both academically and socially when they were educated next to their peers without disabilities (Johnson, McDonnell, Holzwarth, & Hunter, 2004). With this data in mind, it was essential to determine how to best prepare the school personnel who were being directly affected by these growing placements. As more and more student diversity occurred in the classroom as the result of inclusion efforts, attention must be focused on the preparation of teachers, aides, administrators, and instruction.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about successful inclusion practices, which were in place in Galloway Township School District. The use of successful inclusion practices meant any and all components of teaching including, but not limited to, positive attitudes, supports, collaborative teaching, team-teaching, teacher training, materials and resources, and curricular modifications. This study resulted in an inclusion report to staff and administrators for use when implementing inclusion in other buildings in Galloway Township School District not having inclusion programs.

Definitions

*Inclusion* means the opportunity for all students, regardless of their disability, to be educated in age-appropriate regular classes, in naturally occurring proportions, in their neighborhood school with all necessary supports provided to students and educators to ensure meaningful participation in the total community.

*Disability* means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such impairment, or a perception of such impairment. As defined by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, the term "child with a disability" means a child: with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

*Supports* means materials and resources, teaching aides, teacher training, as well as assistance and guidance.
Collaborative teaching means teachers are part of the instructional or planning team; collaborative approaches are utilized for problem-solving and program implementation; all teachers involved and other specialists collaborate.

Team teaching means extensive collaboration involving an organizational and instructional arrangement in which two or more teachers work in the same classroom. Teachers share, cooperate, and agree on methods of instruction, materials, discipline, evaluation, supervision of aides, and other areas of classroom management.

Teacher training means providing teaching staff with the opportunity for seminars, workshops, and conferences regarding specific information aligning with the staff members' required role(s).

Curricular modifications mean approaches to accommodate or modify the materials, methods of instruction, and curriculum for students with disabilities.

Individual Education Program (IEP) means the legal document that serves as the educational plan complete with goals and objectives specifically and individually designed for a child with a disability.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were the number of administrators, teachers, and teacher aides who chose to participate in this project.

Setting of the Study

The setting for this study was the Galloway Township School District in Galloway, New Jersey. Galloway Township was the largest K-8 school district in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties and also one of the fifteen largest K-8 school districts in the state of New Jersey. Galloway Township covered over 90 square miles in southern New Jersey. The
township was a growing community north of Atlantic City in Atlantic County, New Jersey located near Philadelphia, New York City, and Wilmington, Delaware.

According to the 2000 United States Census Bureau, Galloway Township had a population of 31,209, with 10,772 households and 7,680 families living in the township comprising 11,406 housing units. Of the 10,772 households, 38.4% had children younger than eighteen, 54.5% were married couples, 12.4% had females as head of household with no husband present, and 28.7% were non-families. In 2000, 21.5% of the township’s households were made up of individuals, and 6.6% had someone living alone who was sixty-five years or older.

As of the Census of 2000, the racial diversity of Galloway was 77.16% White, 9.8% African American, 6.16% Hispanic or Latino, .24% Native American, 8.0% Asian, .05% Pacific Islander, 2.59% from “other” races.

The median income for a household in the township in 2000 was $51,592, and the median income for a family was $57,156. Females in the township had a median income of $31,156; males had a median income of $38,048. The per capita income for the township in 2000 was $21,048, with 6.6% of the township’s population and 4.4% of the families below the poverty line.

The township had a mayor, a six-member council, and an acting township manager. Galloway also had many department heads such as chief financial officer, public works director, community education director, community services director, seniors/social services director, township clerk, court administrator, community development director, tax collector, and chief of police.

The Galloway Township School District had student enrollment of over 4,000 students and staff numbers nearing 600. Galloway was comprised of nine school buildings: Arthur Rann Elementary School (grades one through six), Cologne Elementary School (grades one through
four), Galloway Township Middle School (grades seven and eight), Oceanville Kindergarten Learning Center, Pomona Kindergarten Learning Center, Reeds Road Elementary School (grades one through six), Roland Rogers Elementary School (grades one through six), South Egg Harbor Pre-K and Kindergarten School, and Smithville Elementary School (grades one through six).

All subject area curriculums were directly aligned to the core curriculum content standards developed by the New Jersey State Department of Education. Galloway Township developed additional programs (AIM – Afterschool Instructional Model, EI – Early Intervention, and SLP – Summer Learning Program) in order to assist any students who were in need of additional help in the areas of language arts literacy and mathematics.

In terms of administrator and faculty academic degrees, Table 1 below demonstrates degrees attained by the year 2003 broken down by buildings in the district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Bachelor's Degree</th>
<th>Master's Degree</th>
<th>Doctoral Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Rann</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cologne</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galloway Township Middle School</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceanville</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomona</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeds Road</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland Rogers</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Egg Harbor</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithville</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Significance of the Study

This research project was important since it helped to create a successful model of an inclusion program. This model could be utilized in the near future as inclusion programs were to be implemented throughout the Galloway Township School District. Regular and special education teachers, teacher aides, and administrators in the district could benefit from this information as they prepared to jointly build successful inclusion programs.

Relationship of the Study to the ISLLC Standards

This study related directly to ISLLC Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision that is shared and communicated by the school community. The Knowledge of this standard is 1.a.1. The Dispositions are 1.b.1 & 4. The Performances of this standard are 1.c.1.
Inclusion is, in simplistic terms, the practice of educating students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools next to their non-disabled peers. Advocates viewed inclusion as a vision of commitment where resources and support were plentiful and where all inherently benefited as “the world is an inclusive community” (Sapon-Shevin, 1994, p.7). According to Price, Mayfield, McFadden, and Marsh (2001) Judge John Gerry in Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District wrote, “Inclusion is a right, not a special privilege for a select few.” However, inclusion was not an educational practice that could easily, and always successfully, work.

According to Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997), a successful inclusion program was one where all teachers were provided with all necessary supports and resources. Additionally, parents stated it was essential for positive attitudes towards people with disabilities in order for inclusion to work (Bennett et al., 1997). Several studies (Elmore, 1996; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992) also stressed the significance of administrators creating a continuity of focus in terms of a successful inclusion program.

Research on inclusion was relevant since the numbers of students with learning disabilities were increasingly being placed in the regular education classroom environment. According to Johnson et al. (2004) the 2001 U.S. Department of Education data confirmed that the number of students with developmental disabilities included in a regular education classroom had progressively increased during the last decade. Cook, Tankersley, Cook, and Landrum (2000) reported that students with disabilities placed in inclusive settings increased sixty percent from
1988 to 1995. With this data in mind, it was essential to determine how to best prepare the educational professionals as well as the students with (and without) disabilities who may be affected in the near future by these placements.

The public schools of America were growing quite diverse in terms of student population. According to Salisbury and McGregor (2002), thirty-five percent of students in America were members of a minority group, twenty percent lived in poverty, and ten percent were students with disabilities. The emphasis of inclusive education for students with disabilities and those considered “at-risk” in our public school systems across the nation was increasing.

“Differences hold great opportunities for learning. Differences offer a free, abundant, and renewable resource. I would like to see our compulsion for eliminating differences replaced by an equally compelling focus on making use of these differences to improve schools” (Barth, 1990, p.514-515).

What happened when children with disabilities attended regular education classrooms? From administrators to teachers to paraprofessionals, how did one best serve young children with disabilities? What made for successful inclusion?

Administrators

According to Blackman (1993), administrators should have been guided by the question: “What educational and social experiences will effectively prepare our children to lead fulfilled lives as adults?” (p.23).

According to most of the literature reviewed, administrators, specifically building principals, saw many challenges to inclusion. Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, and Schertz (2001) identified some primary areas of concern for school leaders. Administrators wanted to know where were all these children with disabilities coming from. They were concerned about having the
personnel to teach these students, and additionally, where to go for training and support in order to serve the included children. Some school leaders cited the need for paraprofessionals to work with students having severe disabilities. Administrators also felt collaboration was essential in order to make any necessary changes. Salisbury & McGregor (2002) concurred; stating that collaborative teaching practices between the regular education and special education teacher that supported the needs of all students was an essential component to a successful inclusive setting. Principals noted that parents must also be supported early through services such as behavioral skills and parenting skills classes (Brotherson et al., 2001). Research suggested that aside from personnel, support, resources, training, and collaboration, administrators’ attitudes towards students with disabilities were critical for inclusion to succeed due to the administrators’ leadership role within a building (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000).

A building administrator played a significant role in molding the culture and climate of the entire school, both staff and students alike. A principal could choose to nurture a community of learners in an inclusive school environment or choose to allow teachers, classrooms, and students to act completely independent of each other (Dyal & Flynt, 1996). As one of the first steps in a successful inclusion program, Westling (1989) felt that administrators should have a strong statement of mission and of vision for the success of all students.

Price et al. (2001) stated that the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Digest identified five areas of successful inclusion programs: attitudes and beliefs, service and physical accommodations, school support, collaboration, and instructional methods. Under the area of school support, The ERIC Digest expanded further by stating, “The principal understands the needs of students with disabilities” (Price et al., 2001).
Both regular and special education teachers also saw many challenges to the practice of inclusion. After all, these teachers had a great amount of responsibility for the success of their students with and without disabilities (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989). Teachers had just as many concerns regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities as their administrators or school leaders. According to McNally, Cole, and Waugh (2001), teachers reported that they needed additional supports if the students with disabilities were to succeed in their regular education classrooms. These additional supports involved additional planning time to prepare for the included student, personnel support, materials, administrative support, and even a reduced class size. Many teachers reported that they did not have adequate time, training, materials, and personnel resources for inclusion to succeed (Bennett et al., 1997). Kozleski and Jackson (1993) conducted a case study of a girl with severe disabilities from the ages of eight to eleven who was fully included in a regular education classroom. Their results indicated that aside from planning time, personnel, materials, and resources, successful inclusion called for positive attitudes and ongoing parental involvement (Bennett et al.).

Through much of the literature reviewed, a recurring theme was that of administrators and teachers stressing the need for parental involvement. Informed and knowledgeable parents were their children's best advocates. Parents of children with disabilities were actually themselves great resources of knowledge to administrators, teachers, and support personnel. They held a unique view of their child's development, behavior, feelings, and character (Dominguez, 1994).

Parents and educators needed to sit down and work collaboratively in order to determine if inclusion was the best placement for the child. According to Zinkil and Gilbert (2000), important
considerations needed to be addressed. These included: whether or not the goals and objectives of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) could be met; if the child could function academically and socially in a larger class environment; and, if it would be socially advantageous for the child to have increased contact with peers without disabilities. When parents and educators could answer "yes" to these questions, the process of implementing and carrying out a successful inclusion plan could begin in earnest.

Positive Attitudes

Just as administrators needed to have positive attitudes towards children with disabilities, it was equally essential for teachers to display this respectful demeanor. According to Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001), one of the most important components of successful inclusion was for classrooms where all students and teachers felt safe, worthy, and accepted. In order for students to have felt safe, their teachers and classmates had to first accept them. Cook et al. (2000) stated that recurring documentation suggested that educational opportunities were directly impacted by teachers’ attitudes towards their students with or without disabilities.

Positive attitudes towards people with disabilities were foremost on professionals’ and families’ lists of successful inclusion practices. However, it was not the common thread that surfaced in most of the literature reviewed. The common thread of the documents reviewed centered on tangible operatives that one could utilize in order to make inclusion succeed.

Most literature reviewed suggested that administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents agreed that supports, personnel, materials, resources, and communication and parental involvement were all fundamental components in order to develop, implement, and maintain the focus of a successful inclusion program.
This research was guided by the several components of a successful inclusion program which kept recurring in the reviewed literature and by the questions: What components did one need to have in place in an educational setting in order to experience a successful inclusion program? Which components did educators feel were more essential than others were?
CHAPTER 3
The Design of the Study

The subjects of this study were a purposive sampling of the regular and special education teaching staff, as well as teaching aides and administrators who were directly involved in an inclusive classroom setting in the Galloway Township School District during the school year 2003-2004.

To begin this research project, an inclusion survey was constructed which consisted of eight Likert scale questions, four questions regarding respondents' educational history/background, three unstructured or open-ended questions, and one rank-ordered item for respondents to sequence the important components of a successful inclusion program. The respondents were also asked how they would define inclusion. The physical appearance of the instrument was user-friendly in that it was easy to read, divided into sections, and had ample space for replies. Each section of the inclusion survey included clear instructions regarding how and where to respond. Additionally, the survey was constructed so that its completion was not overly time consuming for the administrators, teachers, and aides being requested to participate.

A distribution group list was created in a web-based email account which included all the inclusion teachers and aides in the district. An email was then sent to the inclusion teachers and aides in Galloway Township who had been involved in an inclusive classroom setting for the school year 2003-2004. This electronic message explained the need for the teachers' and aides' respective input in this project and also briefly described the type of survey they were being requested to complete. The email also provided a timeline in terms of when and how the respondents would be receiving the survey, as well as the date that was being requested for the surveys to be returned.
The administrators in Galloway Township who had had an inclusion classroom in their buildings for the school year 2003-2004 were contacted separately via email to describe the survey. The reason for the project, the format of the survey, and the requested timeline was explained to the administrators in the district who would be involved in the inclusion survey.

Inclusion surveys were then sent out in marked interoffice envelopes to the five school buildings in the district that had had inclusion classrooms during the school year 2003-2004. Attached to each survey was a cover letter requesting that the inclusion teachers and aides, as well as administrators, who had inclusion classrooms in their respective buildings, complete the survey scales and open-ended questions. The cover letter reiterated the information in the email stating when and how to return the completed instruments.

A total of thirty-five inclusion surveys were sent out to the five affected buildings in Galloway Township. Twenty-nine surveys were returned via interoffice envelopes within the requested two weeks.

The data were then analyzed and summarized using comparisons and contrasts to determine if any recurring themes existed from the respondents, and in what particular order in terms of their respective primary concerns for successful inclusion.
CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Data from the twenty-nine participants were analyzed using a comparative method to classify and compare recurring themes in terms of individuals' primary concerns for successful inclusion. The variables analyzed for comparisons were positive attitudes (towards people with disabilities), supports, teacher training, materials and resources, curricular modifications, teacher compatibility, and parental involvement.

The five administrators who responded to the survey had a combined one hundred eight years of educational experience. The twenty teachers responding had a combined two hundred fourteen years in the field of education. And, the four assistants who responded had a combined forty-seven years of educational experience. Table 1.1 below lists the range in years in terms of participants' overall educational experience.

Table 1.1  Range in Number of Years of Educational Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>9 - 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>2 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistants</td>
<td>1 - 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of educational experience in Galloway Township School District, the five administrators responding to the survey had a combined fifty-three years, the twenty teachers totaled one hundred sixty-two years, and the assistants combined for twenty-four years of educational experience in Galloway. Table 1.2 lists the participants' range in years of educational experience in Galloway Township School District.
Table 1.2  Range in Number of Years of Educational Experience in Galloway Township School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>1 – 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1 – 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistants</td>
<td>2 – 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked how long the participants had been involved with an inclusion classroom in their respective buildings, the combined number of years as well as the range in years decreased significantly for administrators, teachers, and assistants. Table 1.3 below summarizes the range in years participants were involved in an inclusive classroom setting.

Table 1.3  Range in Number of Years of Experience with Inclusion Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>0 – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>0 – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistants</td>
<td>0 – 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked, “What is your definition of inclusion?” One principal replied that inclusion was “…students classified with learning disabilities receiving instruction in the mainstream. Instruction provided in a team teaching arrangement by both a regular education and special education teacher.” Yet another administrator wrote, “a classroom setting/learning environment that includes learners of various learning styles and levels.” Responses from teachers included “diverse abilities coming together in a classroom with differentiated instruction,” “including special needs students in regular education classroom,” “a learning environment where all students are actively involved and included. Each child is challenged to their fullest potential,” and “special education students who are receiving an education in a regular education classroom with modifications and taught by a team of an inclusion teacher and a regular education
A fifth grade inclusion special education teacher felt that inclusion "...is an environment where two teachers of two different educational backgrounds work together with students both classified and not classified, in order to meet their educational goals, whether the goals are based on the curriculum or an IEP." A respondent who was a regular education teacher wrote the definition of inclusion was "including kids in the least restrictive environment, where they can be successful, through the support of a co-teaching model." A fourth grade inclusion teacher felt inclusion was "the integration of special needs students and regular education students together with the appropriate supports to enable all students to participate in the mainstream with benefits to everyone."

Participants were asked if they saw "many" or "just a few" challenges to inclusive education. Eighteen of the twenty-nine respondents chose "just a few," nine selected "many," and two did not answer this item on the survey.

Eight Likert rating scale statements followed in which the participants were asked to chose their level of agreement ("strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree," or "strongly disagree"). In response to the statement "My primary concern for a successful inclusion program is that the people involved have positive attitudes towards children with disabilities," twenty-two participants strongly agreed, six respondents agreed, and one educator neither agreed nor disagreed. When asked to rate supports (such as instructional aides) as a primary concern for a successful inclusion program, eighteen respondents strongly agreed, six participants agreed, two educators neither agreed nor disagreed, two respondents disagreed, and one teacher stated that "our inclusion room does not have an aide." One educator who strongly agreed about supports being a primary concern also wrote on the instrument, "Assistants are the extra eyes and hands of a teacher. They can be a real asset to the teacher."
Participants were asked to rate (according to their level of agreement) if teacher training was a primary concern for a successful inclusion program. Twenty-one of the twenty-nine respondents strongly agreed and eight educators agreed. One participant who strongly agreed also wrote, "Assistants should be included." When asked to rate materials and resources as a primary concern for inclusion success, nineteen of twenty-nine respondents strongly agreed, with ten participants having chosen "agree."

In terms of curricular modifications as a primary concern for successful inclusion, twenty-one of twenty-nine respondents strongly agreed, seven participants agreed, and one educator disagreed. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement to the statement, "My primary concern for a successful inclusion program is that teacher compatibility exists between the regular and special education teachers." Twenty-one of twenty-nine respondents strongly agreed, seven participants agreed, and one educator chose to neither agree nor disagree.

When asked to rate their level of agreement to the statement; "My primary concern for a successful inclusion program is positive parental involvement," fifteen of twenty-nine participants strongly agreed, thirteen respondents agreed, and one educator chose to neither agree nor disagree. One participant, who strongly agreed also added, "It helps, however you can still succeed without parental support."

The last rating scale statement on the survey was "My primary concern for a successful inclusion program include all the following components: positive attitudes towards children with disabilities, supports, teacher training, materials and resources, curricular modifications, teacher compatibility, and positive parental involvement." Twenty-five of the twenty-nine respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while the remaining four participants agreed.
The participants were then asked to rank the specific components (positive attitudes, supports, teacher training, materials and resources, curricular modifications, teacher compatibility, and positive parental involvement) “of an inclusion program by importance with ‘7’ for the most important to ‘1’ for the least important.” Respondents selected teacher compatibility, positive attitudes, and teacher training as the most essential components for successful inclusion. Teacher compatibility was ranked the highest thirteen times, positive attitudes was ranked ‘7’ nine times, and teacher training was chosen seven times as the most important component for a successful inclusion program. Teacher training was ranked ten times as the second most important component.

In terms of ranking the least important components for successful inclusion, curricular modifications and teacher compatibility were ranked ‘1’ six times each, with supports being ranked lowest five times, and positive parental involvement listed as the least important component four times. Comments written on the ranking section included, “It was hard to rank because they are all so important” and “I feel all these components are equally important in a successful inclusion class.”

Participants were asked to list “...any other additional components you would want in place for a successful inclusion program....” Fifteen respondents chose not to answer this question. Five participants felt that support from administrators was an additional component they would like to see in place for successful inclusion. One educator wrote, “I feel the components listed in your survey cover the necessary ones for a successful inclusion program.” Another respondent added, “Teacher training in regular education. Special Education should be a specialty, something additional to education.” One participant answered, “Making sure all staff, whether it is a custodian, school secretary, specials teachers, understand what inclusion is and that there are two
teachers. Also an official standard needs to be set as to what special needs students belong in this setting.” Another response was “Establish equality. If you walked into our room, you would not know who special education kids were or (who was) special education teacher. Both teachers should alternate homeroom jobs, attendance.” One educator wrote, “Each teacher has their own unique teaching style. It would be nice to find a way to match each student with a teacher, who could meet their individual educational needs.”

The last question on the survey was “When implementing a new inclusion program, what professional advice would you impart to the individuals who would be involved with a new inclusion program?” Teacher compatibility was mentioned nine times with responses such as “Make sure the two teachers get along – this is a marriage” and “to make sure the teachers are trained properly, having positive attitudes, a knowledge of curricular modifications, and teacher compatibility.” Other educators wrote, “To respect each other as people and teachers. Have high expectations for all the children in your class” and “Each teacher should work as a team, set up a routine and stick with it, divide your planning and who is the primary teacher and support teacher for each subject, both involved in classroom management and managing the class, discipline, routine, etc.” One teacher wrote, “Teams should always be a matter of choice. Teachers must be compatible.” “Make sure teachers get along and can work together!” was yet another response related to teacher compatibility.

Flexibility was mentioned three times by the respondents in terms of professional advice they would impart to individuals involved in a new inclusion program. Sample comments were “Be open, flexible, trust each other” and “Be flexible and let go of your control issues. Be careful of being a dumping ground and stand up for yourself, your partner and all your students. You will
enjoy all the benefits and fun you can have in this special setting. You will learn a lot about
yourself...good and not so good.”

One administrator wrote, “I would advise them to keep current on research. I would also
advise them that they could always see me with any concerns. Other responses included “Let the
program grow – give it time to succeed” and “Be ready to modify many if not all lessons; small
focus groups are beneficial; use modified materials and resources; keep parents involved and
notify when anything good/positive happens to their child.” One assistant wrote, “Every child is
capable of learning in their own way, at their own pace. Teach, as if each student were your own
child. Be positive and keep the line of communication open to each student’s parent.” And finally,
one teacher’s advice was “The focus is making each individual child successful.”

Two respondents left this item blank on the survey.
CHAPTER 5
Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

The participants in this study were selected because they shared the experience of including children with disabilities into regular educational settings in their respective schools.

Comparative analysis of the participants’ perceptions regarding the significance of positive attitudes, supports, teacher training, materials and resources, curricular modifications, teacher compatibility, and positive parental involvement suggested that teacher compatibility was foremost on the minds of the majority of the respondents. Additionally, this study suggested that positive attitudes, followed by teacher training, were also perceived as important in terms of a successful inclusion program.

However, when respondents were given the choice to select all components (positive attitudes, supports, teacher training, materials and resources, curricular modifications, teacher compatibility, and positive parental involvement) as their primary concerns, twenty-five of twenty-nine chose all components as their primary concerns. The answers to this item on the survey suggested that the majority of the respondents felt all components were equally important in order to have a successful inclusion program.

The majority (eighteen of twenty-nine) of the respondents replied that inclusion came with “just a few challenges.” This finding was inconsistent with the previous findings of Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin (1989), which suggested that teachers and administrators had many concerns regarding inclusion and students with disabilities. The reasons for inconsistency with the previous study could include, but were not limited to, the difference and number of subjects, participants, and/or sampling, and the span in years of both studies.
When the respondents were asked to impart professional advice to educators involved in a new inclusion program, the majority of the participants wrote about the significance of teacher compatibility, followed by flexibility which in all cases was tied to flexibility in terms of working closely with another educational professional.

This study related directly to ISLLC Standard 1: *A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision that is shared and communicated by the school community.* Additionally, this standard dealt directly with diversity and inclusion with a school administrator who believed in and was committed to both the educability of all and inclusion itself.

The question that guided this research was: What were administrators’, teachers’, and aides’ perceptions about the significance of positive attitudes, supports, teacher training, materials and resources, curricular modifications, teacher compatibility, and positive parental involvement with regard to a successful inclusive classroom setting?

The majority of respondents chose teacher compatibility, followed by positive attitudes, and finally, teacher training as the most essential components for successful inclusion of students with disabilities.

Suggestions for further research in this particular area would include greater specification of exactly what teacher compatibility would be comprised of in terms of individual characteristics and/or traits, as well as what specific individual flexibility would be required. Were there specific types of individuals who would perform better together for the benefit of all children? Would it prove overwhelmingly beneficial to all involved in an inclusion program if the educators had similar ideologies and educational philosophies? Or, should the educators involved have diverse ideologies and educational philosophies in order to complement each other?
Since positive attitudes were forefront on many educators’ minds in this particular study, future research could include a study exploring positive attitudes toward people with disabilities. Who are the people who have positive attitudes toward people with disabilities? Do they have contact with any individuals with disabilities, and if so, in what context? Who are the people who have less than positive attitudes toward people with disabilities? Do these individuals have contact with people with disabilities, and if so, in what context? And finally, what exactly constitutes a positive attitude versus a negative attitude towards someone with a life long disability?

Another suggestion for future study would include teacher training. Future research may be needed to determine which specific skill areas teachers need most in order to be best prepared for students with disabilities in their classrooms. Research concerning strategies for behavior management, academic, social, and daily living skills could prove useful to administrators, teachers, and aides dealing with students with disabilities included in the regular education setting. While social and academic concerns might be more prevalent in the earlier school years, the concerns might shift to daily living skills in the included student’s later years in school.

As an increasing number of students with learning disabilities receive their education in a regular educational setting, it is essential to continue to study means in which to make the inclusion experience successful and meaningful for all involved in the process of inclusion.
REFERENCES


