Perceptions Of Elementary School Teachers Regarding Preparedness And Inclusionary Practices Of Classified Students In Public Elementary Schools

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PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS REGARDING PREPAREDNESS AND INCLUSIONARY PRACTICES OF CLASSIFIED STUDENTS IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

BY

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DEDICATION

My family is always behind me. My brother, Bob, supports my endeavors and cheers me on through his friendship and love. My Mother, Marie, is always proud of my accomplishments and believes in me and knows what I am capable of. She, too, cheers me on, and through her love makes me believe in myself. My son, Jesse, whose birth was the most spectacular event of my life, experienced this journey along with me. He is my reason for a lot of my accomplishments. I continually strive to make him proud of me. My Dad, who is no longer with us, has been my angel on my shoulder throughout this journey. And lastly, my Aunt Lois, who has also passed on, made this possible. My love to all of you.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

More than 40 years have passed since Jerome Brunner (1960) wrote about the need to better prepare our schools and our teachers to meet the challenges of a social democracy. His words still ring true today as approximately 11 percent (5.3 million) of school-age children are classified according to the U. S. Department of Education (1995). At the same time the movement towards mainstreaming and inclusive classrooms has brought hundreds of thousands of classified students into the general education classroom. Today's teachers are expected to have the skills to teach a wide range of students.

Much more effort in the actual preparation of curriculum materials, in teacher training, and in supporting research will be necessary if improvements in our educational practices are to be of an order that will meet the challenges of the scientific and social revolution through which we are now living. (Brunner, 1960 p. 32)

In the wake of the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Free And Appropriate Education (FAPE), efforts were been made in the United States and abroad to integrate diverse types of students, into the regular education classes. This practice requires the knowledge and skills of teachers and the leadership of administrators for success. The success of inclusion is meeting the unique needs of all of the students in the
class. An understanding of inclusion, its ramifications on all involved, an ability to adjust pedagogy and methodologies to meet all learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, an ability to communicate with students and parents conceptually and empathetically, and a personal ability to cope while attempting to meet everyone’s needs and expectations are a full menu for any teacher. With this reform in education towards full inclusion, are all of our teachers adequately prepared? Have they acquired the necessary information and skills from their educational courses in higher education? If not, are they receiving adequate knowledge and support from their school district while immersed in inclusion? While the movement towards inclusion rapidly increases, the lack of adequate knowledge and resources come full circle as some of the higher institutions of learning adjust to this paradigm shift in educational standards and must innovate curriculum to meet educational teacher training.

The researcher’s concerns are for both the teacher and for the students, for as the teachers become better educated about inclusion and meeting the unique needs of all children, the children benefit, which is the overall goal of education.

Background of the Problem/History and Legislation

Historically the deviant individual has repeatedly been placed into some sort of category. During the time from the Early Middle Ages to the 1600s society placed the deviant individual into hospitals or asylums (segregation phase); during the 1700s –1800s social supporters of humane treatment developed specialized schools for training (transition phase) and the 1900s to present where society has been making the biggest attempt to include these individuals into society as functioning and contributing human beings (service phase) (Coleman, 1996). During the latter phase, national organizations
cropped up in support of individuals with mental disorders, and those in support of education for children with disabilities. For example, in 1922, The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) an organization comprised of parents of children with disabilities and educators was established. A group of administrators and supervisors were attending the summer session at the Teachers College, Columbia University (1922), and their faculty members organized the International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children (ICEP). Also established in 1930 was the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, a first attempt to recognize special education as a valid integral segment of the educational system. These emerging viewpoints led to the beginning of additional mental health course work in teacher education courses at the university level (Coleman, 1996). The merger of the ICEP with the Special Education Department of the National Education Association resulted in the Council's becoming a department of the National Education Association (1941) (http://www.cec.sped.org). Coleman (1965) reported that parent advocate groups continued to rise in the late 1940s and 1950s, such as the National Association for Retarded Citizens (1950), the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (1964), and the National Society for Autistic Children (1965).

As the decades passed, more attention was placed on rights for the individuals, particularly in educational settings. Many court cases became significant watersheds for future legislative actions on behalf of individuals with disabilities. For instance, in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954), The United States Supreme Court established the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution providing free access of public education to African–American students. The court stated that is was
not lawful to discriminate against students for reasons unrelated to educational practices, and anything else is considered "separate but not equal." The plaintiff's attorney, John W. Davis said in court that the ruling in this case serves as a foundation for prohibiting the exclusion of all children, including those with disabilities (Alper, Schloss, & Schloss, 1994). In 1970, *Diana v. California State Board of Education* set the groundsworks for affirming the rights of students to be tested in their native language, and this later was interpreted to include methods to be used with individuals with hearing impairment, visual impairment, and physical disabilities. The following year, The Federal District Court ruled in *Wyatt v. Aderbolt* (1971), that institutionalized children and youths with mental retardation be granted the necessary services for their treatments. The same year the federal district court extended stare decisis to PARC, *Bowman et al. v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) requiring access to education and due process for students with mental retardation (Alper, Scholss, & Scholss, 1994). *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia* (1971) enabled all children with disabilities a right to an education and gave their parents the right to due process procedures, correct assessment for these children, and proper educational placements: This case led to *Public Law 93-112*, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This legislative action ensured required services rendered to those disabled persons in need, funds for more research and training, and Sections 503 and 504 focused on affirmative action for students in universities and employees employed where federal funds are received (Coleman, 1996).

On November 29, 1975 President Ford signed a legislative course of action, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, *Public Law 94-142*, ensuring a free and appropriate education to all children with disabilities, evaluation and assessment, and
guaranteeing the right to due process of the law, and financial support for educational services (Mercer, 1998). With PL94-142 came the emergence of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). This program is a personalized instructional plan that facilitates the needs of the individualized learner, mapping out for the teacher the goals and objectives that need to be met, outcomes for the student, curriculum, teacher's responsibilities, schedule, settings, and related services (Mercer & Mercer, 1998). With these parameters come some difficult decisions that may affect the quality of education being received, such as the most appropriate educational setting to serve the students' needs, the decisions of who will deliver instruction to the students, and the decision of who will be the students' peers in this chosen educational setting. IDEA delineates that a least restrictive environment (LRE) be chosen for meeting the needs of the disabled student, specifically that if appropriate the disabled student should be educated with the nondisabled student. The IEP determines the best setting to meet the student's educational and social needs. In the past, disabled students were placed in self-contained classrooms with other disabled students, all with varying needs. The premise behind LRE was to remove any negative connotations attached to the disabled student being included in segregated settings (Mercer, 1998). At this period in time in the 1970s, various disorders were recognized and the services for meeting the needs of these disorders were delegated to specialists. For example, disorders of the spoken language were now shifted to speech and language therapist. Using new resources, such as, criterion-oriented materials, approaches were utilized specifically for written language and perceptual and motor processing disorders. Commercially developed programs were initiated into the market that focused on skills rather than on abilities.
These models were investigated by leaders in the field, such as Kirk, Cruickshank, and Frostig (as cited in Mercer, 1997) and soon faded away with PL94-142 being more strongly implemented. Behavioral approaches were utilized for direct and reinforced instruction, and then cognitive based interventions were instrumental in approaching learning disability instruction. This period of time, the 1980s, marked the emergence of more federal legislation, giving attention and support to learning disabilities, ability models of instruction, computer assisted materials for stronger academic emphasis for written language deficits, reinforced instructional approaches for behavior modification, criterion tasks for learning disabilities, and the move toward cognitive based approaches to learning (Mercer, 1997).

Emerging in 1986 was Public Law 99-457 whereby the legislation for education was changed to include infants and preschoolers that required family services. Then on October 30, 1990, President Bush took legislation a step further and signed Public Law 101-476, The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990 (as cited in Coleman, 1997), which later came to be known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.) This latter derivation of the law replaced the term handicapped with the term disabled for all categories to be included under this more generalized term, including autism and traumatic brain disorders. Attention Deficit Disorder does not fall under this category and hence does not extend to the same services; however, children with this classification would receive services under preexisting special educational services (Mercer & Mercer, 1998).

IDEA made it possible for services to be provided for infants and toddlers, and a free and appropriate public education for individual’s ages 3-21 years of age. The IDEA
ensures four basic educational rights to disabled students: (a) an assessment of the specific disability with no one measurement being dominant, (b) A free and appropriate public education suited to individual needs, (c) placement in an environment considered the "least restrictive" when most applicable, and (d) additional services when needed.

Historically, the next step in this ongoing movement towards individual education is mainstreaming. IDEA does not touch upon this concept of integrating students with disabilities with nondisabled students on a part-time basis. This aspect of LRE is a responsible action only when it is deemed that the outcomes will be academically and socially beneficial to the disabled students, and only when their unique needs are being sufficiently met (Mercer & Mercer, 1998). To further establish that a proper LRE is appropriate for the student, alternative approaches are instituted to ensure that unique needs were being met academically. In order for this to occur efficiently the teacher-student ratio may have to be adjusted, such as in a class ranging in the mid-20s to 1 or lower. The teacher may have to be provided with additional instructional support from a learning disabilities teacher. Another form of instructional support may come from an itinerant service provider whereby a teacher makes periodic visits to classrooms to provide additional and specialized instruction. Another alternative is the use of a resource room instructor whereby students are pulled out of class for a specified amount of time during the class day for academic instruction (Mercer & Mercer, 1998).

After the mainstreaming concept was introduced, Madeleine Will, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the Reagan administration in 1986, designated an additional route to deliver special education services to students known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI). This REI supported
the idea of disabled students remaining in the general education class with all of their needs being met in one environment. Will felt that there were negative aspects associated with separating disabled students from nondisabled education students, such as, the negative connotation associated with mainstreaming, as it is a part-time placement with non-disabled peers, failure is emphasized instead of success as disabled students become labeled, and the possibility of establishing negative relationships between school personnel and the parents of disabled students, and the disruptive aspect of leaving the general education setting. REI led to the next and present aspect of individual educational equality called inclusion (Mercer & Mercer, 1998).

Full inclusion means that special pull out placements for special education students will not take place and that all needs will be met within the general education classroom setting (Coleman, 1996). Sapon-Shevin (as cited in Mercer, 1997) advocates the idea of inclusive education as it allows for all students and all of their needs to be met in the general education classroom in the local school district with peers their own age. Inclusive educational settings are to be a supportive and nurturing environment that would meet the social and academic needs of disabled and nondisabled students together. Sapon-Shevin supports inclusive education while drawing the parallel of inclusive education and the world as being comprised of diverse races, class, gender, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and varying abilities and talents. She feels that inclusive educational settings set the stage for real life environments comprised of divergent peoples and backgrounds.

The inclusion movement of the 1990s has created fodder for additional controversial disability issues, for example up until 1989 there were no legislative
measures regarding students with emotional/behavioral disorders. The Fifth Circuit Court of appeals heard *Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education*, a case regarding a kindergarten age youngster whose parents wanted him placed in a full-day general educational setting. The school district suggested that a better placement to suit Daniel's needs would be in a special education class with Daniel having lunch and recess mainstreamed with his general education peers. The Court agreed with the school district that Daniel's needs would not be best served in a general education class. This set the tone for future cases in which the courts would decide what placement would better suit the needs of the disabled child and which setting would better serve the needs of general education students. Two years later, The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals heard *Greer v. Rome City School District* ruled that if the education of general education students was to become compromised with having severely disabled students in their general education class, and then placement would not be considered LRE in nature and would ultimately be considered inappropriate. Two cases that were supportive of inclusive education were *Oberti v. Clementon School Board* (1993), and *Sacramento City Unified School District, Board of Education v. Holland* (1994, as cited in Coleman, 1996).

**Statement of the Problem**

Inclusion is a fairly new concept in educational practices, dating only back to the early 1990s. Today there seems to be a movement in the nation towards full inclusive education. According to Evans (1996), the educational career span for most of America's current teachers began in the 1960s and early 1970s. Their level of teaching experience began after graduating from college when they were in their 20s, to when they became 15
year teaching veterans in their mid-thirties, to senior level teachers who are now 40 years and older (Evans, 1996). What level of training do these veteran teachers have to successfully implement inclusive educational measures? Evans continues to state that every recent educational initiative includes plans to promote teacher professionalism by requiring recertification, or abolishing tenure. He further states that two areas of reform are usually heterogeneous grouping and accountability. Heterogeneity is continually on the rise and goes hand in hand with inclusive education. Evans says that academic research supports heterogeneity on moral and social grounds of equity, yet teachers are opposed to its practice (Evans, 1996). Furthermore, a survey conducted in 1989 by Coates found that teachers did not agree with the issues surrounding REI. Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) surveyed 381 general and special education teachers and found that both groups favored pullout special education services as opposed to full inclusion. Schumm and Vaughn (1992) surveyed general education teachers at the elementary and secondary levels to determine their attitudes regarding inclusive educational practices. They found that: (a) the teachers felt that planning practices for each level differed, however, the majority felt that mainstreamed students with disabilities should be able to handle the demands of a regular curriculum and someone even commented that it is more or less up to the student to adapt to the curriculum, not the other way around, as there “is no time for mainstreamed students,” (b) many teachers felt unprepared by their teacher education programs to work effectively with mainstreamed students, and (c) many teachers were accepting to have disabled students mainstreamed into their classroom as long as they did not exhibit emotional or behavioral problems. Additionally, Houck and Rogers (1994) surveyed 788 general education and
special education teachers and found that across both groups they felt that general education teachers were inadequately prepared skill wise for making the adaptation to inclusive educational practices (Mercer, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers’ preparedness (level of training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study is aimed at gathering information to better understand how elementary teachers feel or think about their own level of teacher training and inclusion. It is imperative to understand points of view in this defined area of interest to better know what teachers really think and feel. This study is meant to unearth common themes and trends through frequency, specificity, emotion, and extensiveness presented by means of different voices and multiple views (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Research Questions

1. Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received an appropriate college education enabling them to provide for the needs of classified students in an inclusive educational setting?

2. Have regular education teachers received any special education training after graduating?

3. Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received adequate on the job training to adequately implement inclusive educational practices?
4. What are the perceptions of regular education teachers as to what constitutes inclusion?

5. Do regular education teachers agree that preservice training should begin at the university level and include training for regular and special education teachers combined?

6. Should regular education teachers elect to also be certified in special education?

7. Do regular education teachers perceive dual certification, combining a regular and special education program to be beneficial for prospective teachers?

Rationale and Theoretical Frameworks

Mentioned earlier was the report done by Wickman (1928, as cited in Coleman, 1996) comparing how teachers and mental health unit clinicians viewed youngsters with emotional disorders, which eventually led to additional mental health coursework at the university level for teachers. Wickman knew in 1928 that teachers would need educational preparation for understanding how to successfully handle youths with disabilities. Developmental theorists, such as Piaget, claimed that learners pass through specific stages and adjust themselves to the world by processing information and new experiences. Limited research in this area regarding learning disabilities leads us to believe that all children develop by going through the same stages of development; however, children with learning disabilities reach these stages at a slower pace (Mercer, 1997). Additionally, cognitive psychologists believe that understanding a child’s development enables us to better understand how the child will process information. This
theory is necessary for teachers as they should have an understanding of (a) the nature of
the information that the disabled child must process, (b) the process that the child uses to
assimilate the information, and (c) the extent of the child’s memory to better understand
just how much information the child is capable of processing. Cognitive psychologists
state that there are three types of knowledge: declarative, concepts and facts; procedural,
steps for following through on tasks; and conditional, the feedback from the former types
of knowledge. Furthermore, cognitive psychologists believe that people store information
grouped together in what is termed schema. A challenging task for teachers is
understanding how particular students learn and knowing what necessary information to
group together that will enable the students to obtain and retain this knowledge.

Executive processing is another system that allows a person to regulate, monitor,
and evaluate his or her own learning. Under this category is the main process associated
with learning disabilities, that of attention. It would be pertinent for a teacher to
understand the particular attention behaviors of a child, helping them to understand how
to teach that child to learn and retain information. The behavior attentions that teachers
should know and understand for each student are: (a) overt attention, which would
enable a teacher to evaluate a child’s body language, (b) arousal, the fluctuation from
sleep to high agitation, (c) alertness, signally a readiness to perform, (d) vigilance,
cognitive endurance, and (e) selective attention, the ability to block out unnecessary
noises or other stimulants (Mercer, 1997). The Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitation sponsored some research from the years 1989-1993, projects whose
findings further emphasizes the challenges teachers face when diverse students are placed
in their classrooms (Mercer, 1997).
Importance of Study

The importance of this study is to inform the reader of the societal and historical implications that have had bearing on disabled persons throughout history that have lead to their separation from nondisabled peers. This separation over the past half a century has been disputed in the courts by advocates of the disabled person in favor of them not being excluded for purposes of education as a violation of civil rights. In the educational realm, Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas (1954), opened up the floodgates with respect to unlawfully discriminating for purposes unrelated to educational practices (Alper, Schloss, & Schloss, 1994.) This in turn led to PL 94-142 allowing for the Education of All Handicapped Children which further led to practices of the IDEA, requiring schools to provide transition services to all students with disabilities. The 1991 ruling of PL101-336, the Americans with Disabilities Act, reaffirms the rights of disabled individuals to equal access to facilities and opportunities. The incorporation of IDEA and PL94-142 ensure that all students of all abilities be placed a least restrictive environment. Serving all special needs students in the same educational setting with general education students is considered to be inclusive education. Now that the reader has an understanding for the need of educating all students together let the reader see the need to know whether or not regular education teachers feel that they are adequately prepared to teach in an inclusive setting. We should know whether or not teachers have had any prior training before taking a teaching position or have they received on the job training that would adequately prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting. Equally important are the perceptions of teachers as to what inclusion is. If they have an idea of what it is then they
will better know if they are adequately prepared to deliver instruction for successful inclusion.

Definitions of Terms

*Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):* significant difficulty in the understanding and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities due to distracted, impulsivity, hyperactivity, or being a poor listener (Mercer, 1997).

*Classification:* collecting additional information to determine which special program the child needs or is eligible for (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 1993).

*Due Process:* a set of legal procedures to ensure the fairness of educational decisions and the accountability of both professionals and parents in making those decisions. These procedures allow parents to call a hearing when they do not agree with the school's plans for their child, to obtain an individual evaluation from a qualified examiner outside the school system, or to take other actions to ensure that both family and child have channels through which to voice their interests and concerns (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 1993).

*Emotional Disturbance (ED) or Behaviorally Disturbed (BD):* PL 94-142 defines it as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: (a) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d)
a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term includes children who are schizophrenic. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously emotionally disturbed (Federal Register, 1981).

**Exceptional Child:** a child who differs from the average or normal child in (a) mental characteristics, (b) sensory abilities, (c) communication abilities, (d) behavior and emotional development, or (e) physical characteristics (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 1993).

**Focus Group Study:** a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The goal of which is to collect data that are of interest to the researcher, typically to find a range of opinions of people across several groups. (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** all children with disabilities are provided with a FAPE that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, and to prepare them for employment and independent living. (LaMorte, 2002).

**Inclusion:** a term generally used to refer to the idea of eliminating placements in special education and a call for all students to be educated in general education classroom settings providing appropriate supports and services (Mercer, 1997).

**Individual Education Program (IEP):** an individualized education program must be written for every student with a handicap who is receiving special education. The IEP must describe the child’s current performance and goals for the school year, the particular
special education services to be delivered, and the procedures by which outcomes are evaluated (Kirk, Gallagher, & Anastasiow, 1993).

*Learning Disability:* generic term that refers to a group of disorders that inhibit acquisition of and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, and mathematical abilities (Mercer, 1997).

*Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):* as much as possible a placement for handicapped children to be educated with nonhandicapped children, in as normal a setting as possible (Mercer, 1997).

*Mainstreaming:* the process of bringing exceptional children into daily contact with nonexceptional children in an educational setting (Mercer, 1997).

*Perception:* the way people define a situation has a great deal to do with how well they cope with it and with the outcome (Mercer, 1997).

*Regular Teacher:* general classroom education teacher (Mercer, 1997).

*Stare decisis:* court basing decisions on previous legal precedents (Alper, Schloss, & Schloss, 1994).

*Segmentation:* the decision to control the group composition with prominence given to homogeneity for free flowing conversations among group members (Morgan, 1997).

Theoretical Saturation: the point when you are not gaining new insights. (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

**Delimitations of Study**

Several limitations are inherent in this study and are acknowledged as follows:
1. This study is limited to the responses and perceptions of regular education teachers in a New Jersey public school district.

2. This study is limited to the responses and perceptions of elementary school teachers.

3. This study is limited to the possible personal and professional biases of respondents due to their own life experiences or training regarding students with disabilities.

4. This study is limited to the chosen form of methodology, as the data chosen is that which is of interest to the researcher.

5. This study is limited to the sample size of the focus groups.

6. This study is limited to the particular question route designed by the researcher.

7. This study is limited to the analysis of responses and perceptions of respondents by the researcher.
CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Many inclusionists believe that placing all exceptional children in regular educational classes is the morally sound thing to do. Stainback, Stainback, East, and Sapon-Shevin (1994) believe that anything but inclusion is considered segregation, and because of the rulings from the 1954 court case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, "separate is not equal" (Mercer, 1997). Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1994-1995) feel that it is not necessary to label and segregate children, but that educators should find ways to educate all children in inclusive settings, while meetings all of their special and unique needs. Keogh (1988, as cited in Mercer, 1997) maintains that general education teachers are not able to meet the needs of exceptional children, and she states

It is disturbing that the national reports are unanimous in their conclusion that the present system does not provide quality education to regular students. Can we assume that in its present form it will be adequate to incorporate the educational needs of pupils with learning and achievement problems? (Keogh, 1998, as cited in Mercer, 1997, p.20).

Schumm and Vaughn (1992) surveyed general education teachers in middle and elementary schools to determine their perceptions about planning practices for students with disabilities. They found that planning methods for different grade levels differed greatly, however, middle school teachers feel that mainstreamed students should be
prepared by the time they get to the middle grades to meet the demands of that curriculum. One teacher was quoted as saying "There is not time for mainstreamed students...they adapt to the program, the program does not adapt to them" (Schumm, Vaughn, p. 94). They found that many of the teachers felt unprepared by their educational programs to meet the needs of mainstreamed students, the majority of teachers were fine with the notion of working with mainstreamed students but overall were not willing to have students exhibit emotional or behavioral problems" (Schumm & Vaughn, 1992, p. 96). Perhaps the Council for Exceptional Children's (2000) *What Every Special Educator Must Know: The Standards for the Preparation and Licensure of Special Educators* should be incorporated into all state standards, with the possibility of creating a dual certification, combining special education certification with general education certification to create educators that will have no doubt as to what to do when placed in an inclusive environment.

**Related Literature**

According to Robert L. Osgood (1997), Boston has historically been a forerunner in the training of teachers for special education. The region had served as the birthplace of formal teacher training and as the home of numerous institutions for educating students with disabilities. The Horace Mann School for the Deaf originated in Boston in 1869 with the Boston School Committee making efforts to specially train teachers for this specialized school. In 1871 the Boston School Committee had Alexander Graham Bell's son train the teachers in visible speech, so the students could learn how to lip-read. Then in 1912 the Boston School Committee appropriated money for its teachers to go to a
course of lectures on “The Teaching of Backward Children.” In Boston the greatest significant milestone for educators was the emergence of professional identity among special educators due to the specialized training they received in the nature of and pedagogy for students with disabilities. Osgood (1997) states that special educators have always been recruited differently than regular education teachers because their educational boundaries have always been separate. Osgood states that for inclusion to work, we must “move beyond separate education” to be fully inclusive, equitable learning environments for all students. Osgood further implicates the need for redefining the relationship between special education and regular education and to reduce the tensions and boundaries between them.

In concert with the historical research of Osgood, Cronis, and Ellis (2000) remark that the demand has always been greater than the supply of special educators. To remedy this lack of educators, administrative actions have stressed the promptness of staffing thus being flexible in the content of teacher preparation. This lack of trained professional personnel has made it difficult to successfully institute educational reforms. Cronis and Ellis say that we need to look 10 years into the future, to anticipate changes in our populations of children with disabilities due to medical advances, and that according to past experiences we should also anticipate children with more challenging conditions than are now enrolled presently in our schools. Professional differences keep the practices of regular and special education apart due to varying methodologies, delivery, and placement patterns.

Alternative teacher certification programs are being sought after by well-educated experienced adults looking for a career move, report Newman and Thomas (1991).
Teacher shortages and lack of subject-oriented specialists, such as math, and science teachers, have spawned the need for certifying a new breed of educators. The field of special education has experienced the same type of shortage due to the rising numbers of special needs students in general education. This shortage has spurred educators to examine alternative means of preparing certified and qualified special education teachers (Rosenberg & Rock, 1994.) The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) states a need of strengthening our teacher pool, but not at the expense of sacrificing certification standards, as this would have an adverse affect on the quality of school instruction for a long period of time. It is noted that special education has been a recipient of a numerous amount of educators choosing alternative routes in recent years. Rosenberg and Rock (1994) studied a program at Johns Hopkins University that united the forces of two urban local education agencies and the Maryland State Department of Education. It resulted in a field-based, 2-year program leading to certification and a master's degree. Results display that the alternative certified teachers performed at a satisfactory or better level in their first years of teaching, showed competency in instructional and management strategies, and performed on the whole comparable to teachers trained in the traditional method. Unfortunately, there are not many studies to verify this phenomenon. Further studies implicate that there is a higher attrition rate for alternatively certified teachers in special education as opposed to traditionally trained teachers in said field (Newman & Kay, 1999).

Alternative certification programs were also explored in Tennessee, according to Tanner and colleagues (2000), due to teacher shortages in specialized areas, such as, science, math, foreign languages, and special education, K-12. A cohort of 12
individuals entered the program, all for various areas of teaching. The project was a collaboration between the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and the Hamilton County Schools where teachers were hired. The University provided post-baccalaureate education during the summer prior to the first year of teaching and after the first year. At the end of the project these teacher candidates would be licensed to teach. The collaboration was deemed to be successful with 75% completing their first year of teaching with signed contracts to return the following year. The members of the cohort expressed concerns with the program, and relevant to this paper, they felt a need for prior knowledge of lesson planning and unit planning, behavior management skills, and knowledge for developing IEP’s (Tanner et al., 2000).

Similar to the findings of Newman and Kay, Whitaker (2000) mentions that an alarming rate of first year special educators leaves the profession. McKnab (1995) estimates the annual turnover for special education to be approximately 9-10 percent. Studies have shown that attrition is less when first year teachers are mentored, having additional knowledge conveyed, assistance to the acculturation to the environment, and assistance to possibly reduce stress and for perhaps job enhancement (Whitaker, 2000).

Bullock, Gable, and Rutherford (1998) share a retrospective series of monographs concerned with preparing teachers of students with ED. For regular education teachers they found that in-service training was necessary on a continual basis for having to work with ED students. It has been found that “teacher burnout” is prevalent and leads to attrition of educators who that teach ED students. Federal funding to encourage program development for teacher training has been slow in arrival. (It is also felt that a good knowledge base for supplying these training programs is in general shortage.) We are in
need of a high quality training seeking a good service delivery model for teachers. A
general consensus agrees with current literature (Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994, as cited in
Bullock et al., 1998) that it is necessary to teach ED students social skills however,
general educators are not prepared to accept and teach social skills and behavior
management to students exhibiting challenging behaviors.

Mitchell and Kugelman (1997) enlighten us about new models for school reform
from around the world, from countries such as, England, Wales, Canada, New Zealand,
Australia, Scotland, and Brazil. Explored are the relationships between legislative
policies/regulations directed at the service providers, and whom they service, and the
actual school practices. Of relevant mention is the fact that although Brazil is the second
largest nation in the Western hemisphere and the largest country in South America, little
is known about the integration of students with disabilities. Brazil only recognizes
“visible” disabilities as categories for special education. Interestingly enough is the fact
that Brazilian special education is greatly influenced by changes in educational policies in
the United States. It seems that they depend on us to familiarize themselves with the
latest knowledge and trends. Due to unavailable research and development in Brazil most
education professionals have to wait until American information is then translated into
Portuguese. We estimate that the Brazilians are 10 years behind the U.S. in educational
reforms. Presently, following our U. S. trends, the Brazilians utilize special schools,
early intervention rooms, special classrooms, workshops, support rooms, itinerant
teachers, regular classes, hospital classrooms, home services, and integrated centers for
special education. It appears as if they do not implement inclusion as of yet, only
integration measures (Mitchell & Kugelman, 1997).
Minner and Prater (1994) report on the difficulties of special educators recruited to work on a Navajo Reservation. This correlates to all special educators without proper training. For all concerned, special educators are just as isolated no matter where they are located. In this report they are isolated on a reservation, without the necessary skills and knowledge to work in rural America. It was deemed that successful preparation should be site-based. It is further noted that preparing well-qualified special education teachers is not an easy task, and one that unless fulfilled will develop into attrition before fulfilling their first contract.

Mawdsley (1995) paints a very realistic and detailed picture of the cost ramifications for total inclusion in public schools. Inclusion could at best eliminate all special educators, a cost savings if general educators were trained efficiently. Eliminating cost to special education would make parents of general education students very happy as a great bulk of tax dollars go to special programs, and they may feel that their child is not receiving the amount of resources that are entitled to them. On the other hand, parents of special needs students would perceive this as a threat to take away services that their child is also entitled. Monies go to where ever the services are provided, so resource allocation may be distributed more equally this way, where all may benefit. Instructional services are costly as salaries are spent on general education teachers; special needs teachers, and paraprofessionals (teacher assistants.) State regulations may require a certification for paraprofessionals, and then school systems may opt to hire less qualified aides to circumvent this extra cost. Transportation is one of the more costly items. Inclusionary practices would eliminate transportation costs. It would have to be researched as to whether or not monies allocated for transportation
could be funneled back into the educational practices. Buildings and adaptive materials would be necessary. For example, group space for classroom teachers, special education teachers, consultants, aides, and so forth would require additional classroom space. Ramps and doorways would have to be widened to accommodate wheelchair users, and lifts if classrooms were on a second floor. Adaptive materials would have to be provided, such as, communication devices, mobility devices, specialized wheelchairs, to name a few. Supportive services that require medical assistance would need to be provided.

Boscardin and Jacobsen (1999) give an overall history of school funding models, all aimed at fixing a need at that particular time. They mention resource-based models, a flat grant service for educational adequacy, a child-based approach to seek unity of funding as well as making the child the center for the resources allocated, cost-based approaches that offer incentives for providing appropriate services, and census-based funding that is based on a percentage of students expected to require special services. Boscardin’s conceptual framework for funding inclusive schools promotes a concept of equality and diversity within the district. Overall, they have determined through their research that to date there has been no evident reduction in personnel costs. Districts that practice inclusion have saved money by eliminating the costs of transporting special needs students to alternative schools. One-time purchases of adaptive materials may prove to be cost-effective. What needs to be defined is how allocations of funds will be distributed to schools with diversified populations that would give districts flexibility to utilize these funds to meet the needs of all students.

Pierce, Rasdell, and Ferguson (1998) concur with the findings of Boscardin and Jacobsen, regarding the need for space alterations, wheelchair accessible rooms, the need
for adaptable materials, and so forth. All of these considerations make for a socially responsible designed school building. Architectural programming would provide a design for universal inclusion, determining if a building is barrier-free, whether or not entries, floor finishes, door hardware, clearances, swings, furnishings, plumbing and the like would limit or support use by individuals with special needs.

The research of Waldron and McLeskey (1998) support the concept that learning disabled students can improve academically in an inclusive setting. Basic Academic Skills Samples (BASS) Reading and Mathematics pre and posttest tests were given to students with learning disabilities who were educated in inclusive and noninclusive educational environments. The findings revealed that the students who were educated in inclusive settings made significantly more progress in reading than those students educated on noninclusive settings. However, in contrast to these findings, students who were educated in inclusive and noninclusive settings both made comparable progress in mathematics. The rather insignificant results suggest that there is no reason for mildly learning disabled students to be excluded from a general education class. Severe learning-disabled students would need additional support in an inclusive setting. Inclusion for all degrees of learning disabled students is not the best practice for all; however, the emphasis is placed on the necessity to develop and implement effective educational strategies to suit all learning needs.

Academic achievement, student behavior and self-esteem and parental attitudes were issues under research by Daniel and King (1997). They queried as to whether student placement in random inclusion, clustered inclusion, and noninclusion affected the achievement of students, and their perceived self-esteem. Secondly, they queried to what
extent parent’s perceptions of their child’s behavior varied with respect to one of the above-mentioned placements. Their research determined that there really was no significant pattern academically with regards to placement. However, there was a difference in behavior of those students placed in inclusive settings. This may imply that teachers in inclusive classrooms may have to spend much more time on behavior management issues and this may detract from the overall learning of all students. Surprisingly enough self-esteem of the students placed in inclusive settings was lower than those in noninclusive settings. This finding should be a consideration when placing students in settings that may or may not contribute to their overall well being. In addition, the attitudes of parents with children in inclusive settings were of a greater concern than those parents of children not in inclusive settings. All of these concerns, of the students and of the parents should all be taken into consideration when deciding upon placements.

Pearl, Farmer, Van Acker, Rodkin, Bost, Coe, and Henley (1998) used Social Cognitive Mapping (SCM) to investigate students’ peer relationships and perceptions. They report that students with disabilities are usually perceived by their peers as having inappropriate social behaviors and are usually rejected by these peers with these perceptions. These disabled students are usually perceived as having social skills deficits. Pearl, et al. used their SCM on fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms, each of which classroom had at least two students with disabilities. Some students with mild disabilities were viewed as associating with deviant peers. Some were identified as being members of anti-social groups. These findings further implicate that students with mild disabilities tend not to be nominated for leadership or athletic roles, but are considered
for roles that are for the more shy and help seeking types. Peer assessments improved when students with mild disabilities, both male and female, were members of peer groups, and were identified as being more social. These results suggest that antisocial behavior is not always indicative of students with mild disabilities. In conclusion, they stress the need for the teacher to be trained on implementing social interventions that focus on the social dynamics of classrooms.

Inclusion has a direct impact on students with and without disabilities and their teachers, as reported by Salend and Duhaney (1999). Through their research and investigative measures they conclude that studies have reported that inclusive programs have been beneficial to some classified students, improvement on standardized tests, reading performance, on-task behavior, mastery of IEP goals, grades, and so forth. Some studies also indicate that special needs students are not getting specially designed instruction to meet their educational needs. Additionally, it has been found that special needs students performed better when receiving traditional instruction by resource room pullout measures. Socially they are usually less often accepted and more often rejected by peers without disabilities, creating lower self-esteem and self-perceptions. The perceptions of the educators were related to their feelings of success of implementation, availability of financial resources, supportive training, administrative support, and time allotted for collaboration with peers. They expressed concerns for loss of control over their classroom environment and their role in the general education setting. General educators and special educators expressed positive attitudes towards their increased collegiality that enriched both their professional and personal lives.
The principle of "equifinality equal outcome" is the middle of the road approach that Chow and Blais (1999) advocate in order for inclusion to be successful in regular education. However, a consequence of inclusion is that regular education teachers have to take on additional responsibilities and with that more students. For effective inclusion teachers have to take on new roles in the classroom, develop new competencies, be knowledgeable in the philosophy and process of inclusion, know were to obtain resources and supports, and to basically have an understanding of the disabled student and a positive attitude toward the inclusive concept. According to Vaidya (1997), data collected from high schools and elementary schools show that general education teachers do not feel adequately prepared to meet the unique and special needs of disabled students. It is recommended by Vaidya (1997, as cited in Chow & Blais, 1999) and Osborne and Di Mattia (1995, as cited in Chow & Blais, 1999) that school officials get involved in restructuring the educational systems because if they do not take it upon themselves then the courts will (Chow & Blais, 1999).

The concerns of McLesky, Henry, and Axelrod (1999) regarding inclusive practices are the placement trends over time. They examined data from Reports to Congress about students with learning disabilities being placed in a LRE over a 6-year period. Findings concluded that students with learning disabilities are actually being placed in increasingly less restrictive settings, yet placement practices differ greatly throughout the United States. The results of their study indicated that general education teachers will need to take on additional responsibilities in order to educate students with learning disabilities, and that preparation time with a special education teacher will have to be accommodated. Additionally, professional development skills will have to be taught
to these teachers so they can better meet the needs of their students. Their study indicated a definite need for teacher preparation (McLesky, Henry, & Hodges, 1999), and the suggestion that general education teachers that enter the teaching profession come prepared to meet the needs of their exceptional students (McLesky, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999.)

Hunt and Goetz (1997) report on and evaluate the findings of nineteen investigations regarding inclusive educational programs dispersed throughout the United States. They divide these studies into five categories, such as, “parents perceptions of the pursuit and impact of inclusive educational placement,” “inclusive schools and classrooms: issues and practices,” “the cost of inclusive educational placement,” “educational achievement outcomes for students in inclusive classrooms,” and “social relationships and friendships in inclusive classrooms.” Within each category they present the research performed on a particular well-defined sample population or climate, the variables of the situation, the research instrument utilized, the geographical locales for each study, the intentions of each study, and descriptive statements regarding the types of questions to be answered throughout the study. In addition, research findings are indicated and emergent themes are identified, if applicable.

The research findings imply success in all but one area. Under the heading of “social relationships and friendships in inclusive classrooms,” the authors acknowledge a statement about findings that measured the acceptance of inclusive students amongst their regular education peers. The findings showed that some students with disabilities were popular and some were not. Hunt and Goetz (1997) quoted the authors of the social
competence scale that was utilized for this study, Meyer, Cole, McQuarter and Reichle, as saying

when students are so obviously disabled as the target children, they are somewhat
categorized differently by nonhandicapped children. That is to say, they are not
judged in the same way as other peers: for example even children who reported
not playing with them identified them as friends. The locales of the studies were
diverse ranging from the east coast to the west, and included rural and non-rural
locations, for diversified samples and viewpoints. (p.211)

The authors caution that certain research findings, for example, under the heading,
"inclusive schools and classrooms: issues and practices," we are to take heed to the fact
that the results from a series of a two-tailed matched pair Wilcoxon Tests (Marascuilo &
Serlin, 1988) were taken from a very small sample and may not be indicative of other
inclusive education programs. In addition, regarding research results, the authors do not
make claim in their analyses of the findings that a final result can be made, however, they
make claim in various instances that the outcomes are proof that further research is
necessary and that valid hypotheses are reasonable. For example, under the heading
"inclusive schools and classrooms: issues and practices," the authors allude to the
findings from the St. Cloud, Missouri study, that they were drawn from qualitative
research methods and that they can really only reproduce potential hypotheses for further
practices.

Cost analyses studies are mentioned, and also a "cross-over of shared costs"
between regular education and special education programs. The authors do mention that
a particular cost analysis model in northern California should be further refined so as to be able to be used for future studies in other geographical areas.

The author’s agree that many of the research studies used small quantitative research methods and this could limit the reasoning behind such studies. Another concern of the authors was that of scientific validity with regards to whether or not classroom participation of disabled students could truly be documented without detracting from the academic success of the other students. The authors were concerned that in the field, there was a lack of formal research models to investigate learner levels. The authors feel that this lack of research technique does not allow for a full understanding of inclusion practices for those involved in the movement.

Similar to Hunt and Goetz’s (1997) section regarding parental perceptions, Wigle and Moulin (1999) remark on the importance of student’s perceptions and how few studies have concentrated on the issues of self-concept with regards to being placed in a general education classroom and the amount of time spent there. Hunt and Goetz remark about positive parental perceptions of their children in inclusive settings and how their children felt comfortable with nondisabled peers, and that this environment had a positive impact on their overall learning. Wigle and Moulin’s findings differ with respect to perceptions of the children. They found that inclusive settings for kindergarten children that were learning disabled or mentally retarded, had no bearing on self-concept. However, as the grades progressed in elementary school and self-awareness developed, there was a difference. Their findings showed a statistically significant difference in self-concept issues for both males and females of these classifications. The mean time that both genders spent in class ranged from 30 minutes to 150 minutes per day. Findings
showed that a negative correlation existed for both males and females; however, males were more seriously affected than females were, in relations to self-concept. Wigle and Moulin make a point to caution parents and educational professionals to their findings when deciding on the right setting for classified children. A self-concept is more highly affected by placement in the least restrictive environment in an appropriate setting is than by the amount of class time.

Ferguson (1998) agrees with Hunt and Goetz (1997) that parents want their handicapped child to be included in regular education. Additionally Hunt and Goetz’s findings state that parental perceptions of their regular education children’s perceptions of inclusion differ from their own concepts. Similar to Hunt and Goetz’s findings regarding perceptions of elementary school aged children Ferguson studied the perceptions of high school students, 9-12 grade. The consensus for elementary children attitudes towards disabled peers in Hunt and Goetz’s study was similar to those attitudes of high school students in Ferguson’s study. The majority of high school aged students surveyed (67%) stated that they did not want to be in the same classrooms with disabled peers. Only 33% felt that regular education students benefited by having disabled peers in their classes. There was a greater positive response from those high school students that had been involved in peer tutoring sessions with their disabled peers. In addition, female students were slightly more receptive to handicapped children included in regular education classes. Ferguson’s research findings showed an overall negative response to the attitude’s of regular education students towards inclusive settings, and this, although limited to this study, may have a contributing effect on inclusionary educational experiences for handicapped students.
Analogous to Hunt and Goetz's findings with regards to teacher perceptions of inclusive measures in education, D'Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) found that teachers agree that positive working relationships must be created in the school systems in order for a smooth transition into inclusionary practice can occur. Teachers that were surveyed were in agreement that problems did exist with inclusive programs, and that they had mixed reactions to its overall benefits. Their findings emphasize that teachers must be convinced of the benefits and need for inclusion before it can smoothly occur within their building. The research also suggests that teachers have a strong need to have administrative support, and that they need to feel that they can give the disabled students the equal educational opportunity and quality of instruction that they need. In addition, teachers felt that they needed preparation at the university level to successfully implement inclusionary tactics.

In agreement that the positive attitudes of teachers perceptions towards inclusion was D'Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) found that teachers agree that positive working relationships must be created in the school systems in order for a smooth transition into inclusionary practice can occur. Teachers that were surveyed were in agreement that problems did exist with inclusive programs, and that they had mixed reactions to its overall benefits. Their findings emphasize that teachers must be convinced of the benefits and need for inclusion before it can smoothly occur within their building. The research also suggests that teachers have a strong need to have administrative support, and that they need to feel that they can give the disabled students the equal educational opportunity and quality of instruction that they need. In addition,
teachers felt that they needed preparation at the university level to successfully implement inclusionary tactics.

In agreement that the positive attitudes of teachers perceptions towards inclusion was a necessary component for smooth transition into inclusionary educational settings, Olson, Chalmers, and Hoover (1997) found that innate attitudes amongst teachers also played a large role in perceptions about students with disabilities. An attitudinal theme was pervasive in their study. Through their research seven themes evolved: (a) individual tolerance and flexibility, (b) in agreement with the moral implications that all children should be accepted and educated together with exclusions, (c) being able to work alongside the special education teachers, (d) the need for adjusting personal expectations for practical purposes, (e) personal feelings that their own attitudes were an integral component for students to feel accepted by them, (f) the need for more preparation for additional and different practices within the classrooms, and (g) that mainstreaming was more practical than full inclusion. Out of these themes an implication arose for universities to screen applicants before admitting them into their programs. The teachers felt that because attitude played such a big part in acceptance to inclusion, that pedagogy could be taught but not attitude.

Critical to smooth transition of inclusion procedures are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) agree with Hunt and Goetz's (1997) research that concluded in one report that key stakeholders, such as school leaders, were necessary to implement change and growth in their buildings. They also found that without the support of key school personnel that inclusion would not be successful. The positive attitudes and support amongst key administrators
were influential to the skeptical attitudes of general education teachers. Interestingly they found that positive attitudes amongst special education teachers also played a big role in the attitudes of regular education teachers, as these professionals hold certifications of specialized training and had great influence in molding school wide to implement change. Their research concluded that principals and special education teachers hold opposite opinions regarding inclusive education. The principals on the whole regarded inclusion as a positive means for improving academic improvement for students with disabilities. However, a limitation to this study, as pointed out, is that the special education teachers are directly involved with educating these students, as they are on site with them, whereas the principals are indirectly involved. The attitudes of the special education teachers they feel are negative for fear that these practices will not benefit the disabled student. They conclude that the attitudes of special education teachers need to be altered to one of optimism, and that principals are needed to validate the tone of optimism in order for expansion and inclusive reform to be an accepted practice.

School climates need to be examined in order to evaluate and assess inclusive environments and practices. Zoller, Ramanathan, and Yu (1999, as cited in Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002) explored this venue through use of qualitative measures and found that successful school climates for inclusive measures needed full administrative and full school support. Unearthed was the need for teacher training which further supported teacher confidence.

Maricle (2001), however, reports from her research findings, that a general consensus remains amongst public secondary school principals (limited to her study) that they were generally in agreement that students with disabilities, such as, hearing
impairments, visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, learning disabled (more than one year below grade level), learning disabled (more than two years below grade level), and mild behaviorally disabled be incorporated into inclusionary classrooms. It was not favorable amongst the principals that students with severe ED be involved in inclusive classrooms.

Tapasak and Walter-Thomas (1999) evaluated perceptions of students in an inclusion program after a one-year implementation. Their study was conducted in an urban elementary school, using grades kindergarten through third grade. The students with disabilities were enrolled in regular education classed on a full-time basis. Every inclusive classroom had a regular education teacher and a special education teacher. The teachers were provided with three days of staff development to prepare for new teaching attitudes and responsibilities. Descriptive analyses of their findings were as follows. Positive results were obtained from the students with disabilities in grades kindergarten through second grade and their peers without disabilities all felt pretty good about being together in a classroom together. At the end of the school year it was determined that the self-perceptions of the students with disabilities had improved. The students in the grades three through fifth reported no significant difference in their attitudes; however, their teachers indicated that they felt that there were increases in the social skills of the disabled students. Negative findings indicate that the students with the disabilities on the whole experience low self-perceptions and feel inadequate to their peers without disabilities. The older elementary students displayed more negative feelings than their younger peers, and this is assumed to be related to maturation and a more sensitive outlook with regards to developmental differences. The findings of Tapasak and Walter-
Thomas (1999) reflect a need for implementing ways to understand the perceptions of students with and without disabilities and their social skills with regards to maturation, and to further assist them in building skills for positive self-esteem to facilitate academic achievement, hence contributing to a greater sense of security.

Johnson (1999), not unlike Hunt and Goetz (1997), is concerned with issues and practices for inclusive classrooms. Johnson provides us with an overview of alternative approaches to teaching to facilitate successful inclusion. Many practices mentioned here are similar to the constructs to teaching students with disabilities that Hunt and Goetz advocate. For instance, Johnson makes reference to successful inclusion depending on teacher’s flexibility of instructional strategies. This practice targets learning diversities, not only for disabled students but for regular education students as well. One strategy mentioned is activity-based experiential learning. This method allows students to become involved in discovery and interaction with various situations and variables. For instance, hands-on activities allow students to engage in the lessons, which could promote quicker learning by doing and perhaps aid better retention. Student-directed learning and self-determination encourages students to understand the process through which they best learn. Cooperative learning and peer collaboration reduces competition in a regular education setting as students work together while experiencing peer tutoring. This collaboration could possibly promote other skills, such as, patience, creativity, empathy, and acceptance of others with varying learning abilities. Another method is multigrade classrooms and heterogeneous grouping so peers of different ages and abilities mesh together, providing little room for diverse notability. Individualized and adaptive instruction requires teacher flexibility as this method allows students of diverse
needs to learn at their own pace and ability. *Reduced class size* in inclusive education allows the teacher to interact with more students to provide more student feedback, and to better assess the student’s progress.

Wang and Reynolds (1996) play a role of “devil’s advocate,” while painting the picture of how progressive the inclusion movement could be and its forthcoming implications. They address the changing school scene from the beginning when special needs students were all but ignored. Then the movement went to placing these students in remote residential school settings, then on to local special day schools, to resource room pullouts, to now, with the full practice of inclusion. They comment how these deep structural changes have directly affected the special education environment and this in turn has affected the demographic and socioeconomic communities. These ‘about-face’ maneuvers make it almost impossible for the schools to deal with the full range of problems that come with these changes. For example, many problems that children face today place them at risk for failure and they require diverse special services in addition to their special education needs. It appears that community involvement is what will be helpful in making these reforms manageable and worthwhile for all students. Lastly, Wang and Reynolds refer slightly to the economic side of these issues, one that Hunt and Goetz (1997) all but touched on. They speak of the competition for funds between the two types of educational practices, and how because of public fund deficits these two practices are bound to become entwined.

Using the heading “issues and practices” from Hunt and Goetz’s (1997) study, Idol (1997) puts forth pertinent general and philosophical questions that need to be addressed. Some of these questions address mechanics of inclusion and others address
ideas and values. For example, “Has the school district developed a philosophical position on inclusion?” This question is pertinent because its direction should include the viewpoints of all stakeholders so none feel that inclusion is mandated or imposed upon. Collaboration of all stakeholders is necessary for successful inclusion. Another pertinent question posed is “do the faculty know what to do in the classroom?” Teacher preparation is not mentioned very often with regards to implementing inclusionary practices. This is where collaboration is needed once more. Another question takes us back to the section on perception: “Are the other students in the inclusive classroom prepared?” Not only do teachers need preparation for this practice, the regular education students need training, also. When everyone has an understanding of a situation we tend not to be timid, but can more readily embrace it. A better understanding can help them to learn to care of each other and learn to work together, while accepting differences. Lastly, an important question raised is “What do we need to monitor?” Here the impact of inclusion rests on three variables: student’s change, adult change, and system change.

In alignment with issues and practices, Vaughn, Schumm, and Brick (1998) indicate that a large percentage of elementary teachers in central Florida are advocates for inclusion, however, they do not feel that they are sufficiently informed about how to put into practice strategies and theories to better suit the needs of their disabled students. What they lack is an instrument for determining whether or not their practices are of value or merit to these students. To assist these teachers request, Vaughn and colleagues devised a rating scale to evaluate inclusion programs for high-incidence disabled students. Their Rating Scale of Components of a Responsible Inclusion Program for Students with High-Incidence Disabilities represent 12 core components each reflecting
core themes pertinent to their programs. This rating scale proved efficient and was utilized by the teacher and administrators in the beginning of the school year, during the middle, and at the end to evaluate progress.

The same authors Vaughn, Schumm, and Brick (1998) report on how they additionally aid teachers on how to monitor student understanding. They focus on the teacher’s role in gathering data to analyze student understanding of the materials presented. This way they can make adjustments where needed. They tell us that research has shown that underachievers are hesitant to ask questions for fear of letting their peers know that they do not understand the concept being taught. This is counterproductive to teacher’s intentions. They also hold workshops for teachers to help them attain the necessary tools for properly assessing student learning. One way is an informal member check; informal because it does not require paper and so forth, only informal communication as to whether or not issues and concepts were understood. Teachers can also ask students to summarize the main points of the lesson. It allows the teacher to know if said student has an understanding and serves as a learning tool for other class members. Learning logs are a journal entry for communication between students and teacher so both student and teacher can ask each other pertinent questions regarding understanding. Vaughn and colleagues provide numerous monitoring tools for teachers to assess progress.

Elliot and McKenney (1998) believe that all students learn best within a like system, without differentiating between general or special educational practices. Under this guise they feel that only two questions are pertinent: “How do students learn best, and does specialized instruction really work to meet everyone’s expectations?” Elliot and
McKenney are pro team teaching, whether it is with a general education teacher and a special education teacher collaborating together, or working along side the classroom teacher teaching certain subject areas. They advocate for classroom aides if school budgets allow. These aides would go to the classes where the handicapped children are and monitor their work, and later report back to the teacher on their progress. Elliot and McKenney believe in the fewer pullout services the better, as they initially allow for more individualized attention in a weaker subject area, they do disrupt the student’s day and separate them from the rest of the class which is the antithesis of inclusion.

Similar to Elliot and McKenney’s agreement that regular and special educations teachers should work collaboratively, Daane, Beirine-Smith, and Latham (2000) conducted a study to investigate the perceptions of both types of teachers with respect to collaboration. They used a school that had been implementing inclusion for 2 years, surveying 366 teachers and their administrators. Their study concluded that special education teachers and regular education teachers were indeed collaborating on planning IEP’s and that they were utilizing team teaching in their inclusive classrooms. However, both the teachers and the administrators agreed that the teachers did not feel comfortable collaborating with each other. They felt that finding a way to establish a comfort zone with respect to collaboration was necessary. In addition, both types of teachers agreed that more training of the general education teachers was needed to adequately accommodate students with disabilities, the perceptions of the administrators, general educations teachers, and specials education teachers were similar indicating that the general educations teachers are not skilled in these areas of teaching and that teacher
education programs must do more to prepare general education teacher candidates so they can best meet the needs of all types of students.

In agreement with the research findings of Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham (2000) were the research findings of Smith and Smith (2000) who conducted a qualitative research study aimed at finding out what K-3 early childhood regular educating teacher perceived to promote or hinder successful inclusion. Their study revealed four emergent themes: class load, need for support, need for more time, and training. All of the teachers agreed that what made them feel successful versus unsuccessful was level of training stemming from their undergraduate training and graduate training. All participants stated emphatically that their undergraduate training “did nothing” to prepare them for inclusive education. The educational experience of the teachers surveyed spanned 1-40 years, and all agreed that they felt unprepared for inclusion. They all felt that their only training came from in-service training efforts on the part of the school district.

Because inclusion has the possibility of both social and academic gains for students, Heflin and Bullock (1999) conducted a study designed to survey general and special education teachers in selected Texas school districts to find out how full inclusion affects daily classroom activities with students of emotional disorders, and to compare teachers’ perceptions of inclusion to those found in their literature review. Heflin and Bullock found a general theme of a resistance from teachers due to a lack of training in their literature review. They found that teachers as well as parents felt that unskilled teachers could not provide the necessary support that emotionally challenged students needed. From the three districts surveyed general and special education teachers both agreed that they needed training related to collaboration and training on how to modify
instruction properly. Their research further concluded that students with emotional disorders were being placed in inclusive settings due to administrative decisions and they felt they were not carefully made. The general education teachers felt that they were being forced into inclusive practices and the special education teachers all felt that the general education teachers, should be commended for their efforts, however, they did feel that the emotionally challenged students were not receiving adequate instruction because the personnel were not being prepared.

Analogous to research in the United States, Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) conducted a survey in the United Kingdom, regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. They sampled 23 mainstreamed schools, 14 primary and 9 secondary, representing rural, and suburban areas. They found that 49.38% of the teachers felt the need for systematic training, either as part of their certification programs or in-service training as an ongoing practice. Their data implied that teachers with university-based professional development training appeared to be more positive and confident about meeting the needs of special needs students.

Mayrowetz (1999) conducted a study in New Jersey examining how six teachers in inclusive classrooms were being encouraged to deliver reform-oriented mathematics and what modifications they utilized for academic interventions. His data implied that only two out of the six teachers had previous experience teaching math to students with disabilities. Additionally, the social status of the students and the relationship of the teacher's treatment of the students with disabilities was one that needed further attention. One of the teachers clearly directed strong anger towards one of her unclassified students, indicating that the class was losing patience with the classified students. One of the
teachers said that she felt a need to model appropriate behavior and patience when working with a classified students to “strengthen, the demeanor” of the class.

Weyrauch (2000) asserts that in many rural districts in the United States school districts are faced with the problem of hiring uncertified teachers to teach exceptional children. To circumvent this issue, some states have even established a generic special education certification. Generic certifications such as these cannot meet the necessary competencies in education for severe mental retardation or emotionally disturbed students. Weyrauch subsequently lists the certification requirements across the United States displaying how greatly they vary countrywide. Weyrauch states that Cates and Smiley (1999) suggest that in rural areas team teaching or distance learning via the use of the internet could help alleviate the situation so as to better serve the students’ needs. She states that teacher preparedness is measured by the individual’s abilities to meet states’ certification requirements. In lieu of this definition, she mentions measures that have been made to accommodate certification needs in Oklahoma. Cameron University prepares students in special education by providing additional endorsements in mild/moderate disabilities, and severe profound disabilities to elementary, early childhood, or secondary certificates. Students must compete 21 hours of coursework in addition to student teaching. In addition, coursework in methodology assessment, foundations, management, and characteristics are required. After students graduate they may return for practicums in areas of concentration that they desire. The faculty’s philosophy at Cameron is to better prepare special education teachers to better serve the needs of exceptional children in rural districts (Weyrauch, 2000).
D’Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) found that teachers agree that positive working relationships must be created in the school systems in order for a smooth transition into inclusionary practice can occur. Teachers that were surveyed were in agreement that problems did exist with inclusive programs, and that they had mixed reactions to its overall benefits. Their findings emphasize that teachers must be convinced of the benefits and need for inclusion before it can smoothly occur within their building. The research also suggests that teachers have a strong need to have administrative support, and that they need to feel that they can give the disabled students the equal educational opportunity and quality of instruction that they need. In addition, teachers felt that they needed preparation at the university level to successfully implement inclusionary tactics.

In agreement that the positive attitudes of teachers perceptions towards inclusion Little (2000) additionally reports on educational reform in response to a changing student population. Reform programs today need to prepare skilled teachers to meet the needs of a diverse population of students. Professional Development Schools (PDS) are attempting to redefine teacher education programs, starting with beginning teachers. PDS are collaborations of public schools and universities that provide access to theory and knowledge production. Educators from the University of Central Florida, the Volusia County School District, and the Florida Inclusive Network began a PDS within an inclusive school district, the Palm Terrace Elementary School. This inclusive school was 4 years old, and had previously brought together a traditional elementary school with two segregated schools for students with moderate to severe disabilities. To ensure preparation at the public school site, co-teaching, vertical-team teaching across grade
levels, and problem solving teams were implemented. Additionally, preservice was a component for student teachers from both elementary and special education programs at the university level, providing teachers and students with co-planning techniques, co-teaching, weekly seminars, and the student teacher learned to implement, and evaluate numerous classroom strategies, techniques, and materials. The positive results of PDS at Palm Terrace directly related to student learning, both at the elementary and university levels. New courses for elementary schoolteachers were a positive outcome at the university level to ensure better teacher preparedness.

Sprague and Pennell (2000) report on another positive attempt to prepare preservice teacher for inclusion. A pilot program was developed by the faculty at Christopher Newport University and the school personnel from Tabb Middle School in Newport News, VA. They joined forces because so many novice teachers expressed a feeling of being totally unprepared for inclusion. The course utilized a new textbook to completely familiarize students with the terms and practices of inclusion. Collaborative teaching strategies were introduced early. Students to observed inclusive classrooms, wrote a journal entry for each observation, what instructional modifications they noticed, and what concerns they had based on their observation. They were to share these journal entries with fellow students in class. Students went to workshops presented by regular and special education teachers. Pre and post surveys were given to the students. Prior to the course, only 30% of the students agreed with the concepts of inclusion, and after the course 58% concurred. They additionally expressed an interest in becoming an inclusive team member. The results further show a need for preservice training for novice teachers.
According to Myers, Griffin, Telekei, Taylor, and Wheeler (1998), as far back as 1985 representatives from 2 and 4 year institutions in the state of North Carolina sought to develop programs for education majors that would provide training necessary for them to be ready for inclusive education. This move resulted in a licensure program that requires teacher training to include the three strands of child development, early childhood education, and early childhood special education. In August 1992 the North Carolina board of Education approved Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) Certification Undergraduate Guidelines and Competencies. This program would produce graduates capable to work with both handicapped and nonhandicapped children. East Carolina University began a B-K program the following month. Revisions were made to their already existing programs, and four courses were added: assessment and intervention, parent and professional collaboration, literacy development in early childhood, and early childhood special education. Initially in-service training was held for those teachers already possessing certification in preschool handicapped or prekindergarten. It was then a requirement for undergraduates to apply and fulfill B-K licensure by August 1996. Those already holding licensures enrolled in 200 hours of workshops of classroom and field experiences to fulfill B-K licensure. North Carolina's B-K teacher education program stresses inclusion for teacher training at both preservice and in-service levels. The collaboration of the different fields of child development has resulted in better quality teacher education (Meyers, Griffin, Telekei, Taylor, & Wheeler, 1998).

Consistent with partnering universities and local educators Howard and Norris (1997) found that collaborative partnerships existed in Kentucky amongst universities and local school districts. The partnerships in Kentucky began in 1995 with two purposes
in mind. First, to work collaboratively to address and improve services to learners with special needs, and to work collaboratively to address the problems of teachers working with learners with special needs. Commitments were made to provide effective support for beginning teachers because it was well known that first year teachers usually were assigned to BD/ED students, and it was an overwhelming experience. Second, was the need to provide effective support for teachers who held only holding emergency certifications. Teachers with regular teaching certifications could obtain special education certification training after only completing nine hours of special education coursework. The partnership provided teachers with skills to coordinate professional development opportunities without many resources, and to develop an ongoing network of educators to address concerns and problems. Their goal was to provide special needs students with professionals who can better service their needs while serving their own (Howard & Norris, 1997).

Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead (1999), State Superintendent of the Office of Special Education published a report by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction on early childhood special education for children with disabilities, ages 3-5. He notes that teachers of early childhood special education (ECSE) must hold a North Dakota Educator’s Professional Certificate and special education credential in early childhood special education. Teachers who do not have the necessary credentials may receive a letter of approval to teach in their area of specified education after they have completed eight hours of coursework in ECSE. This approval is valid for up to 12 months and renewable up to 3 years. Teachers must fully qualify for their teaching credentials within 3 years.
Flynt, Dyal, and Morton (1998) unearthed a new twist to certification requirements in Alabama. The state has done away with categorical certifications and created a generic certification of Collaborative Teacher merging certification in emotionally conflicted, mental retardation, mild learning/behavior disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedically and other health impaired and specific learning disabilities. Alabama principals were surveyed and 70% respondents believed that this new certification of Collaborative Teacher would lead to more students' needs being met. Most respondents were unsure how this new certification would affect special education teacher shortages. Surprisingly though, almost half of the responding principals said that they felt that their own inclusion training was inadequate, as was their ability to use the teachers with this certification. The authors find it alarming that teachers are being trained at the university level preparing them for special education careers and perspective jobsites where principals are not ready for them.

Bergren's (1997) findings were in concert with those advocating teacher training for successful inclusionary practices. His study surveyed 150 regular education and special education teachers and showed that both groups agreed that co-teaching was necessary to meet the needs of their students with disabilities, along with administrative support and attitudes toward student achievement, all influencing factors for the success or failure of inclusion. His survey results showed that both groups of teacher agreed that modified instruction was crucial for successful inclusion of disabled students, however, teachers without adequate training felt ill equipped to implement these modifications. College training appeared to be instrumental regarding the attitudes associated with modifying instruction successfully and successful co-teaching.
Markowitz (2000) found that since the passage of IDEA in 1997 only 26 states held valid certification requirements for providing Braille instruction, and only 14 states require specific Braille competency. According to Markowitz a typical certification for such a competency requires one college-level course in Braille. Only 11 state education agencies have policies or guidelines for evaluating a student's need for Braille instruction.

O'Shea and O'Shea (1998) are firm believers in teacher support in order for inclusion to work. They report that teachers need more time to plan and prepare their lessons, and time to modify instruction. They are also advocates of reduced class size. They feel that a greater understanding of methodology, strategy, and empathy and collaboration are ingredients for successful inclusion. For inclusive schools to attain achievement they believe in ongoing staff development for long-term commitment to student achievement. An understanding of teacher's attitudes provides support to teachers so they in turn can provide support for student success. Administration must inform teachers that they are free to ask for assistance when needed, building teacher confidence and moral. All of these teacher strategies trickle down to the overall student effect. Close contact with the family of students with special needs was imperative for teacher understanding and for equitable family participation.

Monahan, Marino, Miller, and Cronic (1997) surveyed teachers, administrators, and counselors throughout South Carolina to gain some insight on their perceptions of inclusive education. Responding to their surveys, were 125 counselors, 100 administrators, and 342 teachers. The three groups believed that general and special education teachers should collaborate, however, as in former studies, regular education
teachers said that they were not all that comfortable with co-teaching along with the special educators. The data from the surveys implicated that general education teachers felt that they received limited help from special education teachers with modifying instruction for their exceptional students. They agreed that the special education teachers were supportive, yet provided limited assistance. Implications lead to necessary teacher preparation methods that would prepare all teachers on how to modify instruction for all varying needs of students. Teachers indicated a lack of confidence in their knowledge and skills. The data further implied a need for higher education and faculty development, along with smaller class size.

With regards to teacher preparation, The Consortium of Inclusive Schooling Practices, a 5-year federally funded project aimed at developing a framework incorporating standards-based reform within inclusive schooling environment to be utilized at the district and school level, was developed in 1996 to promote inclusive orientation in education, to hopefully promote a large scale change (Roach, Salisbury, & McGregor, 2002). Within this framework, professional development relates to both teacher preparation and staff development in the schools and universities that is ongoing training leading to certification. It was recognized that three important components were necessary to address the learning needs of special needs students relative to university training: professional development training for teachers addressing the needs of various types of special needs students, licensure and certification requirements reflecting the need for teachers to obtain a wider scope of knowledge to teach a varied population of special needs, and the assessment and delivery of diverse disciplines from both regular and special education teachers. The professional development can take place in the form
of peer mentoring, coaching, modeling, in-class support, conferences, workshops, and summer training. Roach, Salisbury, and McGregor note that the involvement of all personnel in focusing on the learning needs of special needs students encourage an inclusive educational system.

Similar to Monahan, Marino, Miller, and Cronic’s (1997) survey findings regarding the need for collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers, Scott and Mc William (2002) are concerned with how different professionals working with special needs students will coordinate their methods to meet the needs of the students. Scott being the project coordinator for Individualizing Inclusion in Child Care, a model demonstration for young children up to 5 years of age, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and Rehabilitation Services, has recognized concerns about teachers having the experience to work with specialists. In addition, do these specialists that service special needs students have experiences working in classroom settings? Collaboration is one issue, however, teachers and specialists need to learn how to coordinate their methods and strategies to best suit the needs of special needs students in classroom settings.

The findings from a few focus groups in West Virginia regarding their concerns about successful inclusion indicate that the roles of special educators are changing. The educators themselves felt that they were more of a consultant than instructor. As their roles have evolved they find they are doing more assessing, evaluating, and consulting with regular education teachers on ways to modify instruction and plan IEP’s. The focus groups identified a lack of training as one of the obstacles for implementing inclusion. All of the focus group members were in agreement that there was a definite need for
training teachers, administrators, and parents for inclusion. They claim that teachers from West Virginia schools do not have a basic understanding of inclusion. In addition to gaining a more clear understanding of inclusion they feel a real need for training in appropriate curriculum and instruction in alternative means of assessments and knowledge of the characteristics of students with disabilities. They further suggest that teacher preparation programs include field experiences early in students’ college career that expose students to real classroom situations (Trump & Hange, 1996).

Anderson (1997) is also concerned with teacher preparation. She reports on a couple of articles sponsored by the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education (NCPSE). One in particular points out that local education agencies have a need to know which higher education institutions are preparing our nations teachers to meet the demands of a diverse population of students with disabilities within their district and the NCPSE offers assistance in defining these institutions. Requirements for certification vary from state to state which is why the NCPSE offers its assistance in these matters. NCPSE, in conjunction with the Council for Exceptional Children, also sponsor, a person-to-person recruitment project called the Special Education Recruiters Network, identifying special educators in various locales that volunteer to speak with prospective special educators about certification and preparation standards. Another article sponsored by the NCPSE states that we should get serious about standards for both student and teachers, denoting that we need to reinvent teacher preparation and professional developments.

Ripley (1997), advocating the necessary relationship between regular and special education teachers, further explores teacher collaboration. She states that the primary
responsibility of the regular education teacher is to instruct disabled students in the
general curricula, while the special education teacher is there to provide instruction by
adapting and modifying materials to match particular learning styles, strengths, and
special needs. In concert with previous articles, Ripley agrees that education in
collaborative procedures should be incorporated into all teacher preparation and
professional development programs.

Adequately trained teaching personnel and teacher collaboration is a concern
reported from Cawley, Hayden, Cade, and Baker-Kroczyński (2002) as necessary
training is pertinent in developing the needed proficiencies to enhance student's
performance. Of major concern is the need to prepare science teachers to work with
students with disabilities, as a survey of science educators revealed that teacher education
programs for science proficiencies reflected little training and importance for preparing
teachers to work with students with disabilities (Norman, Casseau, & Stefanich, 1998).
Further studies revealed that training was necessary to assist science teacher who worked
with students with disabilities and training was also necessary for special education
teachers to learn more about the teaching of science proficiencies. Their consultation
together was necessary for the best practices in the science classroom.

Two case studies involving children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders
(PDD) were examined by Renew. Three issues have been pointed out by Simpson (1995,
as cited in Renew, 1998) as being significant in educating children with PDD; (a) a
willingness to accept and rely on unproven and controversial interventions for success,
(b) the placement of these students full time in general education classes, and (c) the need
for adequately trained personnel to educate students with PDD. It seems to Renew that
varying ideas of inclusion affect how teachers approach inclusive procedures. It is feared that without teacher preparation these students will serve as “guinea pigs” as the teachers will learn as they continue teaching. It is felt that teachers are rarely prepared to conduct IEP meetings properly and that they are influenced by the ideas and feelings of school personnel.

In concert with previous literature, Urban and Hauselt (1998) inform us of a project that was implemented in New Jersey called Toward Inclusive Education (TIE). This was one district’s attempt to successfully include disabled students into general education in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classrooms. Prior to the school year of implementation, staff members were given an intensive 2 weeks of in-service training. The following summer, they received another 2 weeks of the same type of intensive training. The results of their program showed that student achievement warranted promotion to the next grade level, attendance improved, disciplinary measures decreased, and the teachers reported that training was absolutely necessary (Urban & Hauslet, 1998).

Spinelli (1998) informs us that with the trend towards full inclusion, teacher education university programs will need to be in the lead to promote change. These programs will emphasize new methods of instructional procedures. New teachers will need to know how to make learning more relevant, interesting, and meaningful for a diverse population of learners. Future educators will have to be versed in designing and implementing authentic learning and assessment procedures, be knowledgeable about the latest changes in educational legislation, and be able to work effectively in a collaborative atmosphere. Existing faculty members have expressed their own fears about introducing
new and innovative ways of presenting these strategies, apprehensive that these new ideas may not be accepted favorably among students, colleagues, and administration.

Reciprocating the same sentiments regarding teacher preparation, Key (2000) reports on the experiences of five interns in a language arts high school program and their interactions with cooperating teachers. All interns expressed a comradely relationship with the teachers when working collaboratively, as the teachers allotted time for planning instruction, implementation, and assessment for their special education students. The five interns felt that they were disadvantaged by never having worked in an inclusive classroom before, without having special educators present. They expressed their feelings of needing two teachers present in a classroom as a necessary component for overall student achievement. Every intern expressed a need for additional coursework in student diversity and in classroom management for regular and special education students. Most of the participants had problems with time on task and keeping the students interested. They basically felt that the one required special education course in their educational program did not give them the knowledge for teaching diverse needs and abilities.

Engleman and Maddox (1997) apprise us with the federally funded Transition Challenge-North Carolina project (TRAC-NC) that recognizes the need to fully prepare newly qualified individuals with the necessary preparation to serve low-incidence disability students. TRAC-NC provides add-on certification or a master’s degree to those individuals wanting to teach low-incidence students. It also provides supplementary training to the add-on certification for added knowledge, access to resources, such as, library or video materials about their population of students, and a permanent master’s
degree program within the Special Education Department of the School of Education at East Carolina University.

Top (1996), in her doctoral dissertation, explores the perceptions of State Directors of Special Education regarding policies and practices of inclusion implementation. While her findings indicated that 36 of the respondents were not willing to divulge if their state utilized full inclusion, it also showed that the directors had varying viewpoints on what inclusive policies and procedures should be. They did however state that inclusion was on the rise, and that some of the directors used LRE synonymously with inclusion. Lastly, it was noted that state policies did not make a major difference in actual practices in the state. In Top's recommendations she highly advises that universities that offer teacher preparation review their programs and consider training future teachers in the practices of inclusion.

Rahmin (1997) reviews a study that investigated the perceptions of 78 special education teachers in Ohio about their implementation of a community-based, functional curriculum for students with severe disabilities. While his report states that the majority of faculty supported this new program, they found that their biggest detriment to success was that regular education teachers did not accept students with severe disabilities. There seemed to be a great divide between the two types of educators. It is noted how important it is to have teaching practitioners who are knowledgeable, appropriately trained, and possessing skills necessary to develop curriculum adjustments that meet the varying needs of the students.

Beard, Bull, and Montgomery (1991) examine a study that survey's states' mandates, definitions, and components of transition programs that assist disabled students
after graduation as they become active members of the community. Important to the
program was how they received interagency planning, community integration, on-the-job
training, vocational rehabilitation, and parental involvement. Closely related to the
overall success of the students is the knowledge and skills which should be added to
special education teacher training curricula, either in the form of a new certification or as
an addition to the competencies already required by law. The degree of smoothness to
which students flow into transition activities is greatly affected by how well their teachers
apply knowledge of community/career assessment, knowledge of job coaching, and
parental involvement. A lot of these skills the counselors are knowledgeable in, however,
students and parents rely on teachers for much knowledge and support.

The perceptions of teachers regarding inclusion were the subject of Vaughn,
Shay, Jallad, Slusher, and Saumell's (1998) 10 focus group discussions. Theses focus
groups were comprised of special education teachers, regular education teachers, Chapter
I teachers, and teachers of the gifted. Respondents responded strongly, either positively
or negatively. They claimed that certain items had a greater impact on whether or not
inclusion was successful, such as the class size, inadequate resources, to what extent do
students benefit, and lack of teacher preparation. Regarding teacher preparation, both
groups of educators felt that regular education teachers were not adequately prepared to
meet the needs of disabled students. A middle school teacher commented that many
teachers just did not have the necessary training to deal with these children. An
elementary teacher said that she felt that training should begin at the undergraduate level,
and that prospective regular education teachers would probably require many courses in
special education to meet the needs of these students. A Chapter I teacher expressed
sorrow for her lack of ability with a disabled fifth grade student and felt that she did him a great disservice by having him in her class, as she was not prepared to teach him. A high school teacher felt that the only solution was requiring a double major for prospective education majors, one as content and the other as special education.

Landers, Dill, and Weaver (1995) acquaint us with a program that would impart information about the impact on inclusion of teacher preparation and administrative preparation programs. The University of Dayton Department of Teacher Education received an Education Systems Change Project Grant from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. The purpose of the grant was to support the Ohio public school systems as they implemented inclusive practices. They were concerned with the perceptions and necessary skills of the teachers and administration for smoothly implementing inclusive practices. Through survey questionnaires data was collected and analyzed to determine teachers and administrative perceptions along with the impact that inclusion had on their daily practices. The findings showed that both teachers and administrators were all in support of inclusion and meetings the needs of all students. It was felt that administrators need to develop a greater concept of inclusion and the leadership skills needed to cross the political scene to effect successful changes. Also, administrators were found to need additional strategies for communication with parents. The teachers, of both general education and special education, indicated that graduates of teacher education programs must be prepared to teach all types of students and to meet their unique needs; a greater understanding of the concept of inclusion and its dynamics.

Efforts have been made to better inform education majors about inclusion, according to Campbell and Fyfe (1995). Webster University in Missouri has instituted
programs for both undergraduate and graduate programs aimed at serving preservice and practicing teachers, covering early childhood to secondary education. Graduates students were given the chance to learn about inclusive educational practices while engaged in a specialized area of study. An elective course, “Inclusion Strategies in the Regular Classroom” was aimed at preparing both types of students for special education situations. The university has been attempting to institute a dual certification in special education or early childhood special education and elementary or early childhood certification. While the movement towards inclusion proceeds, resistance seems to exist at all levels. For instance, Campbell and Fyfe (1995) inform us about the resistance to changing educational practices at the university level from the faculty. In order for faculty to teach education majors they too, need a broader knowledge base regarding inclusion. Additionally, at the state levels, regular education and special education are recognized as separate programs requiring separate certifications. If dual certification is not an option then regular education majors may be spending more on additional courses for the knowledge necessary to implement inclusive educational practices.

Jensen (2001) also agrees with the idea of teachers being dually certified in both general and special education. By having a more expansive knowledge and understanding of brain impairments, teachers can better improve learning for struggling students by better identifying and accommodating learning differences. He feels that schools of higher learning and school staff development programs can aide teachers to better reach these students.

The shaping of prospective teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion of disabled students in regular education was the outcome of Reber, Marshak, and Glor-
Scheib's (1995) research study. Three groups of participants from an educational program in rural Western Pennsylvania participated in a study to assess attitudes towards inclusive settings of disabled students in regular educational environments. Participants were either from a group who had just completed a three credit course structured to survey the characteristics of children with disabilities and implications of methodologies for inclusive settings, a group of students who chose to fulfill a special education course and a post-course exam, and a group who participated in a practicum project giving them hands-on experience. The students from all groups involved agreed to complete a questionnaire after completing their educational experience. The results found that the type of academic experience that students undertake has a direct impact on their attitudes in their teacher preparation. The practicum proved to be of more value than just a course as an overview of inclusionary practices. Additionally, attitudes differ regarding the types of disability students they may encounter.

From personal experience Merritt (2001) admits that regular education teachers might find it daunting to consider teaching students with disabilities if they have had no formal training. She herself was one of the volunteers at her school asked to work with two fully included kindergarten girls (one wheelchair bound) to get them ready for full inclusion in the first grade. Without undergraduate training or staff development courses to prepare her, Merritt became acquainted with the girls and their needs. She even worked with the IEP team so as to develop better adaptations in the classroom that would accommodate a student using a wheelchair. Merritt admits that neither her undergraduate training nor staff development courses prepared her for teaching in an inclusive classroom.
The attitudes of New Jersey Special Education Directors towards inclusion, as reported by Weitzman (2000), concur with previous literature that the overall training of today's teachers needs to be developed. Some directors feel that teachers should be required to attend school for a minimum of 5 years or a master's degree in education, resulting in better prepared teachers for all types of children. They further believe that more preparation would increase their understanding of the nature and needs of exceptional children.

Summary of Review

It was recognized as far back as 1869 that there existed a need for specially trained teachers for students with disabilities, such as deaf students needing teachers trained in visible speech therapy (Osgood, 1997). The need for specially trained teachers brought about the emergence of a professional identity among special educators because they dealt with different pedagogies needed for students with disabilities. Because of this, special educators were recruited differently than regular education teachers, and there were not a great amount of them. Lack of trained special education personnel has made it difficult to institute reforms in education. The same holds true for today, with increasing numbers of special students in the general education classrooms, demands are imposed on regular education teachers. Thus, diverse learners need assistance in areas of learning disabilities, memory, language, strategies, vocabulary, and so on (Swanson, Hoskyn, Lee, 1999). Due to the lack of qualified teachers for special needs students, areas around the United States have explored alternative certification programs to recruit teachers in untraditional methods, a form of enticement into the field of special
education. (Tanner, Bibler, Gettys, Puckett, Brower, Goode, Hardaway, Davidson, Warren-King, Childs, Donohoo, & Stewart, 2000).

Recruiting special needs teachers is a difficult task in itself; however, keeping them in the field is another. Teachers dealing with special needs students need training and support, as the attrition rate is great, particularly for first year teachers (Bullock, Gable, Rutherford, 1998). Preparing well-trained special education teachers is not an easy task, and one that has to be completed or else they leave their positions before their first contract. With the movement of inclusive classrooms on the rise, reports reveal that combining special needs students with regular education students produces positive results for the special needs students, such as, improvements on standardized test, reading performance, on-task behavior, mastery of IEP goals, grades, and so forth. In spite of these positive results, it has been found that special needs student are not receiving specially designed instruction to meet their educational needs (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). McLlesky, Henry, and Axelrod (1999) concur that there is a definite need for teacher preparation. The survey conducted by Daane, Beirine-Smith, and Latham (2000) reveal the same, that teachers agreed that more training for general education teachers was needed to adequately accommodate the needs of special needs students. Their survey also indicated that school administrators felt that general education teachers were not sufficiently trained for meeting the needs of special needs students.

Heflin and Bullock (1999) acknowledge through their research findings that teachers as well as parents felt that untrained teachers could not meet the needs of special needs students. It is also recognized at the university level that there is need for preparing teachers to meet the needs of diverse students, such as at the University of
Dayton, Ohio (Landers, Dill, & Weaver, 1995). It is felt here that teachers, both general and special education be prepared to teach all types of students meeting their different needs while gaining a better concept of inclusion. The same holds for Webster University in Missouri (Campbell & Fyfe, 1995) as they instituted programs aimed at undergraduate and graduate programs to serve preservice and practicing teachers in the areas of early childhood and inclusive educational practices while engaged in a specialized area of study.

It appears that there is a need for educating all teachers in the practices of special education to meet the diverse needs of so many children included in general education classes today. All in all, the more preparation teachers could receive would increase their understanding of the nature and needs of exceptional children making the practice of inclusion more successful.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

The design of this study will be the utilization of three focus groups to effect theoretical saturation of common themes and trends (Krueger & Casey, 2000). More than one focus group is necessary as a single group of people would be too limited and not produce any characteristic insights (Babbie, 1999). This qualitative method was chosen because the researcher believes that the topics of teacher preparedness and inclusion are current social circumstances that deserve a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions of a particular area of interest to the researcher. This will be accomplished through the use of a predetermined route of open-ended questions designed by the researcher (Krueger, 1998) (see Appendix A). As a qualitative instrument, focus groups serve as a primary means of collecting data. Focus groups enable participants to be interviewed in a natural setting with the distinguishing feature of participants being influencing and influenced by others, producing data and insights that would be less accessible without group interaction. Utilized in a self-contained manner, focus groups can be the basis for a complete study, based upon verbal behavior and self-reported data that demands the same attention to detail that is required of other types of data collection (Morgan, 1997).

This form of social science research is scientific as it provides a process of disciplined inquiry that is verifiable and systematic through sufficient data that produces a wake of testimony. The data is obtained through field notes, recordings, an oral
summary, debriefings between moderator and assistant moderator, and transcripts. Since no instrument exists that can measure the views and perceptions of an intricate topic, in-depth perceptions of the participants are required that cannot be expressed in numeric form but can however be measured in a descriptive manner (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The series of discussions groups will take place in a conducive, nonthreatening environment so as to encourage the participants to talk freely and share their perceptions, points of view and personal experiences, all of which will be documented by use of a tape recorder. Krueger and Casey reported that the intent of the focus groups is to encourage self-disclosure amongst the participants and to attempt to detect a range of opinions and trends across several groups until theoretical saturation has been reached.

Research Design

The researcher chose a suburban school district that is located in North Eastern New Jersey. It is located in a community that has been established since pre-revolutionary times, and today has a population of 28,870 (1990 Census). The school district is comprised of six elementary schools, two intermediate schools, and one high school with a total enrollment of 5,336 students, according to the New Jersey State Department of Education’s School Report Cards (2000-2001). The high school has an enrollment of 1,360 students of which 13% are students with disabilities that have IEP’s. The two middle schools have a combined enrollment of 1,332 students, 14-17% of which have disabilities and IEP’s. The six elementary schools have a total enrollment of 2,644 students, of which 6-14% have disabilities and IEP’s.
The researcher will first contact the special services director of the district and meet in an informal meeting to describe the intent of the study. The researcher will ask the special services director about the chosen district and whether it was a feasible place to conduct the study. After establishing said district for the study, the special services director will supply the names of the superintendent of the district and the names of the principals for three of the six elementary schools in which to contact for permission. The researcher will call the superintendent of schools and each of the elementary school principals to verbally establish intent. The researcher will offer each principal a monetary donation to the school as an incentive for using their schools and their teachers for the study (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Letters explaining the study will be formally sent to the superintendent of school, three elementary principals, and to teachers in grades 1-5 requesting volunteers from each of the five grade levels. Anonymity of responses will be explained to the participants. They will be told that they will be provided with numbered tent cards (with their name written in an area that will not be seen by the moderator). All participants for the release and use of personal anonymous responses will be requested to sign a permission form (with permission to use audio taped responses, also). They will be informed that a neutral location will be established, the dates and times for arrival, and the length of time projected for the discussion. Incentives will be disclosed, such as, refreshments available for everyone, and a monetary donation to each of the three schools used.

The researcher’s three homogeneous groups will be determined by who chooses to randomly attend and participate in the research study after reviewing and consenting to the research procedure (Morgan, 1997). The researcher will develop a question route
comprised of clear and thoughtful questions that will be asked of the participants during a 2-hour discussion. The questions are to seem spontaneous, however, they will be the result of considerable thought and effort on the part of the researcher so as to induce a range of ideas or feelings that insight attention to a better understanding of the problem from various perspectives. Additionally, the chosen questions will be the result of similar questions that will have been test piloted with a similar group prior to collecting the qualitative research in the form of the focus groups. These questions will be asked in a conversational manner. The wording of the questions should be direct, forthright, comfortable and simple (Krueger, 1998).

The moderating team is comprised of a moderator (the researcher) and an assistant. The team will first welcome the participants and engage them in small talk, avoiding the focused issue, to determine the conversational types of participants. By establishing participants who seem shyer and those more garrulous, the team will decide where to place participants when seated around the discussion table. The rule of thumb being that the participant more apt to dominate the conversation is placed beside the moderator, and the less responsive type is place across from the moderator so as to better engage them in the conversation (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The moderator will establish ground rules that will help for a smooth discussion, such one person talking at a time, and that no names of students or personnel are mentioned. The moderator uses high involvement techniques during the discussion so as to channel the discussion and the content in the direction of the questioning route to continually establish sense and purpose.
The most frequently cited justifications for high involvement have to do with controlling the interaction in the group, including getting irrelevant discussions back on track, restarting discussion when the group runs dry, ensuring that groupthink does not stifle opinions that differ from those of the majority, cutting off overly dominant participants, engaging overly participants, and so on. (Morgan, 1997, p. 52)

The assistant will make sure that everyone's needs are met, such as refreshments, lighting, unexpected interruptions; and is also responsible for taking notes, paying particular attention to quotes, and serves as and extra pair of eyes for both the accumulation of information and validity of analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The moderator and the moderator's assistant establish a comfortable atmosphere to develop a rapport with the participants to invoke trust and confidence.

Instrument Design

The 1 to 2 hour discussion session is comprised of categories of questions that Krueger (1998) describes as not being of equal importance, such as, opening questions, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions. It begins with opening questions that everyone answers quickly, in about 30 seconds, getting everyone talking, involved, and promoting a comfortable feeling with both moderators. The opening questions are of factual nature. Next are introductory questions that allowed the participants to speculate on past experiences to hopefully evoke conversation of other participants, adding their own reflections of experiences. Introductory questions are open-ended and focus on the topic of discussion and allow participants to tell about their feelings or understandings of the problem that is under investigation. These questions are followed by transition
questions that connect the introductory questions with the more insightful questions, which are the key questions. The key questions are what Krueger (1998) calls the ones that "drive the study." These questions are also open-ended and require the moderator to utilize probing and pausing techniques, which are beneficial as they elicit the need for more in-depth detail (Krueger, 1998). The ending question is used to bring closure to the discussion and allow for any last attempts for discussion or additional insights. A self-addressed stamped envelope will also be distributed among participants to also ensure closure but to allow for second thoughts that the participants may have after the discussion is completed. The entire discussion will be tape recorded, with permission for use from participants established prior to the discussion, and anonymity assured by using numbered tent cards for each participant.

Setting

The date and time for each focus group discussion will be set so as not to conflict with other meetings or functions after school. The research will take place in a comfortable, permissive location, one that is familiar to the participants, such as the faculty lounge or library. The location will be one that is preferably free from visual and audible distractions.

Background Information of Participants

The three focus groups together were comprised of 18 volunteers, 2 male and 16 female, who were all regular education teachers who taught grades one to five. (One resource room teacher was present, however, her responses are not included in the data
analysis.) The number of years of teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 35 years, the mode being 4 years, the median 7.5; and the mean 13.3 years. The number of years teaching special needs students within a regular educational setting ranged from 2 years to 35 years, the mode being 5 years, the median 5.5, and the mean 9.3 years. The number of teachers that had ever taken special education courses at the university level was split down the middle with half never taking any special education courses, and half that have taken courses. Of those in the half that have taken special educations courses the majority had taken them recently, within the past 5 years or currently enrolled. Their homogeneity will provide sufficient variation among the participants to allow for contrasting opinions and perceptions (Morgan, 1997).

Pilot Study Results

Elementary school teachers of grades first through fifth, from a northern New Jersey suburban school district were asked to volunteer to test pilot the researcher’s questions from the prepared question route. Twenty-one teachers and one building administrator were present. The question route was given to each volunteer. The researcher asked a question and then they talked amongst themselves before answering. The questions from the question route basically remained as the researcher prepared them initially, however these 22 volunteers honed them to be more specific. Krathwohl (1998) feels that test pilot saturation will help the researcher know that what was conveyed was what was intended by each question, which will aid in analyzing the responses. The volunteers felt that it was necessary for the researcher to clarify and state that all questions pertained to a regular education classroom setting. When asked the question about ever having taken special education courses at the university level, they felt that it
should be denoted as to how recently, as some had taken courses too long ago to possibly pertain to current situations. Many made it clear that the questions evoked yes and or no answers and they stated that the researcher would need to ask for elaboration. When asked if something was successful, they felt it necessary to additionally inquire about the same issue possibly being unsuccessful. The entire test pilot group felt it necessary that the researcher add a question to the study regarding support from administrative staff, teaching staff, team support, and adequate planning time. The mention of planning time brought about a lot of discussion as they all concurred that planning time was a key element if teaching special needs students. When asked to jot down on a piece of paper a phrase or sentence that best describes your position on this topic, they told the researcher to change "topic" to read the title of the dissertation for clarity. All in all, they felt that the questions followed sequentially, made sense, and they expressed a great interest in learning the results of the researcher's study, as they were glad that someone was actually addressing this subject matter. They additionally commented on the personality of the researcher as one that would evoke successful group discussions.

Data Collection

The researcher addressed three focus groups from the same school district on three separate occasions. Each volunteer was given a copy of the question route. They were instructed to speak one at a time and that the researcher would ask the necessary questions, utilizing prompts where necessary, and bring the discussion back to the topic if need be. They were given numbers for identification for the closed-ended questions so no names were used and a response was obtained by each participant. The researcher
only asked specific volunteers for responses when asking closed ended questions for
descriptive data. Otherwise, when asked open ended questions they were not to wait to
be addressed for answers that they were to freely speak and carry on a discussion. The
researcher explained that she was there to listen and learn from them. Two tape recorders
were placed in the center of the focus group to record the entire discussion. The
volunteers were given paper to write responses to the penultimate question, which were
then given to the researcher. The taped discussions were transcribed into written format
for analysis.

Data Analysis

Krueger and Casey (2000) state that the basic understanding in focus group
analysis is systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous. The results should reflect
what was shared in the groups. The analysis is connected, flowing from one response to
another, portraying a process that was followed. Most importantly, another researcher
should be able to read the research and derive those same conclusions. Verification in
analysis can be had from enough data there is a trail of evidence, including the
moderator’s notes, tape recordings, and the final transcripts. Unlike quantitative data
analysis, focus group research data is continuous, as it should be analyzed between
groups, thus revealing where more information may need to be collected, specifically by
using more probing techniques. The sequence continues after the data is collected by the
researcher who analyzes transcripts, tapes, notes, and memory to detect common themes,
helpful quotes; recognize surprising comments and perceptions, and similarities and
differences amongst groups. Particular emphasis will be given to factors that emerge
such as, range, specificity, depth, and personal context (Merton, Fiske, & Kendal, 1990).
Merton feels that these are four areas that make focus groups effective, as they:

Cover a maximum range of relevant topics; provide data that are specific as possible, foster interaction that explores the participants' feelings in some depth, and take into account the personal context that participants use in generating their responses of the topic. (Merton et al., 1990)

Range can be useful as it may bring into the discussion other topics that can build on the strength of the subject. Specificity can provide detailed accounts of participants' experiences. Depth of a topic can emphasize participants' involvement with the subject, perhaps compelling others to share more detailed experiences of their own. The most critical aspect Merton and colleagues (1990) feel is the personal context from which responses flow.

Perspectives and personal contexts may be used on the social roles and categories that the participants occupy; they may be rooted in more individual experiences.

Either way, the point of doing a group interview is to bring a number of different perspectives into contact. (Merton et al., 1990, p. 46)

Questions 1, 2, and 3 on the question route (see Tables 1-7) were asked so as to solicit descriptive data to give the reader a clear picture of who was present in the focus group discussions. The question route responses from questions 3, 5, and 7 pertain to research question 1 and teacher's perceptions of receiving an appropriate college education enabling them to provide for the needs of classified students in an inclusive educational setting. Responses from question route 3 and 4 concern research question 2 and additional special education training after graduating. Research question 3 regarding
on the job training to better implement inclusive educational practices relate to question route questions 4, 5, and 5a. Research question 4 directly relates to question route questions #6 and 10 about what teachers perceive to be inclusion. Question route questions 5a, 7 and 8 pertain to research question 5 concerning training in regular and special education beginning at the university level. Research question 6 combines responses from question route questions 8 and 9 about electing to be certified in both regular and special education. Research question 7 directly asks about the possibility of combining regular and special education training for prospective teachers and is validated by responses from question route questions 8 and 9.

Summary

With approval from the Institutional Review Board, the researcher conducted three focus group discussions comprised of regular elementary school teachers to determine their perceptions of inclusion and what training they felt was necessary to implement inclusionary practices in a regular educational setting. The questions asked in the focus group discussions were test piloted with regular elementary school teachers from a different district prior to the data collection so as to ensure clarity and continuity. The researcher then analyzed the written transcripts from the three focus group discussions, looking for common themes, ideas, and nuances that would help to depict the underlying feelings and perceptions of these teachers about how sufficiently they feel trained to teach students with special needs. The results of the research will be discussed in Chapter IV. The entire discussions from the three focus groups are included in Appendix B. Krueger and Casey (2000) point out that focus groups do not provide solutions to problems, however they can provide a better understanding of the problem,
through a range if ideas and themes generated across a group(s) of people that are characterized by homogeneity yet with enough variation to provide different and contrasting opinions and ideas (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The target audience that can best provide such ideas and themes are “information-rich people,” what Patton (1990) describes as “those from which on can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the study” (p.1690). The moderating team concentrates on neutrality and systematic procedures throughout the discussion. For every resulting point, an evidence trail is verified across participants and groups. The moderating team’s goal is to identify common patterns and themes through theoretical saturation, and to possibly provide enlightenment through their conclusions and interpretations.
Table 1

**Research Question 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>X</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received appropriate college education enabling them to provide for the needs of classified students in an inclusive educational setting?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe any on-the-job training, in-service or professional development experiences that helped you to facilitate the needs of special needs students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs students, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you have received the necessary support from administrative staff, teaching staff, team support, etc. and adequate planning time for facilitating the needs of special needs students?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Close your eyes. When you hear the term “inclusion” what comes to mind? Describe the attributes that makes it successful or unsuccessful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training? If so, please explain.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Research Question 2

| Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently? | X |
| Describe any on the job training, in-service or professional development experiences that helped you to facilitate the needs of special needs students? | X |
| Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs students, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate? | |
| Do you feel that you have received the necessary support from administrative staff, teaching staff, team support, etc. and adequate planning time for facilitating the needs of special needs students? | |
| Close your eyes. When you hear the term “inclusion” what comes to mind? Describe the attributes that makes it successful or unsuccessful? | |
| Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training? If so, please explain. | |
| Do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers? | |
| Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful? | |
| On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools? | |
Table 3

Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received adequate on the job training to adequately implement inclusive educational practices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs students, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate?</td>
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Research Question 4

What are the perceptions of regular education teachers as to what constitutes inclusion?

Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently?

Describe any on the job training, in-service or professional development experiences that helped you to facilitate the needs of special needs students?

Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs students, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate?

Do you feel that you have received the necessary support from administrative staff, teaching staff, team support, etc. and adequate planning time for facilitating the needs of special needs students?

Close your eyes. When you hear the term “inclusion” what comes to mind? Describe the attributes that makes it successful or unsuccessful? X

Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training? If so, please explain.

Do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers?

Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful?

On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools? X
Table 5

Research Question 5

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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do regular education teachers agree that preservice training should begin at the university level and include training for regular and special education teachers combined?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe any on the job training, in-service or professional development experiences that helped you to facilitate the needs of special needs students?</td>
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<td>Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs students, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you have received the necessary support from administrative staff, teaching staff, team support, etc. and adequate planning time for facilitating the needs of special needs students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close your eyes. When you hear the term “inclusion” what comes to mind? Describe the attributes that makes it successful or unsuccessful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training? If so, please explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful?</td>
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<tr>
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### Research Question 6

<table>
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<th>Should regular education teachers elect to also be certified in special education?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers? X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful? X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Research Question 7

| Do regular education teachers perceive dual certification, combining a regular and special education program to be beneficial for prospective teachers? |
| Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When? How recently? |
| Describe any on the job training, in-service or professional development experiences that helped you to facilitate the needs of special needs students? |
| Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs students, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate? |
| Do you feel that you have received the necessary support from administrative staff, teaching staff, team support, etc. and adequate planning time for facilitating the needs of special needs students? |
| Close you eyes. When you hear the term “inclusion” what comes to mind? Describe the attributes that makes it successful or unsuccessful? |
| Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training? If so, please explain. |
| Do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers? X |
| Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful? X |
| On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools? |
CHAPTER IV
Research Findings

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers' preparedness (level of training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study is aimed at gathering information to better understand how elementary teachers feel or think about their own level of teacher training and inclusion. Qualitative measures were utilized to capture the feelings and attitudes of regular educations teachers to answer the research questions:

1. Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received an appropriate college education enabling them to provide for the needs of classified students in an inclusive educational setting?

2. Have regular education teachers received any special education training after graduating?

3. Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received adequate on the job training to adequately implement inclusive educational practices?

4. What are the perceptions of regular education teachers as to what constitutes inclusion?

5. Do regular education teachers agree that preservice training should begin at the university level and include training for regular and special education teachers combined?
6. Should regular education teachers elect to also be certified in special education?

7. Do regular education teachers perceive dual certification, combining a regular and special education program to be beneficial for prospective teachers?

Analysis of Discussions

Research Question 1

Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received an appropriate college education enabling them to provide for the needs of classified students in an inclusive educational setting?

The responses from 3, 5, and 7 (see Appendix A) from the question route pertain to research question 1. One teacher who teaches in a regular education class is currently enrolled in a graduate program at a local university, with the program of concentration in learning disabilities. Perhaps this teacher recognized the need for additional university preparation in order to teach in her current regular educational setting. Another teacher had recently completed a master’s degree in teaching and some of the courses taught were about teaching basic skills and learning disabilities. Another hint that there may just be a need for additional preparation if special needs students are to be included in the regular education classes. One of the teachers is certified in special education but the required courses were not taken recently. A couple of other teachers expressed that they had some background in special education however these courses, too, were not taken recently, either. One respondent appeared to be sufficiently capable of teaching special needs students, as this teacher is dual certified in both regular and special education. The researcher inquired if the university where these certifications were issued was in New
Jersey or out of state, and it turns out that it was not in New Jersey. A couple of teachers expressed that they had had one course in special education.

A seasoned teacher that has had no special education courses from college or training in special education expressed having had blind and deaf children in her class. Well, I was teaching fifth grade and they just told me that I was going to have a new student. This was, well, the second blind child...I have to tell you this, because we were giving New Jersey State testing at that time, and they just brought her in to me in the middle of my class being tested. And she had never been in a classroom before. And she was quite like a wild animal. I mean, she had never ever experienced being in a classroom, and my children are taking this timed test that she is throwing over desks and everything. She cursed a lot. We had a lot of learning to do with her, but as the year went on things got better.

She continued to speak about another blind child that had been placed in her class, a child in which their other siblings began going blind, also. She expressed that she thinks that they all eventually died. The researcher asked again about the kind of help that she had received or courses to help her teach these disabled children. The same teacher said that there had been a special teacher who translated textbooks into Braille, however, no mention was made how the blind child learned to read and with whom. She went on to talk about another blind child that when they played kickball, he was made aware of where the ball was and she had someone hold his hand when they ran. “That’s just common sense.” She continued to relate other instances. “And they chose me for a deaf child because my voice was deeper. They said that the sound of my voice was one that would be best for him. So that’s why he was in my class.” It is apparent that this
latter teacher taught these children using only innate knowledge and experience, as she had expressed, and that the use of "just common sense" was the way she approached various difficult situations. When this teacher related her experiences, her voice expressed an incredulous tone, however, much empathy was also expressed. In a way, she shrugged off her approach of dealing with this student while stating, "but you know, you just do that kind of, you know you wanted him to be included." It was almost as if intimating that since she did not have any special education training in college, and this was the situation, she just dealt with it the best way she knew how.

Another teacher related about having had a severely hearing disabled male student that was only able to hear partially in one ear. The researcher inquired about the type of assistance given to the teacher to aid the child. The teacher said that headphones were given to her so that he could hear her better. Another teacher said that she had the same child the year after and that she, too was given the headphones while the student was wearing his hearing aides, and that this would allow the child to hear at a much higher decibel. The second teacher said that someone was just supposed to show her how to use this tool. Another described this as a sound field with speakers and microphones to assist hearing impaired and even emotionally disturbed children to hear well. The researcher asked them how they could handle teaching these students without formalized training from college or the use of a special education teacher assistant. Both teachers said that sometimes after school a special teacher assists students, and sometimes during lunch. They expressed utilizing their extra time to assist these students. The researcher felt that they assisted these students from their hearts and they agreed. They spoke of needing to balance their time with the gifted students while reteaching lessons to the students
struggling, "Who were maybe not classified yet, or where they refuse to classify them."

Regarding feeling sufficiently trained to meet the needs of these students, a teacher
remarked that she had had a female student that eventually was classified emotionally
disturbed and that "we just couldn't do it. We tried everything. You know, there are
times that you don't, no matter what you do, and God knows we tried, but...."

Research Question 2

Have regular education teachers received any special education training after
graduating from college?

The replies to 3 and 4 questions from the question route concern research question
2. One teacher remarked that they had not had any university training in special education
at the university level after graduating, however they mentioned taking staff development
courses in the district. Another mentioned that they had had taken some graduate courses
however, they were not recent. This teacher then continued to state that they had gone to
other things in the district for continuing education credits. As mentioned in research
question 1, one teacher remarked that they were currently matriculated in a master's
degree program at a state college for special education. Mentioned previously, also in the
same question, was a teacher who had completed a master's degree within the past five
years and had taken courses for teaching basic skills and learning disabled students. And
then there is the response from the teacher who had taught a couple of blind students and
a deaf student without any special education training, and they remarked that they "didn't
have any courses." The responses were more plentiful regarding professional
development courses that were taken in the district. A couple of teachers remarked that
they had been involved in a differentiated instruction professional development course. They also remarked that they had taken a professional development course in the district concerning brain-based research, which encompassed learning styles. Another teacher mentioned another in-service regarding ADHD and ADD. A little discrepancy was present in their responses regarding how recently these professional development courses had been offered. They concurred that the differentiated instruction had been recent "but the ADD one was probably like 4 or 5 years ago." Another teacher commented, "4 or 5 years ago, yeah... and then the multiple intelligences was probably like 2 years ago or something." Others agreed. "Then when they had that teaching institute, where was that? In Raritan? Back in those days, we went like a 3-day conference. We didn't stay there, but we went every day and it was on multiple intelligences and the latest research on the brain, left and right brain research." The researcher inquired if these professional development courses were helpful for them when teaching special needs students. "That, that particular workshop or institute whatever you wanted to call it, really impacted on my teaching. It really did. In all phases." When asked to give an example, the teacher replied,

Yeah, I mean it really, it really taught you that, you know, some kids are global learners, kids that needed the tactile, you know you learned about different learning styles. I mean, I, it's been a long time since I've been in a classroom setting, you know, at learning that type of presentation, it really made me look at the children in my class long and hard and how I could reach all different learning styles. And then you learned about your own learning style...and how you gravitated towards basically your own comfort zone when you were teaching.
Because that's what you were comfortable with, you know. It made you kind of self-analyze yourself... and how you learn.

A different teacher then commented on their experience with a professional development course:

The ADHD workshop I felt was good, because I didn't really know that much about the children. You know, especially when you are teaching first grade, it's like they're all rambunctious. So, it kind of helped, they gave us lists to kind of identify what kind of characteristics and ADHD student has.

This teacher commented that they absolutely found this helpful. The researcher asked for another teacher's response:

Um, differentiation workshop was helpful because it kind of gave me lessons on how to take one goal and different children and meet it in a different way. So, you know, from part of the child's view in one way you could design the whole lesson differently, that child or from a group that maybe had something in common and how they learn. So, that's been very helpful. I've used that a lot and I think the kids really like it. They like the fact that they don't all have to do the same thing and that's O.K. And they understand that. And they understand that that doesn't mean that someone is better than someone else. And I think that's important. And they're also identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, and I think that's important that they understand that they all have strengths and weaknesses.

The researcher asked for any additional comments, and one teacher responded on their training:
Just that I went to an in-service about central auditory processing and just how children with that disorder, how it’s important the teachers understand that they can ask questions and they should ask teachers to repeat directions and that teachers in general should listen because it really is, it’s what they can’t do the most. They can’t hear and understand it the first time around and it was very helpful just to get information to give to other teachers so that they can be more aware of how they should react to children who suffer from this disorder.

One of the more interesting comments was from a teacher who commented that what has helped them to facilitate the needs of special needs students was “learn as you go.” That teacher continued to say that she had received a student with a bad hearing disability and “there was nothing to warn me about that, no classes, no conversations with anyone.” This teacher told us how she prepared herself by self-educating herself through reading and experimenting in the classroom with where to stand and where to speak to gain the best results with the student. She said that it was comparable to having a foreign student who does not speak English, “a lot of it is just learn as you go.” Another teacher said, “I’ve had students over the course of the school year that are classified during the school year and then go out for reading or math to the recourse room, and there is no training or how to schedule that, deal with that, plan for that. You know, alter your work, that kind of thing.” A couple of teachers praised the resource room teacher as being “invaluable” as their source of information. “They are excellent resources.” “Just working with the resource room teachers and staff members, banging my head at lunch, trying to get ideas from other people and that type of thing. That’s where it’s been.” They continued to relate how the resource room teachers helped them to understand what
they could expect for the year with many special needs students in the classroom. Another teacher spoke about talking to the third grade teacher, because being a fourth grade teacher, the teacher of the grade before hers, could relate some success that they may have experienced. “That’s one of my biggest I can’t say that training classes that I’ve had, because I haven’t had a lot.” One teacher commented that they did not get many resource room kids in their classroom. “I think I push to hard and I don’t get them. The researcher did not understand what “push too hard,” meant, so someone clarified for the researcher that the former teacher “doesn’t want them. She makes it known that she doesn’t want them so they don’t give them to her.” The researcher feels that, perhaps if regular education teachers received sufficient training in special education either from a university or from professional development courses there would be less hesitancy in accepting special needs students into their classroom. Mentioned, however was the fact that neurologically impaired students are included in their regular classes, but that these students don’t receive the mainstream curriculum, that they’re there “as more of an experience in a regular mainstream class. They’re goal is to just be part of the social aspect and to gain whatever knowledge they have.” After a prompt from the researcher to continue, more discussion about professional development being offered at the district level ensued. A remark was made that professional development was basically at the discretion of the teacher whether they attended these courses or not.

It’s at the teachers’ discretion to take. It’s basically like in one second you’re just thrown into the fire with these kids. I remember my first year. I had one child who was severely, you know, classified and problems, things like that, and it was, I just relied on the recourse room teachers for help and trying to figure it out,
trying to figure out what an IEP is, and well, you’re just thrown in. And if you’ve had no special ed basis, it’s very daunting to have that, you have to, kind of, save yourself.

Others remarked that they basically had an understanding about what these students needed by the time the school year was half over. “You kind of figure it out.” It appears to the researcher that a lot of “figuring out what to do” with special needs students occurs at the regular education level. The researcher probed into this area about not having any training and in a situation, such as with an IEP that one had never seen before, what are the impressions of teachers? Some of the comments were, “The IEP’s are very intense, and there’s a lot of parts to it” and “not having worked with one before, I remember the first time seeing it was overwhelming because of all the things you had to accommodate for the child and all the goals that are set by the IEP, and not understanding, you know, how do you work with it?” and “it makes it tough to keep it all in your mind exactly what you have to do for each child...there are things I don’t need to worry about, but there are things I need to know, and that’s tough when you have more that one and you have the academically gifted children, and have the average children or the immature children...it’s a lot to handle.”

Other teachers recalled receiving PAF training, which is a branch of Orton Gillingham, and viewing the video “Fat City” which was described as “very powerful.” When asked if these methods helped them in any way, responses were that “it makes you understand better, because unless you have one [learning disability] yourself, unless you’ve grown up with a learning disability, you really can’t see it until there is something that’s very visual and somewhat powerful like that movie” and “It gives you tools, just
more tools in the bag, a little more understanding and how to deal with it in different ways to approach kids.” A poignant remark was from a teacher who spoke from personal experience about raising a child 27 years ago, who had a learning disability. Another teacher asked this teacher, “What was it like when he was 7? Did you have the same kinds of things available?” The teacher responded, “No, and he went through the school system, and this is his school. And what happened to me is I eventually took him out of the public school and put him in private school, because I felt that I needed to help him where he was. And he went to college. He graduated, and works on Wall Street, so...he has a severe earning disability.” She continued to say that with her personal experience and professional development courses that she has taken have helped her have a better understanding of the kids that are in the class. She commented that she knows that they [learning disabled students] feel stupid. Regarding her son, “Because that’s how even today, he’ll tell you that he always used to feel stupid.”

Research Question 3

Do regular education teachers perceive that they have received adequate on the job training to adequately implement inclusive educational practices?

The rejoinder from 4, 5, and 5a from the question route relate to research question 3. Numerous teachers responded about professional development courses that they took in their district. Common were responses about having taken brain based research courses, differentiated instruction, courses at a local teaching institute, Orton Gillingham, central auditory processing, viewing “Fat City.” They generally responded that they found these professional development courses beneficial, however, it appeared that they
were not very recent and far and few between. Many responded that they relied on the expertise of the resource room teachers and Child Study Team members for information. They were asked by the researcher if they felt sufficiently trained to implement educational practices for any type of special needs student, such as, blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed students. One teacher stated that they did not feel sufficiently trained, yet they felt that there were people to go to for information and support. Another teacher reminded this teacher of a situation that they had been in a couple of years ago. They related having had a Down’s Syndrome child, “and I mean, I knew nothing, and just learned as I went. And it was a very positive experience but I felt that you know, I just learned as I went and asked questions along the way.” Another teacher recalled that approximately 3-4 years ago there was a self-contained class for neurologically impaired students, and that the problems were more severe for these primary aged students. “We had those kids in our classrooms a lot, and we had absolutely no training and, not a lot of help quite frankly.” The teachers said that these neurologically impaired students were mainstreamed for lunch, specials, science, and math. One commented that they had a neurologically impaired student mainstreamed in their math class and that made 28 students in total for that class period. “And that was not a good situation. We were given no help in having that many kids.” “They weren’t there for the academics as much as they were for the social. I still felt very inadequate.” Another responded in kind, “Yeah, and had I known what I was doing...” (Inferences to another teacher feeling inadequate was evident.) Another mentioned that the necessary supports were needed to be established before special needs students arrive in a classroom.
I had a cerebral, I had a cerebral palsy in my class and I felt that he was just put in my classroom with an aide and it was my second year of teaching. So I had to go and take a class and I was supposed to set up the classroom and he was unable to walk. He did not write. We did not have a computer with an enlarged mouse so I thought the supports weren’t there, whereas now if I were going to have a child with that severe a disability, I would make sure that all those supports were in place before. Like, I knew who I was going to go to.

The researcher went off in another direction at this point but felt that it was relevant to the prior response. The researcher asked the teachers how far in advance do they learn that they will receive a child with special needs. One teacher mentioned that they were informed before the end of the school year; however, they did not meet with the assigned classroom aide until the first day of school. Previously mentioned in research question 1, was the response of a teacher who had had a deaf child in the classroom and they were given headphones that would help them both communicate better together. Very candidly a teacher remarked that they do not feel sufficiently trained, however, they could do it anyway, because they would utilize the resources in the building, such as the more experienced teachers, resource team, and the principals. “So could I do it? Absolutely! Would I be scared out of my mind? Yes. Would I be overwhelmed? Yes. Would I be worried that somehow I wouldn’t do enough or give enough? Yes, but I could do it.”

Previously mentioned in research question 1 a teacher related an experience of having had an emotionally disturbed child in class, just a couple of years ago, and that they felt that they tried everything but in the end were unsuccessful. Additional circumstances were related about this child, such as “It got to the point where I got a phone call at night,
had to be in school at 7:00 in the morning, they take every sharp object out of the classroom, and you know, she was dangerous. She was a danger to everyone in the building and everybody in the classroom and she went wild on us on a regular basis.” They continued to say “Nobody prepared you for that either. I don’t think, I, I mean I was frustrated and God knows you guys know how frustrated I was, but even the administration was very frustrated.” The teachers began discussing how many of these special needs students are now going to special schools so they are better serviced. “For a while though, we, they wouldn’t call them...” Another teacher remarked in kind, “They wouldn’t classify them. And then they’d come into our regular classrooms...they were not classified as emotionally disturbed.” A teacher related having had an emotionally disturbed child brought in to the classroom by the psychologist and was told not to let the student sit by the window as this classroom was on the second floor. The student remarked to the teacher, “You don’t have to worry because if I fly out the window, I’m going to take you with me.” “I mean, he was really emotionally disturbed, said the teacher, but I had to teach him all year.” When asked by the researcher what kind of supports was available for them, it was remarked, “Well, you know, at that time, we didn’t have too much support.” It was intimated that this incident was only a few years ago and that recently more students are being sent to special schools, as the “shift is to bring those types of students out of district.”

To further probe the teachers about whether or not they have received adequate on-the-job training to meet the needs of inclusive practices, the researcher inquired if they felt that they have received the necessary support from the administration and fellow teachers. This question brought about a lot of emotional discussion. A very honest
response from a teacher was, "I think that, in theory, they're very helpful in the sense of their philosophy and what they tell us, that we're able to go to conferences and so forth, is very responsible. But in practice, they can, they'll just drop any child and he's here today and you have to react to it. So you tend to react to a situation rather than to prepare for a situation. Um, and it happens in the pre-school quite a bit. Um, the whole, the whole program has changed from children with very slight disabilities to major disabilities and, as a staff, we don't feel that we are the best for the children. We feel that we don't have the practice and experience to give them, to make it, to make their lives different. Administration feels, "we're here, you got them do it!" And we do need more support. We need more support in the areas that we've never traveled before." The teacher went on to mention assisting students that require various skills due to the nature of their disability. A couple of teachers commented that it is difficult to attend to all of the various needs of students in the class when it is one teacher and 20 to 25 kids that they are trying to differentiate instruction. When the researcher continued to probe, teachers commented that they constantly complain about the areas that they struggle in but are told that these students do not qualify "because they don't want that many kids referred to special ed." It appears that the teachers identify year to year the same students that they feel may need special services, and that, "The administration does deter us from identifying children or well, not identifying children, but putting children, or giving children the needs that they really need to survive in the classroom, to be successful." Others concurred that they felt the same, and that in previous years, early intervention was more readily practiced, at the pre-school level. They felt that more students were de-classified when they reached the middle school years due to early intervention measures.
One commented that they felt that years are wasted if a child has not had early intervention measures, and that they felt that their high school special education department was the largest department in the high school. They went on to comment that they felt that the money should be spent in the elementary grades to prevent possible stigmas and social issues in the later grades. The comments continued about early intervention and about how half-day kindergarten does not allow the teachers to really get to know the students in only 2 ½ hours of time on a daily basis. One teacher commented that at meetings, suggestions are being offered about trying certain strategies with students that are used with the special ed class, yet they are not classified and receiving the same assistance. The comments from the others sounded as if in disbelief when they heard comments, such as “...so it’s like they’re classified without being classified,” and “so they’re getting the classified services but no IEP.” They continued describing how not many IEP’s are wanted and how it should not be documented or not wanted on paper.

One recalled hearing comments such as, “this child will not be classified.” They said that they’ve heard from teachers that they they’ve done all that they could for these students, “and they still don’t get the services, and they feel like they’ve failed the child. And I don’t think the teachers should feel that way. Especially when they’ve done everything they can.” They mentioned that kindergarteners do not get classified; yet they, as teachers, are made aware that there are issues that need to be dealt with, with these students. Much frustration was verbalized. “Even more, it’s just, every year it gets worse so it feels like....” Others concurred that they have felt that there were those students that needed a referral so as to receive special services. “I think one of the most frustrating things is trying to get a child help when a child really needs it. I mean, this year I’ve got
two in my class who should’ve been referred 3...3 years ago.” An overlap in conversation here, “Well, I feel like things like differentiation are being put in, to kind of tell us “OK, now you’re differentiating, so now you can handle all these different needs with this lesson because that’s what you’re supposed to do.” One teacher tried to justify the frustration here by stating that they felt the kids in their district were not quite so needy as compared to those in other districts. At this point the others agreed, and commented that they felt that they were an ambitious district. Others felt that administration tries to help them, that they are aware of the teachers needs and try to be supportive, “but how many hands do you have?” Another commented that they felt that staff gives each other 100% support and that administration encourages taking classes and professional development courses; however, they felt that this encouragement leaned more towards classes for assisting the gifted rather than those that were struggling. One teacher said that there really was not a great deal of support coming from administration unless you went looking for it. Another concurred that there was support, “But not readily at your fingers. If you go out and look for it.” Mention was made of a student’s assistance counselor who is at the school 2 ½ days per week, as the counselor is being shared between schools. They described the counselor’s role as one who assists at PAC meetings, and to work with students who are having emotional, behavioral, and academic issues at school. They said that they heard that at the budget meeting that this counselor was instituted because there were so many referrals, and that this was supposed to cut down on them [referrals].

The researcher felt that adequate planning time was relevant to receiving adequate administrative support. This portion of the research questioning brought out additional
emphatic and emotional comments from each group of teachers. Some teachers said that they found it necessary to meet and plan lessons outside of school, as there was no time for planning during school hours. Others mentioned remaining after hours till maybe 6pm or 7pm in the evening. One mentioned receiving a note and gift from a parent who was aware of these late nights at school. The note read, “This is a little token of our, my appreciation for your hard work.” Planning time at school equated on the average to 15 minutes to maybe 45 minutes, and when there were phone calls to return, the planning time was reduced even more. The majority of teachers felt that with special needs students there needed to be a common planning time with the resource room teacher, as from previous comments, the resource room teacher is considered a major resource of information. “The resource room teacher will show up for in class support and they’ll be like,” “Oh, well, what are we doing today?” “Because you weren’t able to meet so how were you able to plan and accommodate for what you’re coming in to assist with?”

The comments that follow were from the end of the discussions when the researcher allowed for open discussions amongst the participants. It appeared that since they were aware of the themes of the group discussions, they wanted to add more ideas and thoughts. “Well, I think, I think if they’re going to do more inclusion, I think you have to have more aides hired. I, I think you have to, you need another pair of hands.” Then others joined in, and added comments, such as “We need more training.” “And more incentive to do the training.” The researcher asked them to elaborate on what kind of training they were referring to:

Training. Workshops. I mean, there are plenty of teachers that I know of that over the summer for 2 weeks would be happy to do some type of like, you know,
inexpensive thing, or even, if it were sponsored through something from the
school to go for training. I mean, there are a lot of people who don’t have
different methods, different teaching styles, that are appropriate to certain types of
children.

Hmm, mmm, I’m actually trying to like, create, in our district, usable
material, I think it’s important because they sometimes teach it to you and say this
is what you need to do but teaching about it and actually doing it are two different
stories, you need that guidance when you’re trying to do it the first time. I think
that’s part of the downfall to some of the training we’ve received.

“We need guidance.” “Yeah. Like, don’t just tell me this is what you need to do, OK,
now have us do something so that we have to show it you and, we can test it...does it
work? You know? Why doesn’t it work? That kind of thing. There’s no follow
through.” The researcher asked them where and from whom this guidance should come
from. They answered that they felt it should come from the administration, as “they have
the money to back up additional support.” “I mean, it is kind of ironic that out of all the
different fields, we probably get the least incentive to further educate ourselves and we’re
educators.” “And I can’t tell you how many times people have questioned me about that,
from the outside world. Business people or whatever. Well, why is it that you don’t get
paid for training when you’re the ones teaching people? I don’t even know how to
respond... I don’t know what to say to them.” The researcher continued to probe the
participants for details about additional in-service training. The researcher asked, “And
there’s lack of it?” One of the responses was,
Right. Even without the university training, you know, because that’s what we are right now. Um, we need support, we need the training, and we need preparation, to be successful. I mean, we try so hard to work with these kids, and, but we always run into a roadblock. And we either go to the principal and ask him or her, ‘well, what do we do?’ or we go to the resource room teacher, or our colleagues, who are very helpful to one another. But we definitely need support.

Additionally, they expressed the need for being allowed to give input, as they have ideas and thoughts to share, to be a part of the decision-making. For example, they referred to some in-service programs that were given, and on the whole, they felt they were a waste of time. The researcher felt that they were expressing a need for a chance to offer suggestions about what kind of training they would find beneficial to suit their classroom needs.

Well, first of all I think you have to listen to you special ed teachers. We’re the, they’re the experts in the field and you have to solicit their opinions first. I think you know maybe regular ed teachers and special ed teachers sit down together, without any administrative people there, and come up with a plan or suggestions or methodology for doing this. And, and then, you know, the two of you present a unified voice, so you’re coming from the specialized people and the people who are going to be, you know, taking on, on the, you know, task, and using their expertise. You know? Because a lot of us just don’t know, you’re just, you know, you’re going in blind.

“I think if you have a voice in the final decision, even if it’s sometimes not the way you want it, if you felt like you were heard....” “...And they took into consideration what you
said before they made the final decision, that helps. Because a lot of times they make the decisions and then ask for you opinion.” They expressed how they dealt with the students that were not officially classified, that through differentiation, they modify grading and deal with the parents’ wishes.

Research Question 4

What are the perceptions of regular education teachers as to what constitutes inclusion?

The verbal and written responses from 6 and 10 of the question route are appropriate for research question 4. For 6 on the question route the researcher asked the participants to close their eyes and describe what comes to mind when they hear the term ‘inclusion.’ The researcher was soliciting responses that were either about successful or unsuccessful inclusion. Additionally, they were asked of question route 10 to write down on a piece of paper a phrase or sentence that best describes their position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools. As anonymous as all verbal responses were, the written responses were even more so, as they were just written and collected by the researcher’s assistant, without knowing whom wrote what particular statement.

The majority of the teachers felt that inclusion was having two teachers in the classroom when there were special needs students included in the mix. The combination could be comprised of two teachers, one as an assistant, one as a resource room teacher, or one as the special education teacher, along with the regular education teacher. When asked what they felt inclusion was, one teacher responded, “Frustration comes to mind.”
The researcher found that the word "frustration" infiltrated most of the discussions. At this point the researcher was probing for what constituted unsuccessful inclusion.

I think, it's sometimes it's a day by day, like almost an hour by hour thing, I just need to keep reminding myself...I had a particularly difficult day today, and I was so, I was, I reached such a frustration level, that I mean, part of me was almost like you know, I can't do this, I need help, like you know, this is ridiculous that I have to try to do this when, I mean, I was very angry I was like a psycho today...and yeah, I don't have the training."

The teacher went on to describe a situation of having 19 children, all needing varied attention. The teacher went on to describe how he/she "regrouped" mentally, and after lunchtime, worked with small groups of kids. "OK, I have an idea, I'm just going to take a small group, and that was actually successful, but I was like, I was really...you saw me when I got back from lunch, I was so frustrated. And I haven't been trained." Another teacher added a comment to this part of the discussion. "Right. Right, that's what's happening. They're putting special needs students in the classrooms with regular ed teachers that haven't had specific training. At all, or any."

Regarding the combination of teachers in the classroom, one teacher related that "I know that the principal and I had talked about it last year, at least with the first grade teachers, about maybe having someone in the, you know, in terms of inclusion and having an assistant teacher in there." The researcher asked whether this was meant to be full time or not. The response was that is was not to be full time, but on a rotation basis. But in the end, it did not occur. The teachers brought up the fact that since they were not trained, they certainly needed some sort of preparation. "Preparation for it because as
you’ve heard, a lot of us haven’t taken special ed classes in a very long time. We’re not trained as special ed teachers....” One teacher commented on the fact that it could be difficult adapting to another teacher in the classroom. Others retorted that flexibility is key for adaptation and success. More exasperated comments followed. “But I think that you know, regular, if you’re going to have a child like that, then they, you know, they, they can’t just throw that on you without giving you some kind of....” Another teacher responds, “…preparation,” and another continues…”preparation for it because as you’ve heard, a lot of us haven’t taken special ed classes in a very long time. We’re not trained as special ed teachers.” Others that just felt that same flexible mode and commented, “I don’t think having the special needs child in the classroom is that much of a problem. “Somehow the teachers cope, we just, we have this coping capacity....” Another practical approach was commented, “I don’t think we’re really doing any inclusion teaching if his special needs aren’t being met by the special methodology that he needs to learn.” “Some of teachers felt that they did not have inclusionary practices going this particular year, however, they spoke of having had neurologically impaired students, and “when we used to have a NI (neurologically impaired) class here and they were in our classrooms a lot, that inclusion, for me was very, always very frustrating.” Others added to that comment, such as, “But even that’s mainstreaming, not inclusion.” “Believe me, the teacher was never there.” (Assuming they were referring to the in class support teacher, resource room teacher, or classroom teachers assistant.) One teacher said that, “It can be wonderful, and I think for it to be wonderful, I think you have to have two teachers that work well together.” Conversely commented was,
I think of a double-edged sword as far as cooperative learning goes. I've had experiences with inclusion of our students who were really uplifting to children with special needs, and I've also had experiences where children were degrading to children with special needs. No, it really depends on the group, the children, their knowledge of the situation.

Being a fifth grade teacher, I think it's easier when the child is classified right from the very beginning. Because it becomes routine, you know, right now I'm having a lot of opposition from ... because, you know, it's new and they don't want anyone else to know, although I do have a teacher that comes into the classroom and teachers math with him, and that's acceptable, but I think you know, especially when you get to the older children, if it's, it is the norm from the first day of school, that's fine. But if something gets changed, then it's hard.

You know, the in-class special ed teacher does have to work with everyone in the classroom, not to single that person out because the whole purpose of inclusion is not to, pull them out, to make them feel as if they're part of the class like everyone else. So if the special ed teacher is not going to work with everyone, then you're really doing not what it's designed to, and the child has to be put in a class where they are able to excel and not two or three grades below, expecting that the in-class teacher is just going to miraculously put them in, you know, teach them this wonderful way of teaching. So, they really need to be a good fit not only for the two teachers but for the child and the academic subject.

The researcher probed for more responses:
In first grade I’ve had the experience of having a special ed teacher come into the class and teach with me I’ve had the resource room teachers, not resource room, the basic skills teachers come in, and do lessons with me and when they’re there, I mean, the children are thrilled to have someone else in the room, and I’m thrilled to have someone else to bounce ideas off of and I’m trying to get a point across and I can see some people are hesitating, its not clicking and I can look and that person can jump right in and maybe say it a different way and all of a sudden, you know, the light bulb goes off, you know you can constantly bounce things back and forth with each other. I, I enjoy that very much.

The researcher asked the participants to write down on a piece of paper, one phrase or sentence that best describes they’re position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools. The responses amongst all of those that chose to write them were basically from four categories. The largest response was from a category that basically expressed the need for more training and support, both inside the school and district to outside training. “Teachers are already doing so much on a daily basis, and they need more support, preparation, training, time to learn to be successful with special needs students.” The second common category expressed that teachers were prepared, perhaps the more experienced ones, that they are more prepared than they realized and that they need to rely on in-school supports, and that teachers have the necessary “tools” to teach special needs students. The third and fourth category tied, with responses that ranged from teachers not prepared to deal with classified students and those that felt that they could “learn as they go” and “learn by doing.”
While some of the teachers were writing their responses the discussions continued. One teacher commented that they learned a lot from being a classroom aide for 2 years in a class for older students that were considered perceptionally impaired.

Well, you know when I worked as an aide for those 2 years in the older perceptionally impaired class, um, but perceptionally impaired was a euphemism to cover for, there were kids in that group that were emotionally disturbed, and um, I learned so much from being an aide in that classroom about dealing with kids in general. But in dealing with special ed kids, um, but not everyone, I had the advantage of that, of being not the person in authority but being able to help that person in authority and learn from that person, and work, but work directly with the kids...teachers should serve like an internship in a special ed classroom.

So that you're not the person responsible immediately.

Feeling free to be open with their responses, they asked each other what they thought about the growing numbers of special needs students. They commented “it just seems that they’re going from one in the classroom to five or six in your classroom and it changes the whole dynamics.” They felt that more students were being brought back to the district to save on money that would be spent in out of district placements. “...So we’re bringing more special needs children back into the district, so obviously we’re going to have these children included in our classroom and it’s going to grow, but you were talking about numbers, right, and growing, and it’s going to grow even more.” Then a teacher asked the other teacher about whether or not this would be considered in class support of not. “Inclusion. They will be in class for the entire day and, I mean, I observed in a district that said they were inclusive and they were on their way to being
inclusive. They were pulled for math and speech and OT, but full inclusion means that those students are going to be in and not pulled. All of those services will be delivered in the room.”

Research Question 5

Do regular education teachers agree that preservice training should begin at the university level and include training for regular and special education teachers combined?

From the question route, 7 and 8 concerned research question 5. The researcher asked if successful inclusion could occur without university training. Responses varied, with teachers being both pro and con about inclusion’s success without prior university training. “Absolutely,” was a comment from the pro side, and from the con side, “Without an aide? I think it’ll be very difficult without the necessary training. And, and we do it but it is difficult. I mean, we do struggle.” Others concurred that more training was necessary, however, not necessarily at the university level, but training that encompassed hands-on training. Preparation time was still a major component to making inclusion successful. Responses were about recent university training, whether they are graduate or professional development, but just that training needed to be current. “I can say without university training, but I think it needs to be some training, and it has to be in a timely manner. Like, you can’t have taken it 12 years ago and expect for it to be current.” Another commented that prior knowledge of receiving a student with specific needs would be the impetus for taking a workshop so as to better tend to the student’s special needs. “I’m just one of those hands-on people that unless I’m experiencing it right at that moment, you can give me all the theory you want but I’m it’s not really going to
sink in.” A few teachers commented on the fact that textbook knowledge was fine if you were given the chance to put it into practice. “You know, all these things, you know all these theories, but 90% of what you actually know how to do is what you learned hands-on on the job so I think it has to be a combination.” “I’ve been in a couple of different courses. The type of training that you get is important, too. I’ve been in a professional development course where they’ll talk until they’re blue in the face about “here’s what an NI looks like,” or “this neurological.” “You know what, it doesn’t matter what they are. What I need are tools to use, that I can take into the classroom tomorrow, strategies to use, what will work. Not a discussion of what this disability looks like versus this but here’s what you do with it.” Some teachers agreed that university training would be nice, however, they have not had it, and what they need is in class support, either from resource room teachers or special education teachers.

The researcher then asked if they felt that dual certification would be beneficial, both in regular education and special education, for prospective teachers. This question brought about some remembrance and remarks about double majors that had been accomplished at the undergraduate level; however, these were in different subject areas, such as, history or English. Not every one agreed that having a regular and special education certification was necessary, but perhaps it could be beneficial. They felt that having a double major in some other area would bring in valuable dimensions to teaching. They were concerned about the length of time to complete a dual certified program, whether or not it could be accomplished in the traditional 4 year program, or whether it would have to be extended to possible 6 years of preparation. “So what they’re actually doing is just putting more coursework. They would be required to take more
courses in special ed than what they are now, which is one or zero.” Comments were made about wondering why more courses were not included in traditional programs, like for special education and gifted students. Someone mentioned a seminar class that appeared to him or her like a “mish-mosh” of things. “It was whatever you could throw in, gifted, someone from the gifted department come to speak with us, someone from the special ed, one from ESL. Yeah, that’s how we were exposed to special things outside of the regular mainstream classroom. All children are the same according to my degree.”

The teacher further commented that this was only within the past 5 years that this particular seminar class took place. Others offered additional creative options, such as making it necessary for everyone to teach kindergarten first because that’s where you can learn the basics about teaching so many types of children. “You should have to have elementary ed and special education. Because there are so many children in the classroom…and it’s the law. We have to do it; we have no choice. So we should definitely be dual certified.” “I actually regret not doing it. I was at the point in college where I was deciding to be either special ed or to go another way, and I went another way, and now I regret not having gotten special ed.” “I think also the amount of children who are now classified and things like that, it just makes sense. I mean, because the numbers keep rising.” Others commented about just going back for special education certification, as it would only be approximately 5 additional courses. Money and already being in debt from paying back loans and whether the district would pay a percentage for the additional certification was another issue. The researcher felt it necessary to stress dual certification for “prospective teachers.” The researcher wanted comments in these areas because it was evident that time and money issues were present for teachers already
actively teaching. “I think, for me, if they had required it when I had gone to school, that that would have been great, because now I find myself with children of my own and a husband and a home, and a life and it’s very hard to get back to college. It’s very hard to get back to school and take classes and, you know, get a new certification or a new degree. So if it was built into the, you know, your first 4 years of school, if that was built into your elementary school certification, it would be there at a time in your life when you have the time and the availability and the energy and, you know, nothing else pulling on you and you can give everything you have to your, you know, 4 or 6 years in college, and ah, get what you need. I think it would be great.”

Research Question 6

Should regular education teachers elect to also be certified in special education?

The relative questions from the question route were 8 and 9. The researcher previously asked the participants if they thought that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers. As already mentioned, the responses were varied, those who believed it was not necessary and those who believed that it was beneficial. The researcher assumes that the participants who believed that dual certification would be beneficial for prospective teachers would be the ones who would more readily opt to become certified.

I do. I do. I feel that way because the training itself is nice to have, it’s very nice to have a background, to be familiar with a lot of disabilities that you come across, but I think it just allows for just a wider variety, a wider, a wider view of everything, of the whole situation. I mean, what I, for example, when I was
applying for jobs, I wasn’t only looking at regular ed, I was also looking at special ed. I kind of left that door open for; it’s another option, its way for teachers to go. It’s a different scenario teaching in a resource room versus a regular ed classroom, and if anyone needed a change or would like a change, it’s always there for you. Aside from all the insights that you have in the classroom, it helps, it definitely helps.

“I think it would be very beneficial, you know, the amount of things that I come across now that the training would have been so much more helpful.”

There are a lot of occurrences that happen that trigger things in your mind. I mean, my training was pretty much split down the middle; I had to do student teaching in both areas. I took pretty much an even amount of courses in both areas, practicums in both areas. You’ll just hit something every once in a while that’s like, I remember that, whereas a lot of people who weren’t trained in special ed might not.

Another teacher agreed that dual certification is important for people coming out of college because as experienced teachers they have their prior knowledge base to draw upon. This same participant expressed that they feel that the special ed children in more recent years, “are much more needy than the ones that we had before. There are more classifications, an ADD, and suddenly cropped up the ADHD, which that wasn’t around. I, I the first time I heard that I couldn’t have a clue what that meant.”

Next the researcher asked the participants if they would elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful. The researcher found that time and money are obstacles for deciding on whether or not to go for further
training. Regarding time, some of the responses were, "Not after school. Release time during the day... like a 4-day, a 4-hour day and then you know... during your regular day. After school is a lot to ask for." "It would be very hard, but would I like to be able to find the time to do that? Absolutely, but it's very hard to find the time to do that." "You know, when will they offer it? Will they, could it be something on the weekends? Could it be something that you did at nights? Could it be something during your school time? Could you get time off from school? Could you take a sabbatical of some sort to go and get the certification and would your job be waiting...you know, there's a lot to ah, think about." "I have a family and an active life outside of school, and if there was a way to incorporate it during some of my time that I'm here, I would say yes, it's absolutely worth doing. But it's now the time commitment that I'm not able to give." "The idea of going for the, the extra credits or the degree is that is not a bad idea at all, it's just a matter of time. We put so much time into our work, I don't know if I can fit it in right now with everything."

With respect to money, some of the responses were, "I think in theory [dual certification], that's a wonderful idea. Um, I think, had I ended up the way I was I still would not be teaching because it would have taken me another five years which it took me to get my first certification, because I was working full time." This latter participant had a prior undergraduate degree in another area and received their master's degree in elementary education years later.

I have an undergrad from years before. So, I should have taken 10 years of schooling to become a teacher or should I have gotten my certification and should my district have sponsored programs to train me in special ed? That I think is a
better alternative. Well, you know, I understand, I think it's important that the
teachers get training but so I'm also already 20 grand in debt from my master's
that I took for regular so I should be 40 grand in debt....

"Who's paying for it? Because right now I have, I have a brand new Saturn, I don't have
the money to do it." "If the district paid, definitively. 'Cause I'd be interested in doing it.
Down the road it would make life so much easier. Especially if you're working with the
real young grades where you're responsible pretty much for identifying you know,
identifying and working with them. It's always tricky." "But I'm sure it's also hard to fit
in with everything, and I think that, I also think it's very hard like affordability is hard,
because it's not like, you know, we would have to pay for the degree." Others mentioned
that their district had a reimbursement program that paid them $1,000 per year. "There's
not enough incentive." "A thousand dollars per year, for graduate school, for graduate
class. So you know it could take you like 20 years to finish your degree. So you will be
retired by the time...." "Or you become poor like me...." "It's not in our realm of
thought." One participant related having signed up for an Orton Gillingham course in the
summer, but only if the district agreed ahead of time to pay for the course. The teacher
said it was out of state, which meant three nights of accommodations that the district
would not pay for. "So you know, the two things, the time and...[money]." "I wouldn't
either [elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more
successful]."

The researcher listened to comments about a teacher's friend in another district
with many years of experience and special education training, that was a given a great
number of students with special needs in one classroom. The researchers asked this
teacher if they thought that they would receive more special needs students if they went out and got university training in special education. The responses were multiple and affirmative. Many felt that more students would be brought back into district if the teachers were more trained. [NJ Department of Education, 1998]

Research Question 7

Do regular education teachers perceive dual certification, combining a regular and special education program to be beneficial for prospective teachers?

The responses from the 8 and 9 of the question route correspond to research question 7. As previously mentioned, the researcher found that time and money were the prime obstacles for practicing teachers hesitating to further their education and receive special education certification. However, for prospective teachers, the participants that were in favor of dual certification felt that it was necessary if one is planning on teaching elementary education. Other comments included, “I think it should definitely be offered for you, but it’s not going to be required.” At this point the majority of the participants felt differently, that they agreed that dual certification was the way to go to be thoroughly prepared for teaching both regular and special education students. “It should be both, yeah.” Others concurred that if one is teaching the early grades that dual certification would be most beneficial. “As I teach at the fifth grade level and I’m sort of inwardly thankful that by the time the kids are at my doorstep, most of the issues, or a lot of the issues are identified and have been worked out for a number of years. I’m just thinking, “Man am I fortunate!“ I feel the same way. By the fourth grade, either, like the parents have like spoken with like two, three, fours years and like something’s been identified
and there are already measures in place.” “And the expectations are, are so much greater, so much earlier that what perhaps I was identifying in second grade years ago because they need to be able to pretty much, they have to read by the time they come to second grade. They have to, they have to be reading. That’s that’s just the way it is.” “A lot of colleges, don’t you have to do one of your students teaching or some kind of a placement at yeah…..” “I never had to, a special ed setting in Trenton, but I never…..” “…But they could probably do a similar thing in my circumstance where if you’re getting a master’s in education you’re getting a master’s in both, you’re required to take you know 100 level whatever’s, some of them should be in special ed as part of the degree.”

…but I think I see the benefits of both points because yes, that special ed training would be great, um and also however, you know what? So much is heaped upon a teaching candidate starting out that perhaps the districts, too, need to look at their function and their role in providing and supporting their teachers that it shouldn’t just be, ‘hey, you want to work here? Go back and get dual certification.’ Yeah. It’s a lot of merits....

“It’s beneficial to have anything in addition of regular classroom.” As mentioned in a previous research question, a teacher agreed that special education training is important for people coming out of college because they don’t have the experience to draw upon. The researcher heard participants mention parents as a resource of knowledge. Perhaps this is because parents are aware that the teachers in regular education do not posses the necessary training to assist their special needs children. “You know, I have children whose parents have sent me information.” “The proactive, the proactivism is great.” “Yeah, yeah. You know, you get volumes of things that they send you, books and, and
that helps.” Others mentioned having received materials from parents. The researcher inquired if the parents came in and physically helped out. “No. No, they’re all working. I also don’t think they’d want their children to stand out any more than they normally would.”

Analysis of Qualitative Research

Since there was no available instrument to measure the responses of the focus groups, the researcher conducted in-depth discussion groups to unearth the perceptions of the participants. Krueger and Casey (2000) emphasize that these types of results cannot be described using quantitative measures, but needed to be expressed in a descriptive style. The identical questions were asked of each focus group, their responses were notated, their emotions were observed, and elaboration was asked when clarification was necessary. The style of discussion was meant to release the uninhibited thoughts and ideas of others in the group. The details and experiences of one participant were to hopefully unleash the thoughts and ideas of others in the same group (Krathwohl, 1998.) The responses of each of the groups were clustered together as the responses were not meant to be comparisons across groups (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Figure 1). On the contrary, their responses were clustered across the groups, combining common themes, thoughts, and nuances. Clustering is a strategy used in qualitative data analysis that helps to put “like” things into ideas or “like” categories that emerge from interaction. It is a form of grouping that hopefully will shed light to better understand a phenomenon. Typically they can be exclusive or overlap. (Hodson, 1991) (see Figure 1). In general, it is a name given to a process that enables easy categorizing and sorting.
The researcher has a reason, perhaps even a passion, for conducting their investigation. However, the responses fully reveal the true thoughts and feeling of the participant's perceptions of preparedness for inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools.

It must be taken into consideration, that the teaching experience of some teachers was greater than others and may have had an impact on their answers. The amount and type of classified students that the various teachers have had in their classes may have also had an impact on their responses. The personal experiences in a career, and even the personal experiences of the given day for the participants of the focus group all have bearing on the responses and feelings emoted during the discussion groups.
Figure 1. Overlapping Clusters: Teacher Preparedness
CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers' preparedness (level of training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study is aimed at gathering information to better understand how elementary teachers feel or think about their own level of teacher training and inclusion. Specifically, this study seeks to unearth common themes, feelings, patterns, and nuances that ranged across the research focus groups, to get an understanding as to whether or not regular education teachers feel that they are adequately prepared to teach in an inclusive setting. We should know whether or not teachers have had any prior training before taking a teaching position or have they received on the job training that would adequately prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting. Equally important are the perceptions of teachers as to what inclusion is. If they have an idea of what it is then they will better know if they are adequately prepared to deliver instruction for successful inclusion. Then, the study seeks to determine if the findings that were unearthed were synonymous with current research findings.

In Chapter I of this study, the researcher presents background information, statement of the problem, the purpose the study, research questions, limitations of the study, definitions of terms, and the importance of the study. Within Chapter II, the researcher presents an overview, definitions of perception, inclusion, mainstreaming,
least restrictive environment, historical, legislative and judicial influences of inclusion and LRE, and surrounding issues found in current literature that correlates teacher preparedness to teaching special needs students within an inclusionary educational setting. Chapter III addresses the methodology, including an overview, research design, setting, participants, pilot study results, data collection, and data analysis. The research findings are presented in Chapter IV. This was in the format of qualitative data analysis, including poignant quotes from the participants and pertinent comments by the researcher for each research question, and cluster analysis tactics. Chapter V presents a summary, the conclusions, and the implications of the study as well as recommendations for further research.

Summary of the Study

In the wake of IDEA and FAPE, efforts were been made in the United States and abroad to integrate diverse types of students into the regular education classes. This practice requires the knowledge and skills of teachers and the leadership of administrators for success. The success of inclusion is meeting the unique needs of all of the students in the class. An understanding of inclusion, its ramifications on all involved, an ability to adjust pedagogy and methodologies to meet all learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, an ability to communicate with students and parents conceptually and empathetically, and a personal ability to cope while attempting to meet everyone's needs and expectations are a full menu for any teacher. With this reform in education towards full inclusion, are all of our teachers adequately prepared? Have they acquired the necessary information and skills from their educational courses in higher education? If not, are they receiving
adequate knowledge and support from their school district while immersed in inclusion? According to Evans (1996) the educational career span for most of America's current teachers began in the 1960s and early 1970s. Their level of teaching experience began after graduating from college when they were in their 20s, to when they became 15 year teaching veterans in their mid-30s, to senior level teachers who are now 40 years and older. What level of training do these veteran teachers have to successfully implement inclusive educational measures? Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) surveyed 381 general and special education teachers and found that both groups favored pullout special education services as opposed to full inclusion. Schumm and Vaughn (1992) surveyed general education teachers at the elementary and secondary levels to determine their attitudes regarding inclusive educational practices. They found that: (a) the teachers felt that planning practices for each level differed, however, the majority felt that mainstreamed students with disabilities should be able to handle the demands of a regular curriculum and someone even commented that it is more or less up to the student to adapt to the curriculum, not the other way around, as there “is no time for mainstreamed students” (p.94), (b) many teachers felt unprepared by their teacher education programs to work effectively with mainstreamed students, and (c) many teachers were accepting to have disabled students mainstreamed into their classroom as long as they did not exhibit emotional or behavioral problems. Additionally, Houck and Rogers (1994) surveyed 788 general education and special education teachers and found that across both groups they felt that general education teachers were inadequately prepared skill wise for making the adaptation to inclusive educational practices (Mercer, 1997).
Successful inclusion requires the support and beliefs of the stakeholders involved. In order to fully believe in its [inclusion] practice the concerns of teachers need to be quelled. These usually stem from their resistance to teaching students with disabilities due to their fears of not having the competencies to benefit the needs of both regular and special education students (McLesky & Waldron, 2000). School wide issues encompass teacher training, administrative support, teacher collaboration, adequate planning time, and professional development to adequately prepare teachers for inclusive education. Equally important are the perceptions of teachers as to what inclusion is. If they have an idea of what it is then they will better know if they are adequately prepared to deliver instruction for successful inclusion.

To accomplish this task, the researcher developed a set of questions that encompassed teacher educational training at the university level, certifications, professional development experiences, on the job experiences, support from administration and staff, and planning time. The researcher test piloted these questions with elementary school teachers who critiqued them and made suggestions that helped refine them for further clarity. With permission from a northern New Jersey school district, the researcher sent letters to three elementary schools asking for regular education teachers to volunteer for three separate focus group discussions. A total of 18 regular education teachers volunteered across the three groups. The researcher presented the test pilot question route to each of the focus group volunteers. The results were summarized and analyzed.
Findings of the Research

Research Question 1 asks whether regular education teachers feel that they received an appropriate college education enabling them to provide for the needs of classified students in an inclusive educational setting. Responses from the participants varied from some being presently enrolled in special education courses at the graduate level to having just completed a master's degree that included special education courses, to being dual certified in both regular education ands special education. Other responses expressed some background in special education however not recently. Others related personal experiences about having taught students with special needs, such as deaf, blind, and emotionally disturbed children without having had any proper training, to expressing not being able to sufficiently meet the needs of classified students, particularly those with emotional problems. These research findings were consistent with Evans's (1996) statement about the educational career span for most of America's current teachers having begun in the 1960s and early 1970s, their level of teaching experience beginning after graduating from college when they were in their 20s, to when they became 15 year teaching veterans in their mid-30s, to senior level teachers who are now 40 years and older. He questions the level of training that these veteran teachers have to successfully implement inclusive educational measures. The research findings also concur with the findings of Schumm and Vaughn (1992) who surveyed general education teachers at the elementary and secondary levels to determine their attitudes regarding inclusive educational practices. They found that many teachers felt unprepared by their teacher education programs to work effectively with mainstreamed students, and that many teachers were accepting to have disabled students mainstreamed into their classroom as
long as they did not exhibit emotional or behavioral problems. Additionally, Houck and Rogers (1994) surveyed 788 general education and special education teachers and found that across both groups they felt that general education teachers were inadequately prepared skill wise for making the adaptation to inclusive educational practices (Mercer, 1997). Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham (2000) conducted a study to investigate the perceptions of both types of teachers with respect to collaboration. They used a school that had been implementing inclusion for 2 years, surveying 366 teachers and their administrators. Their study concluded that both types of teachers agreed that more training of the general education teachers was needed to adequately accommodate students with disabilities, the perceptions of the administrators, general educations teachers, and specials education teachers were similar indicating that the general education teachers are not skilled in these areas of teaching and that teacher education programs must do more to prepare general education teacher candidates so they can best meet the needs of all types of students (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000.) In agreement with the research findings of Daane, Beirne-Smith and Latham, were the research findings of Smith and Smith (2000) who conducted a qualitative research study aimed at finding out what K-3 early childhood regular education teachers perceived to promote or hinder successful inclusion. Their study revealed four emergent themes: class load, need for support, need for more time, and training. All of the teachers agreed that what made them feel successful versus unsuccessful was level of training stemming from their under graduate training and graduate training. All participants stated emphatically that their undergraduate training "did nothing" to prepare them for inclusive education. The educational experience of the teachers surveyed spanned 1-40 years, and all agreed
that they felt unprepared for inclusion. They all felt that their only training came from in-service training efforts on the part of the school district (Smith & Smith, 2000.)

Analogous to research in the United States, Avramidis and Bayliss (2000) conducted a survey in the United Kingdom, regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. They sampled 23 mainstreamed schools, 14 primary and 9 secondary, representing rural, and suburban areas. They found that 49.38% of the teachers felt the need for systematic training, either as part of their certification programs or in-service training as an ongoing practice. Their data implied that teachers with university-based professional development training appeared to be more positive and confident about meeting the needs of special needs students. From personal experience Merritt (2001) admits that regular education teachers might find it daunting to consider teaching students with disabilities if they have had no formal training. She herself was one of the volunteers at her school asked to work with two fully included kindergarten girls (one wheelchair bound) to get them ready for full inclusion in the first grade. Without undergraduate training or staff development courses to prepare her, Merritt became acquainted with the girls and their needs. She even worked with the IEP team so as to develop better adaptations in the classroom that would accommodate a student using a wheelchair. Merritt admits that neither her undergraduate training nor staff development courses prepared her for teaching in an inclusive classroom. Consistent with the remarks from the teacher in the focus group that had been given blind students without any training, Markowitz found that since the passage of IDEA in 1997 only 26 states held valid certification requirements for providing Braille instruction, and only 14 states require specific Braille competency. According to Markowitz (2000) a typical certification for
such a competency requires one college-level course in Braille. Only 11 state education agencies have policies or guidelines for evaluating a student’s need for Braille instruction.

For Research Question 2 participants were asked if they had received any special education training after graduating. Once again the responses varied with a couple of teachers who, on their own, had taken or are presently involved in graduate level courses in special education. The majority of the responses were centered on a few professional development courses that had been offered in district, such as, differentiated instruction, ADHD, Orton Gillingham, brain-based research, multiple intelligence, and auditory processing. These professional development courses were neither current nor on-going, and additionally, participation was at the discretion of the teacher. Relevant research findings synonymous with the need for further training after graduating was found by Roach, Salisbury, and McGregor (2002).

With regards to teacher preparation, The Consortium of Inclusive Schooling Practices, a 5-year federally funded project aimed at developing a framework incorporating standards-based reform within inclusive schooling environment to be utilized at the district and school level, was developed in 1996 to promote inclusive orientation in education, to hopefully promote a large scale change. Within this framework, professional development relates to both teacher preparation and staff development in the schools and universities that have ongoing training leading to certification. It was recognized that three important components were necessary to address the learning needs of special needs students relative to university training: professional development training for teachers addressing the needs of various types of
special needs students, licensure and certification requirements reflecting the need for
teachers to obtain a wider scope of knowledge to teach a varied population of special
needs, and the assessment and delivery of diverse disciplines from both regular and
special education teachers. The professional development can take place in the form of
peer mentoring, coaching, modeling, in-class support, conferences, workshops, and
summer training. Roach, Salisbury, and McGregor note that the involvement of all
personnel in focusing on the learning needs of special needs students encourage an
inclusive educational system. Additionally, Engleman and Darrow (1997) apprise us of
the federally funded Transition Challenge-North Carolina project (TRAC-NC) that
recognizes the need to fully prepare newly qualified individuals with the necessary
preparation to serve low-incidence disability students. TRAC-NC provides add-on
certification or a master’s degree to those individuals wanting to teach low-incidence
students. It also provides supplementary training to the add-on certification for added
knowledge, access to resources, such as, library or video materials about their population
of students, and a permanent master’s degree program within the Special Education
Department of the School of Education at East Carolina University. With regards to
additional training after graduating, Monahan, Marino, Miller, and Cronic (1997)
surveyed teachers, administrators, and counselors throughout South Carolina to gain
some insight on their perceptions of inclusive education. Responding to their surveys,
were 125 counselors, 100 administrators, and 342 teachers. The three groups believed
that general and special education teachers should collaborate, however, as in former
studies, regular education teachers said that they were not all that comfortable with co-
teaching along with the special educators.
The data from the surveys implicated that general education teachers felt that they received limited help from special education teachers with modifying instruction for their exceptional students. They agreed that the special education teachers were supportive, yet provided limited assistance. Implications lead to necessary teacher preparation methods that would prepare all teachers on how to modify instruction for all varying needs of students. Teachers indicated a lack of confidence in their knowledge and skills. The data further implied a need for higher education and faculty development, along with smaller class size. As previously mentioned in Research Question 1, Smith and Smith (2000) found when they researched what K-3 early childhood regular educating teacher perceived to promote or hinder successful inclusion all participants stated emphatically that their undergraduate training “did nothing” to prepare them for inclusive education. The educational experience of the teachers surveyed spanned 1-40 years, and all agreed that they felt unprepared for inclusion. They all felt that their only training came from inservice training efforts on the part of the school district.

For Research Question 3, participants were asked if they perceived to have had adequate on the job training to adequately implement inclusive educational practices. From the question route, this included professional development courses, support from administration, staff members, and planning time. Similar responses regarding professional development courses that were mentioned in Research Question 2 surfaced as being beneficial. Other means of gathering information was reliance on the expertise of the resource room teacher, many of whom described as being a valuable source of information. Others commented that although they did not feel sufficiently trained to teach special needs students, there were many other staff members to go to for
information and guidance. They commented that they could go to administration for support, that they were there if you sought them out. Support was an issue as they did not feel sufficiently trained. In lieu of this, they commented on the need for planning time, as it was necessary if they were to implement inclusive measures. Concurrent with the teachers comments that there were people to in the school staff to go to for information, Saland and Duhaney (1999), through their research and investigative measures further conclude that the perceptions of the educators were related to their feelings of success of implementation, availability of financial resources, supportive training, administrative support, and time allotted for collaboration with peers. They expressed concerns for loss of control over their classroom environment and their role in the general education setting. General educators and special educators expressed positive attitudes towards their increased collegiality that enriched both their professional and personal lives. Regarding teacher preparation time, McLesky, Henry, and Axelrod (1999) examined data from Reports to Congress about students with learning disabilities being placed in a LRE over a six-year period. The results of their study indicated that general education teachers will need to take on additional responsibilities in order to educate students with learning disabilities, and that preparation time with a special education teacher will have to be accommodated. Additionally, professional development skills will have to be taught to these teachers so they can better meet the needs of their students. Their study indicated a definite need for teacher preparation, (McLesky, Henry, & Hodges, 1999) and the suggestion that general education teachers that enter the teaching profession come prepared to meet the needs of their exceptional students. Concerning the need for administrative support, D'Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) found that teachers
agree that positive working relationships must be created in the school systems in order for a smooth transition into inclusionary practice can occur. Teachers that were surveyed were in agreement that problems did exist with inclusive programs, and that they had mixed reactions to its overall benefits. Their findings emphasize that teachers must be convinced of the benefits and need for inclusion before it can smoothly occur within their building. The research also suggests that teachers have a strong need to have administrative support, and that they need to feel that they can give the disabled students the equal educational opportunity and quality of instruction that they need. In addition, teachers felt that they needed preparation at the university level to successfully implement inclusionary tactics. In conjunction to the teacher’s comments on the need for administrative support, critical to smooth transition of inclusion procedures are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) agree with Hunt and Goetz’s (1997) research that concluded in one report that key stakeholders, such as school leaders, were necessary to implement change and growth in their buildings. They also found that without the support of key school personnel inclusion would not be successful. The positive attitudes and support amongst key administrators were influential to the skeptical attitudes of general education teachers. Interestingly they found that positive attitudes amongst special education teachers also played a big role in the attitudes of regular education teachers, as these professionals hold certifications of specialized training and had great influence in molding school wide change. In agreement with the need for planning time and support, O’Shea and O’Shea (1998) are firm believers in teacher support in order for inclusion to work. They report that teachers need more time to plan and prepare their lessons, and time to modify
instruction. They are also advocates of reduced class size. They feel that a greater understanding of methodology, strategy, and empathy and collaboration are ingredients for successful inclusion. For inclusive schools to attain achievement they believe in ongoing staff development for long-term commitment to student achievement. An understanding of teacher's attitudes provides support to teachers so they in turn can provide support for student success. Administration must inform teachers that they are free to ask for assistance when needed, building teacher confidence and moral. In praise of teacher collaboration, Ripley (1997) advocates the necessary relationship between regular and special education teachers. She states that the primary responsibility of the regular education teacher is to instruct disabled students in the general curricula, while the special education teacher is there to provide instruction by adapting and modifying materials to match particular learning styles, strengths, and special needs. In concert with previous articles, Ripley agrees that education in collaborative procedures should be incorporated into all teacher preparation and professional development programs.

What teachers thought to be their perceptions of what inclusion was explained with Research Question 4. Verbally their ideas and thoughts ranged and encompassed successful ideas with unsuccessful ones. Popular was the perception that successful inclusion included two teachers in the classroom, a combination of regular education teacher with a classroom assistant, resource room teacher, or special education teacher. Unsuccessful verbal remarks varied from “frustration” to “need for preparation” to “need for flexibility.” In addition, unsuccessful remarks included that inclusion was not taking place if special needs were not being met by untrained teachers, and that it meant that special needs kids were being place with regular education kids with teachers that did not
have training. Written responses were in basically in four categories; the need for more training, support, and preparation time; teachers are already prepared from experience and innate qualities that teachers possess; teachers are not prepared; and teachers learn on the job.

For a truer meaning and perception of inclusion, Idol (1997) feels that pertinent general and philosophical questions need to be addressed. Some of these questions address mechanics of inclusion and others address ideas and values. For example, “Has the school district developed a philosophical position on inclusion?” This question is pertinent because its direction should include the viewpoints of all stakeholders so none feel that inclusion is mandated or imposed upon. Collaboration of all stakeholders is necessary for successful inclusion. Another pertinent question posed is “do the faculty know what to do in the classroom?” Teacher preparation is not mentioned very often with regards to implementing inclusionary practices. This is where collaboration is needed once more. Another question takes us back to the section on perception: “Are the other students in the inclusive classroom prepared?” Not only do teachers need preparation for this practice, the regular education students need training, also. When everyone has an understanding of a situation we tend not to be timid, but can more readily embrace it. A better understanding can help them to learn to care of each other and learn to work together, while accepting differences. Concurrently, Chow and Blais (1999) feel that in order for inclusion to be successful in regular education, regular education teachers have to take on additional responsibilities and with that more students. For effective inclusion teachers have to take on new roles in the classroom, develop new competencies, be knowledgeable in the philosophy and process of inclusion, know were to obtain resources
and supports, and to basically have an understanding of the disabled student and a positive attitude toward the inclusive concept.

Monahan, Marino, Miller, and Cronic (1997) surveyed teachers, administrators, and counselors throughout South Carolina to gain some insight on their perceptions of inclusive education. Responding to their surveys, were 125 counselors, 100 administrators, and 342 teachers. The three groups believed that general and special education teachers should collaborate, however, as in former studies, regular education teachers said that they were not all that comfortable with co-teaching along with the special educators. The data from the surveys implicated that general education teachers felt that they received limited help from special education teachers with modifying instruction for their exceptional students. They agreed that the special educations teachers were supportive, yet provided limited assistance. Implications lead to necessary teacher preparation methods that would prepare all teachers on how to modify instruction for all varying needs of students. Teachers indicated a lack of confidence in their knowledge and skills. The data further implied a need for higher education and faculty development, along with smaller class size.

Trump and Hange (1996) gathered views from a few focus groups in West Virginia regarding their concerns about successful inclusion and found that the roles of special educators are changing. The educators themselves felt that they were more of a consultant than instructor. As their roles have evolved they find they are doing more assessing, evaluating, and consulting with regular education teachers on ways to modify instruction and plan IEP’s. The focus groups identified a lack of training as one of the obstacles for implementing inclusion. All of the focus group members were in agreement
that there was a definite need for training teachers, administrators, and parents for inclusion. They claim that teachers from West Virginia schools do not have a basic understanding of inclusion. In addition to gaining a more clear understanding of inclusion they feel a real need for training in appropriate curriculum and instruction in alternative means of assessments and knowledge of the characteristics of students with disabilities. They further suggest that teacher preparation programs include field experiences early in students’ college career that expose students to real classroom situations.

Research Question 5 asks participants if regular education teachers agree that preservice training should begin at the university level and include training for special education and regular education teachers combined. Within this inquiry teachers were asked if they thought that successful inclusion could occur without university training and whether or not they thought that dual certification would be beneficial for prospective teachers. Responses varied, as a few felt that they could be successful teaching special needs children without university training, and others commented that more training, on a current basis was necessary as it would be a struggle without training or an assistant. However, the majority of the responses suggested that textbook knowledge was helpful only if the theories could be put into practice. Expressed was a need for practical tools and methodology for the classroom. Creativity was expressed when it was suggested that everyone teach at the Kindergarten level first so as to learn the basics of different types of children and their varied needs. Dual certification was interpreted as either a double major in another discipline or special education. Regarding different disciplines it was mentioned that valuable dimensions could be brought to lessons. Regret was also
expressed for not having been dual certified in special education along with regular education certification.

D’Alonzo, Giordano, and Vanleeuwen (1997) found that teachers agree that positive working relationships must be created in the school systems in order for a smooth transition into inclusionary practice can occur. Teachers that were surveyed were in agreement that problems did exist with inclusive programs, and that they had mixed reactions to its overall benefits. Their findings emphasize that teachers must be convinced of the benefits and need for inclusion before it can smoothly occur within their building. The research also suggests that teachers have a strong need to have administrative support, and that they need to feel that they can give the disabled students the equal educational opportunity and quality of instruction that they need. In addition, teachers felt that they needed preparation at the university level to successfully implement inclusionary tactics. Little (2000) additionally reports on educational reform in response to a changing student population. Reform programs today need to prepare skilled teachers to meet the needs of a diverse population of students. Professional Development Schools (PDS) are attempting to redefine teacher education programs, starting with beginning teachers. PDS are collaborations of public schools and universities that provide access to theory and knowledge production. Educators from the University of Central Florida, the Volusia County School District, and the Florida Inclusive Network began a PDS within an inclusive school district, the Palm Terrace Elementary School. This inclusive school was 4 years old, and had previously brought together a traditional elementary school with two segregated schools for students with moderate to severe disabilities. To ensure preparation at the public school site, co-
teaching, vertical-team teaching across grade levels, and problem solving teams were implemented. Additionally, preservice was a component for student teachers from both elementary and special education programs at the university level, providing teachers and students with co-planning techniques, co-teaching, weekly seminars, and the student teacher learned to implement, and evaluate numerous classroom strategies, techniques, and materials. The positive results of PDS at Palm Terrace directly related to student learning, both at the elementary and university levels. New courses for elementary school teachers were a positive outcome at the university level to ensure better teacher preparedness.

Sprague and Pennell (2000) report on another positive attempt to prepare preservice teacher for inclusion. A pilot program was developed by the faculty at Christopher Newport University and the school personnel from Tabb Middle School in Newport News, VA. They joined forces because so many novice teachers expressed a feeling of being totally unprepared for inclusion. The course utilized a new textbook to completely familiarize students with the terms and practices of inclusion. Collaborative teaching strategies were introduced early. Students to observed inclusive classrooms wrote a journal entry for each observation, what instructional modifications they noticed, and what concerns they had based on their observation. They were to share these journal entries with fellow students in class. Students went to workshops presented by regular and special education teachers. Pre and post surveys were given to the students. Prior to the course, only 30% of the students agreed with the concepts of inclusion, and after the course 58% concurred. They additionally expressed an interest in becoming an inclusive
team member. The results further show a need for preservice training for novice teachers (Sprague & Pennell, 2000).

According to Meyers, Griffin, Telekei, Taylor, and Wheeler (1998), as far back as 1985 representatives from 2 and 4 year institutions in the state of North Carolina sought to develop programs for education majors that would provide training necessary for them to be ready for inclusive education. This move resulted in a licensure program that requires teacher training to include the three strands of child development, early childhood education, and early childhood special education. In August 1992 the North Carolina board of Education approved “Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) Certification Undergraduate Guidelines and Competencies.” This program would produce graduates capable to work with both handicapped and non-handicapped children. East Carolina University began a B-K program the following month. Revisions were made to their already existing programs, and four courses were added: assessment and intervention, parent and professional collaboration, literacy development in early childhood, and early childhood special education. Initially in-service training was held for those teachers already possessing certification in preschool handicapped or pre-kindergarten. It was then a requirement for undergraduates to apply and fulfill B-K licensure by August 1996. Those already holding licensures enrolled in 200 hours of workshops of classroom and field experiences to fulfill B-K licensure. North Carolina’s B-K teacher education program stresses inclusion for teacher training at both preservice and in-service levels. The collaboration of the different fields of child development has resulted in better quality teacher education. The perceptions of teachers regarding inclusion were the subject of Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher, and Saumell’s (1994) 10 focus group
discussions. Theses focus groups were comprised of special education teachers, regular education teachers, Chapter I teachers, and teachers of the gifted. Respondents responded strongly, either positively or negatively. They claimed that certain items had a greater impact on whether or not inclusion was successful, such as the class size, inadequate resources, to what extent do students benefit, and lack of teacher preparation. Regarding teacher preparation, both groups of educators felt that regular education teachers were not adequately prepared to meet the needs of disabled students. A middle school teacher commented that many teachers just did not have the necessary training to deal with these children. An elementary teacher said that she felt that training should begin at the undergraduate level, and that prospective regular education teachers would probably require many courses in special education to meet the needs of these students. A Chapter I teacher expressed sorrow for her lack of ability with a disabled fifth grade student and felt that she did him a great disservice by having him in her class, as she was not prepared to teach him. A high school teacher felt that the only solution was requiring a double major for prospective education majors, one as content and the other as special education.

Research Question 6 asks participants if they think that regular education teachers should elect to be certified in special education. Additionally, as in Research Question 5 the issue of dual certification and whether or not it would be beneficial to prospective teachers is mentioned. Once again the responses varied; however, the majority felt that more training would be beneficial. More prevalent were the responses from teachers that spoke about having families and lives outside of their vocation. This meant that time was an issue and so was money. They also discussed and agreed that the
more certifications that teachers held the more special needs students will be placed in the regular education classrooms.

In concert with finding the time to go to school to become certified, Weyrauch (2000) asserts that in many rural districts in the United States school districts are faced with the problem of hiring uncertified teachers to teach exceptional children. To circumvent this issue, some states have even established a generic special education certification. Generic certifications such as these cannot meet the necessary competencies in education for severe mental retardation or emotionally disturbed students. Weyrauch subsequently lists the certification requirements across the United States displaying how greatly they vary countrywide. Weyrauch states that Cates and Smiley (1999) suggest that in rural areas team teaching or distance learning via the use of the internet could help alleviate the situation so as to better serve the students’ needs. She states that teacher preparedness is measured by the individual’s abilities to meet states’ certification requirements. In lieu of this definition, she mentions measures that have been made to accommodate certification needs in Oklahoma. Cameron University prepares students in special education by providing additional endorsements in mild/moderate disabilities, and severe profound disabilities to elementary, early childhood, or secondary certificates. Students must complete 21 hours of coursework in addition to student teaching. In addition, coursework in methodology assessment, foundations, management, and characteristics are required. After students graduate they may return for practicums in areas of concentration that they desire. The faculty’s philosophy at Cameron is to better prepare special education teachers to better serve the needs of exceptional children in rural districts (Weyrauch, 2000). Additionally, Howard and Norris (1997) found that
collaborative partnerships existed in Kentucky amongst universities and local school districts. The partnerships in Kentucky began in 1995 with two purposes in mind: to work collaboratively to address and improve services to learners with special needs, and to work collaboratively to address the problems of teachers working with learners with special needs. Commitments were made to provide effective support for beginning teachers because it was well known that first year teachers usually were assigned to BD/ED students, and it was an overwhelming experience. Secondly, was the need to provide effective support for teachers who held only holding emergency certifications. Teachers with regular teaching certifications could obtain special education certification training after only completing nine hours of special education coursework. The partnership provided teachers with skills to coordinate professional development opportunities without many resources, and to develop an ongoing network of educators to address concerns and problems. Their goal was to provide special needs students with professionals who can better service their needs while serving their own (Howard & Norris, 1997). While support and partnerships have been established to address time issues by providing easier ways to achieve the necessary certifications, funding for these certifications was not addressed.

Research Question 7 addresses the issue of whether regular education teachers perceives dual certification, combining a regular and special education program is beneficial to prospective teachers. Those in favor felt that for those people going into education as a profession that it definitely should be offered. Dual Certification was considered a way to be thoroughly prepared to teach both regular and special needs students, and also beneficial for prospective teachers as they don’t have experience to
draw upon. Similar were the findings of Engleman and Darrow who apprise us of the federally funded Transition Challenge-North Carolina project (TRAC-NC) that recognizes the need to fully prepare newly qualified individuals with the necessary preparation to serve low-incidence disability students. TRAC-NC provides add-on certification or a master’s degree to those individuals wanting to teach low-incidence students. It also provides supplementary training to the add-on certification for added knowledge, access to resources, such as, library or video materials about their population of students, and a permanent master's degree program within the Special Education Department of the School of Education at East Carolina University (Engleman & Darrow, 1997).

In favor of dual certification were the perceptions of teachers regarding inclusion in Vaughn, Schurmm, Jallad, Slusher, and Saumell’s (1994) 10 focus group discussions. Theses focus groups were comprised of special education teachers, regular education teachers, Chapter I teachers, and teachers of the gifted. Respondents responded strongly, either positively or negatively. They claimed that certain items had a greater impact on whether or not inclusion was successful, such as the class size, inadequate resources, to what extent do students benefit, and lack of teacher preparation. Regarding teacher preparation, both groups of educators felt that regular education teachers were not adequately prepared to meet the needs of disabled students. A middle school teacher commented that many teachers just did not have the necessary training to deal with these children. An elementary teacher said that she felt that training should begin at the undergraduate level, and that prospective regular education teachers would probably require many courses in special education to meet the needs of these students. A Chapter
I teacher expressed sorrow for her lack of ability with a disabled fifth grade student and felt that she did him a great disservice by having him in her class, as she was not prepared to teach him. A high school teacher felt that the only solution was requiring a double major for prospective education majors, one as content and the other as special education (Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher, & Saumell, 1994.)

Similarly efforts have been made to better inform education majors about inclusion, according to Campbell and Fyfe (1995). Webster University in Missouri has instituted programs for both undergraduate and graduate programs aimed at serving preservice and practicing teachers, covering early childhood to secondary education. Graduates students were given the chance to learn about inclusive educational practices while engaged in a specialized area of study. An elective course, “Inclusion Strategies in the Regular Classroom” was aimed at preparing both types of students for special education situations. The university has been attempting to institute a dual certification in special education or early childhood special education and elementary or early childhood certification.

While the movement towards inclusion proceeds, resistance seems to exist at all levels. For instance, Campbell and Fyfe (1995) inform us about the resistance to changing educational practices at the university level from the faculty. In order for faculty to teach education majors they too, need a broader knowledge base regarding inclusion. Additionally, at the state levels, regular education and special education are recognized as separate programs requiring separate certifications. If dual certification is not an option then regular education majors may be spending more on additional courses for the knowledge necessary to implement inclusive educational practices. Jensen (2001)
also agrees with the idea of teachers being dually certified in both general and special education. By having a more expansive knowledge and understanding of brain impairments, teachers can better improve learning for struggling students by better identifying and accommodating learning differences. He feels that schools of higher learning and school staff development programs can aide teachers to better reach these students.

Some Additional Findings

The issues and concerns of regular education teachers and their impressions of how prepared they feel to teach special education students and what they conceive to be necessary elements to facilitate these needs are addressed in this dissertation only. It is interesting to note that the issues and concerns that arose during the focus group discussions often paralleled those found in the research studies cited in this dissertation. The issues and concerns that manifested from these discussion groups appeared to be related as their concepts overlapped and were contingent on each other. These postures that surfaced during the discussions, as seen in Figure 1, are clustered (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and as Hodson (1991) reveals, these desperate concepts are not always mutually exclusive and may overlap.

While this investigation focuses on teacher's perceptions of preparedness, with questions targeting educational backgrounds, degrees, and certifications, other ramifications surfaced. For example, in the focus groups discussions there were regular education teachers that were not in agreement with the need for university training in order to teach special needs students. These teachers relied on experience and an
unspoken, innate quality that appeared to be present. Similarly, Olson, Chalmers, and Hoover (1997) found that innate attitudes amongst teachers also played a large role in perceptions about students with disabilities. An attitudinal theme was pervasive in their study. Through their research seven themes evolved: (a) individual tolerance and flexibility, (b) in agreement with the moral implications that all children should be accepted and educated together with exclusions, (c) being able to work along side the special education teachers, (d) the need for adjusting personal expectations for practical purposes, (e) personal feelings that their own attitudes were an integral component for students to feel accepted by them, (f) the need for more preparation for additional and different practices within the classrooms, and (g) that mainstreaming was more practical than full inclusion. Out of these themes an implication arose for universities to screen applicants before admitting them into their programs. The teachers felt that because attitude played such a big part in acceptance to inclusion, that pedagogy could be taught but not attitude.

Interestingly, a common phrase that was used throughout the focus group discussions was, “learn as you go,” and they intimated that whatever transpired they could handle any situation. Likewise, it seems to Renew (1998) that varying ideas of inclusion affect how teachers approach inclusive procedures. It is feared that without teacher preparation these students will serve as “guinea pigs” as the teachers will learn how to provide educational related services as they continue teaching. It is felt that teachers are rarely prepared to conduct IEP meetings properly and that they are influenced by the ideas and feelings of school personnel.
Additionally in the focus group discussions they spoke of frustration and the need for flexibility. These feelings correspond with Mayrowetz’s (1999) study in New Jersey examining how six teachers in inclusive classrooms were being encouraged to deliver reform-oriented mathematics and what modifications they utilized for academic interventions. His data implied that only two out of the six teachers had previous experience teaching math to students with disabilities. Additionally, the social status of the students and the relationship of the teacher’s treatment of the students with disabilities was one that needed further attention. One of the teachers clearly directed strong anger towards one of her unclassified students, indicating that the class was loosing patience with the classified students. One of the teachers said that she felt a need to model appropriate behavior and patience when working with a classified students to “strengthen the demeanor” of the class.

Similarly, Johnson (1999) makes reference to successful inclusion depending on teacher’s flexibility of instructional strategies. This practice targets learning diversities, not only for disabled students but for regular education students as well. One strategy mentioned is “activity-based experiential learning.” This method allows students to become involved in discovery and interaction with various situations and variables. For instance, hands-on activities allow students to engage in the lessons, which could promote quicker learning by doing and perhaps aid better retention. ‘Student-directed learning and self-determination’ encourages students to understand the process through which they best learn. “Cooperative learning and peer collaboration” reduces competition in a regular education setting as students work together while experiencing peer tutoring. This collaboration could possibly promote other skills, such as, patience,
creativity, empathy, and acceptance of others with varying learning abilities. Another
method is “multigrade classrooms and heterogeneous grouping” so peers of different ages
and abilities mesh together, providing little room for diverse notability. “Individualized
and adaptive instruction” requires teacher flexibility as this method allows students of
diverse needs to learn at their own pace and ability.

Another underlying feeling that came through in the focus group discussions was
the feeling of inclusion being forced upon the teachers. They commented that the
numbers of special needs students being placed in the classroom were rising and that the
dynamics of the classroom were changing. They further commented that they had no
choice in the matter, they just “have to it.” Similar findings came from Heflin and
Bullock’s (1999) study designed to survey general and special education teachers in
selected Texas school districts to find out how full inclusion affects daily classroom
activities with students of emotional disorders, and to compare teachers’ perceptions of
inclusion to those found in their literature review. Heflin and Bullock found a general
theme of a resistance from teachers due to a lack of training in their literature review.
They found that teachers as well as parents felt that unskilled teachers could not provide
the necessary support that emotionally challenged students needed. From the three
districts surveyed general and special education teachers both agreed that they needed
training related to collaboration and training on how to modify instruction properly. Their
research further concluded that students with emotional disorders were being placed in
inclusive settings due to administrative decisions and they felt they were not carefully
made. The general education teachers felt that they were being forced into inclusive
practices and the special education teachers all felt that the general education teachers
should be commended for their efforts; however, they did feel that the emotionally
callenged students were not receiving adequate instruction because the personnel were
not being prepared.

Frustration was a feeling that was pervasive throughout the focus group
discussions, and it appeared for various reasons. Previously mentioned was frustration in
the form of not having had the necessary training to teacher special needs students.
Additionally, frustration was mentioned as the teachers felt that they were not a part of
the decision making process. They felt that there were students that should be classified
so as to receive the necessary services and they were dissuaded against referring these
students. The teachers felt that they should have an opinion about what professional
development courses should be offered as they felt that some of the courses that they had
experienced were of no constructive use. Also, they felt that regular education teachers
and special education teachers should collaborate their ideas and present them to
administration, as the special education teachers had the special education knowledge,
and the regular education teachers were the ones dealing with these students in their
classrooms. Similarly, Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) agree that smooth transition of
inclusion procedures involve key stakeholders, such as school leaders, as they were
necessary to implement change and growth in their buildings. They also found that
without the support of key school personnel that inclusion would not be successful. The
positive attitudes and support amongst key administrators were influential to the skeptical
attitudes of general education teachers. Interestingly they found that positive attitudes
amongst special education teachers also played a big role in the attitudes of regular
education teachers, as these professionals hold certifications of specialized training and
had great influence in molding school wide to implement change. Their research concluded that principals and special education teachers hold opposite opinions regarding inclusive education. The principals on the whole regarded inclusion as a positive means for improving academic improvement for students with disabilities. However, a limitation to this study, as pointed out, is that the special education teachers are directly involved with educating these students, as they are on site with them, whereas the principals are indirectly involved. The attitudes of the special education teachers they feel are negative for fear that these practices will not benefit the disabled student. They conclude that the attitudes of special education teachers need to be altered to one of optimism, and that principals are needed to validate the tone of optimism in order for expansion and inclusive reform to be an accepted practice. McLesky and Waldron (2000) are in agreement with teachers being involved in the decision making process. They feel that teachers need to be assured that they will have the necessary supports available to them to successfully implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Conclusions

As presented in the Literature Review, many inclusionists believe that placing all exceptional children in regular educational classes is the morally sound thing to do. (Stainback, Stainback, East, & Sapon-Shevin 1994). Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1994-1995) feel that it is not necessary to label and segregate children, but that educators should find ways to educate all children in inclusive settings, while meeting all of their special and unique needs.
In order for inclusion to take place and be successful, the beliefs and attitudes of teachers have to be taken into consideration. Teacher preparedness and teachers’ perceptions of preparedness and their perceptions of inclusion are key for successful implementation of inclusive classrooms. Crucial to teacher preparedness is the educational background and training that teachers acquire, both in regular education and special education training. Whether teachers elect to be educated in the practices of special educational theories and methods is dependent upon administrative support and district incentive programs. Professional development is another important component to teacher preparedness as without higher educational training there needs to be some form of on the job preparation. Administrative support is another significant component as teachers need the necessary tools and preparation time to adequately put forth and implement inclusive practices within the regular education classroom. Given all of these factors it is not surprising that regular education teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach special needs students. Inclusion requires the marriage of many components to be successful, such as, the training of teachers, changes in the regular education classroom, school policies, and the beliefs of both teachers and administration.

Implications

The research of the perceptions of teachers regarding their preparedness for teaching in inclusionary practices revealed that a majority of teachers feel that they are not adequately prepared to teach special needs students within the regular education classroom. They feel that with the growing numbers of special needs students that are either being referred for classifications or being brought back into district, the numbers
within the regular education classroom are growing, changing the dynamics of the classroom. They also feel as though they are being forced into inclusionary practices without the necessary training, knowledge, and support. Growing also is the frustration of the teachers. Implicated is a need for more training. This could be in the form of formal education at the university level, either a higher degree in special education or additional certification. The downside to furthering formal education is the lack of time for going to school and the expense of additional education. There seems to be more need of school district incentive for teachers to return to academia.

Training on the job is necessary for successful inclusion as teachers feel that they can benefit from the knowledge of colleagues that have special education training and experience. Another way to broaden teacher knowledge base in special education is through professional development courses. It is felt that these courses need to be related to their specific needs in the classroom; related to the types of special needs students that are included and the necessary tools and strategies that can be implemented to facilitate their needs. Additionally, these courses need to be current as trends, ideas, and classifications continually change. In addition to training, either formal or in-service, is the need for support, especially from administration. Administration can make possible more planning time, tools, strategies, that teachers need to implement inclusionary practices in the classroom. Teachers also want to be part of the decision making as they feel that since they are the recipients of special needs students they have first hand information of what the child needs and what they as teachers need in the form of professional development, planning time, tools and strategies for the classroom.
Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research, additional areas for study are recommended:

1. Three groups of elementary teachers from one school district were included in the focus group discussions. It is recommended that focus group discussions be conducted in more than one school district to determine if there is a variance of responses across districts, for example, perceptions of preparedness, perceptions of inclusion, types of professional development that is offered, planning time, and support from administration.

2. Research of the same nature in the middle schools should be addressed as students may or may have not been classified in elementary school. It would be interesting to determine what the perceptions of middle school teachers would be regarding perceptions of inclusion, preparedness, planning time, administrative support.

3. Regular elementary education teachers and elementary special education teachers combined in a focus group discussion collaborating on what professional development courses would be beneficial and what strategies and tools to use to facilitate the needs of special needs students in the regular education class.

4. Parents of elementary school special needs students and middle school students, respectively, in a focus group discussion giving their perceptions of regular education teacher preparedness and what is needed.

5. Administration and whether or not they think that their regular education teachers have the necessary training to teach special needs students in an inclusive
educational setting, and if not, what they recommend to better facilitate the needs of the special education students; perhaps an improvement of the teacher selection process

6. Perceptions of special needs students in elementary school and middle school, respectively, about whether or not their needs are being met and what they perceive to think is necessary, as far as, teacher modifications and accommodations to fit their educational needs, whether two teachers, and or teacher and classroom assistant is necessary.

7. Perceptions of special needs students in elementary school and middle school, respectively, about whether or not they think that their regular education teacher successfully assimilates both regular and special needs students together in one classroom, both academically and socially.

8. Triangulate quantitative research with qualitative research for a different perspective, in either elementary and or middle school groups.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers’ preparedness (level of training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study is aimed at gathering information to better understand how elementary teachers feel or think about their own level of teacher training and inclusion. Secondly, after determining what teachers concluded inclusion to be, is to determine whether or not teachers felt that successful inclusion could occur without university training. Thirdly, the researcher wanted to know if teachers felt that dual certification would be beneficial to prospective teachers, and whether they
themselves would elect to become certified in special education. Lastly, is to determine what type of on the job preparation teachers received in the way of collaboration or professional development, and administrative support.

The modus operandi of the researcher is to delve into the feelings of teachers to get a closer view of whether or not they felt that special needs student's needs were being met in inclusive classrooms. It is the hope of the researcher that one day, universities will make educational programs that will educate prospective teachers in both areas of regular education and special education. Stainback, Stainback, East, and Sapon-Shevin (1994) believe that anything but inclusion is considered segregation, and because of the rulings from the 1954 court case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, "separate is not equal" (Mercer, 1997). Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1994-1995) feel that it is not necessary to label and segregate children, but that educators should find ways to educate all children in inclusive settings, while meetings all of their special and unique needs.
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Appendix A

Question Route
Question Route

Question #1 – How many years have you been teaching?

Question #2 – How many years have you taught special needs students within a regular classroom?

Question #3 – Have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level? When – how recently?

Question #4 – Describe any on the job training, in-service or professional development experiences that helped you to facilitate the needs of special needs students?

Question #5 – Do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of any type of special needs student, such as a blind, deaf, learning disabled, or emotionally challenged student? Please elaborate.

Question #5a – Do you feel that you have received the necessary support from staff, team support, etc. and adequate planning time for facilitating the needs of special needs students?

Question #6 – Close your eyes. When you hear the term “inclusion” what comes to mind? Describe the attributes that make it successful or unsuccessful.

Question #7 – Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training? If so, please explain.

Question #8 – Do you think dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for prospective teachers?

Question #9 – Would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful?

Question #10 – On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best
describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools.

Question #11 – Is there anything else that we should have talked about? If not, as you leave, I will give you a self-addressed stamped to send to me any personal messages or statements that you may have forgotten that you would like to tell me.
Appendix B

Focus Group Discussions
Group 1

Alright, how many years have you been teaching, Teacher #1?

8 years.

8 years? Teacher #2

6 years.

Teacher 3?

Uh, all told, 23.

And Teacher 4?

32?

Pardon me?

32.

32? Ok! How many years have you taught special needs students within a regular classroom?

Teacher 1, 5 years...

Teacher 1...5 years. Ok. Teacher 2?

I think all 6.

Ok, you've had special needs....

Special needs in terms of, what do you classify under special needs?

Well, any student with a classification.

A classification? Ok, it might be 4 years then.

4 year then? Ok. In all your years of experience, how about you?

I've been having them 23...

23, ok. 23 years.

I was an aide for a while too, in special ed classes, perceptually impaired.
Oh, alright. OK. So...

Self-contained...

Was that in this school or another district?

Yeah, in this school.

Oh, in this school. Ok, so you’ve, you’ve been spending your career here.

And in another district. My earlier years were there.

Oh, alright. And Teacher 4? In all your few years of experience...

I would say that the first 8 years I don’t remember whether we had classification systems back then. Going back we just had kids who needed help and we gave them help. And there was, there wasn’t a testing process as I remember. Ahh, since that time, since I’ve been in special education, working as a speech therapist, of course I’ve been working with special needs children and also working in classrooms such as pre-school, the pre-K handicap class, where we do the whole classes.

Ok, ok, ok, well that’s pretty interesting about um, about that there weren’t the classifications like we have now. Well, now there’s one for everything, so that, that’s pretty interesting.

A student just received supplemental education.

Ok. Now, here’s um, I’m going to try and get more into some open-ended, more meaty questions, uh, this, this still is kind of simple but um, have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level. And anyone can one at a time can just speak and um, knowing that you’ve had these special needs kids, have you ever taken any courses? Teacher 1?

Uh, teacher 1, no, I have not.

Teacher 2, no.

Part of my undergraduate, I had a course in teaching handicap.

Ok, so, part of your undergraduate...

The undergraduate, that I’d taken...

Ok, so that, then that was, then that’s about how many years ago? So they’re not recent?
No, they’re not. Um, I’ve taken staff development. We have a staff development uh, set up here and I’ve taken some courses....

Yeah....

And I’ve taken some courses there....

Yeah, OK. I’m coming to, I’m going to get into that, yeah...I’m kinda leading into that...

...they’re at the graduate level...

Oh, OK. Alright. And how about you? With um...

Well certainly just to get your certification you need to have classes in special ed, with special needs kids.

Yes. Ok. And that’s recent? Or?

No.

No.

Um, undergraduate and graduate but not recent. Other than things we go to uh, continuing education kind of credits and so forth.

Yeah, now, I...we’re going right into that so, ah, so I have a feel for that you, you do that here. So can you describe any kinds of inservice or professional development that helps you facilitate the needs of the students here? What kinds of programs have they done?

Differentiation and instruction.

OK.

Uh, we’ve had....

...we’ve had like brain...

...yeah, the brain and ....

...learning styles, yeah, learning styles....brain research.

We did a whole inservice on ADHD, ADD...

...right, um-hm.

And that, has that been recent?
Yes, that’s been recent.

Yeah, differentiation was recent.

…but the ADD one was probably like 4 or 5 years ago.

4 or 5 years ago, yeah….and then the multiple intelligences was probably like 2 years ago or something.

Yeah probably.

Yeah, well, Howard Gardener been that “buzzword” ….there’s always a buzz term or word around…

Oh…Carol Tomlinson for differentiation.

Yeah, yeah.

Then when they had that teaching institute, where was that? Back in those days, we went for like a 3 day conference. We didn’t stay there, but we went every day and it was on, um, multiple intelligences and the latest research on the brain, left and right brain research.

Mm-hmm. And do you feel that did that um, help you with special needs kids?

That, that particular workshop or institute whatever you wanted to call it, really impacted on my teaching. It really did. In all phases.

Can you give me like an example?

Yeah, I mean it really, it really taught you that, you know, some kids are global learners um, kids that needed, you know you learned about different learning styles. I mean, I, it’s been a long time since I’ve been in a classroom setting, you know, at the learning that type of presentation, and um, it really made me look at the children in my class long and hard and how I could reach all different learning styles.

Interesting.

And then you learned about your own learning style…

Interesting, yeah…

…and how you gravitated towards basically your own comfort zone when you were teaching. Because that’s what you were comfortable with, you know. It made you kind of self-analyze yourself…
Oh, wonderful...

...and how you learn.

Wonderful. Anyone else? Um, how any inservice programs have helped you to facilitate the needs...?

Um, the ADHD workshop I felt was good, because I didn’t really know that much about the children. You know, especially when you are teaching first grade, it’s like they’re all rambunctious. So, it kinda helped, they gave us lists to kind of identify what kind of characteristics an ADHD student has...

And you found that helpful then after you went back into the classroom?

Yeah, absolutely.

How about you, teacher #2?

Um, differentiation workshop was helpful because it kind of gave me lessons on how to take one goal and have different children meet it in a different way. So, you know, part of the child, in one way you could design the whole lesson differently, that child from the group that maybe had something in common and how they learn. So, that’s been very helpful. I’ve used that a lot and um, I think the kids really like it. They like the fact that they don’t all have to do the same thing and that’s ok. And they understand that. And they understand that that doesn’t mean that someone is better than someone else. And I think that’s important. And they’re also identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, and I think that’s important that they understand that they all have strengths and weaknesses...

Right, right, right. Anything else to add to this about any inservice or professional...

Just that I went to an inservice about central auditory processing and just how um, children with that disorder, how it’s important the teachers to understand that they can ask questions and they should ask teachers to repeat directions and that teachers, in general, should, should listen kind of a deal because um, it really is, it’s what they can’t do the most. They can’t hear and understand it the first time around and it was very helpful just to get information to give to other teachers so that they can be more aware of how they should react to children who suffer from this disorder.

Wonderful. Wonderful. Uh, do you feel that you’ve received the necessary support from the administrative staff or a team, um, some kind of effort in the school to facilitate the needs of special needs students? This kind of builds on to the inservice but, do the administrators, have they been helpful to you? This is only on tape, no one else will....
I think that, in theory, they’re very, very helpful in the sense of their philosophy and what they tell us that we’re able to go to conferences and so forth is very responsible. But in practice, they can, they’ll just drop any child and he’s here today and you have to react to it. So you tend to react to a situation rather than to prepare for a situation. Um, and it happens in the pre-school quite a bit. Um, the whole, the whole program has changed from children with very slight disabilities to major disabilities and, as a staff, we don’t feel that we are the best for the children. We feel that we don’t have the practice and experience to give them, to make it, to make their lives different. Administration feels, “we’re here, you got them, do it!” And, and, we, we, we do need more support. We need more support in the areas that we’ve never traveled before, feeding skills, um, sitting skills, how do you work with severely CP kids, who are severely orthopedically handicapped and so forth. There’s a lot that we don’t … and we have to react to that situation.

Right…any other thoughts on this, because, uh, about getting kids put in your classrooms and, the need for more knowledge of how to help them and help yourselves to teach them? Anything to add?

Well, I think, I’m in an all inclusive classroom so whatever comes my way, it’s not a self-contained, it’s just a regular 4th grade classroom. And I think that some of the methods that we’re learning are really wonderful, but they’re very hard to manage with one person, with 20-25 kids.

Right.

And it’s very easy to overlook some of the needs of the students when it’s one teacher to that many children and you’re trying to differentiate because now you have different kids doing different things and you just can’t do everything so, you know, there’s always going to be something that gets overlooked. That’s a little bit difficult.

Do you feel that the administration has been supportive, uh, in your, in your being able to facilitate the needs of the special needs students, or their needs for your own needs? Do you feel they’re being supportive? Is there something else they could do? This is private, there’s nothing….this is just for my knowledge uh,

Whether they’ve been supportive?

Yeah….do they give you help?

Well, I think, we at least, I mean we constantly complain about struggles that we deal with because they don’t want that many kids referred to special ed. And when you have, we have a lot of these process, when you have PAC meetings, and sometimes even after two years of PAC meetings, pupil assistance committee meetings, where you’re trying to help these children, and the final say at the end is no, they’re not qualified, even though we feel year after year the teacher, the different teachers have worked with that particular child, that they need special services. And I think sometimes administration does deter us
from identifying children or, well, not identifying children, but putting children, or giving children the needs that they really need to survive in the classroom, to be successful.

So, so they’re trying to, they don’t want you to make as many referrals...

At least that’s what I think...

Right, well, no that’s, this is, these are opinions, there’s no right or wrong.

I’ve been around longer than you have....

I would agree with that...

...and, and...

..do you see that?

...and it seems that the pendulum is swinging. It used to be, which I believe in, ok, early intervention....

...mmnhm, absolutely....

...I mean every student that I’ve ever had, pretty much, I would say, that they intervened early, like at the pre-school level, or the pre, you know, transitional kindergarten level, and gotten the help early. A lot of those kids, by the time they left middle school or at least freshman year in high school, they were de-classified, because they got them early. Um, now it seems to be the pendulum is swinging and we do have to, I just was at a meeting, where this student has been, it’s been 3 years, and now finally he’s going to be tested over the summer, but he’s going, it’s going to be 3rd grade....

...right, but don’t you feel that you’ve lost these past 3 years....

...yeah, I, I do. I think it’s very, I think we’re doing these children a disservice. Um, and then I took a staff development course at the high school this past year and the special ed department at the high school is the largest department at the high school. There are 22 staff members in that department. And, yes, it was very eye-opening to me.

Comments, speak up, I need that! I need the “oohs” and “aaahhs”...

We didn’t know that!

I think if you would pour your resources into the elementary instead of spending money at the high school, you wouldn’t have that at the high school. You know, you would, you would tackle with the problem before all the social issues come into play and before it becomes a real stigma...
I agree.

...because in the lower grades, it's not a stigma. You know? Everybody, that, that's what you're teaching them, that everybody's different, you know, somebody needs help doing this, somebody's a great artist, somebody's this, and they accept it. But once you get into third grade now, it's a whole different story.

They see it more.

I would love to see a, really a printout of some type, to show what I think is the truth, um, children in early intervention programs at age 3 are identified by hospitals very early on and very vigorously encouraged with programs and, and, parents are given help to get in touch with their schools and at three and four, as they enter the schools, their identified and there are programs for these children, and they move on to transitional programs or so forth. So this group of children who are being, who are identified very, very early because of really big deal issues, those kids are the bulk of your kids coming through now. Very few kids make the referral process in the kindergarten, first, second, third grade. If they haven't been identified previous to that...

Is that right??

That's getting more difficult as the years go on...

Um, the kids that have been previously....they can't do anything about it because they've got history, they've got a file ?? ?? they're ready, and they have to work with them.

Part of the problem, too, I think, is that we don't have all-day kindergarten. We're still in the half-day kindergarten.

Half-day?

Yeah, and I think that's part of the problem too.

How so?

Because I don't think you know, and I taught kindergarten so I know, so you know, in the back of your mind, you're thinking, "so we only have them 2 and a half hours a day."

Right, and you're not sure you know them well enough to...

...you're not sure if you know them well enough plus you're dealing with, back in my day, you could have 2 specials in the, in the 2 ½ hours with them, so maybe you'd see them 20 minutes that whole day. So where if you have them all day, you know, you would see them in different venues and, and you could spend more time with them and, and, and maybe you could really separate the ones that you really think it's maybe developmental....
Mm-hmm....

...but you know, I think, you know, even at that stage, that those kids should be something should be done to identify them so that in first grade, you know by November, you know the kindergarten teacher saw it all year, and the first grade teacher now sees it, that you're not going to wait until the end of....

....third grade....

..second grade, and the kid's going to be in third grade where academic issues come into much heavier into play.

I feel like we're being drowned in paperwork and, just meeting after meeting after meeting, and you talk about the same thing or, and now they're saying, well, you know, why don't you try this strategy but these are strategies that special ed classes are doing with their kids, and even within our, our own school, we have Mary who's doing, who was a special ed teacher, and she's doing the special ed program for the basic skills kids. But it's really, you know, although they're not classified, they're really getting the same assistance....

Um-hmm, umhmm....

...So that's interesting. Right, in our school?

Yes, exactly.

Yes, it is.

They're using the PAF with the kids....

Yeah, yeah....

...Orton-Gillingham....

....so it's like they're classified without being classified.

Exactly.

Ohhh, So they're getting the classified services but no IEP....

Sorta classified....

....because they don't want too many IEP's....
...they don’t want it on paper...

...they don’t want it on paper.

Have you been, is it verbalized, or is it just like, uh, a feeling that you know? There’s a
tone that you’re not supposed to?

....with the teachers!

Well, there have been something’s that have been said and indicated....

I think I’ve heard some direct statements...

Well, you know, I’ve heard direct statements like “this child will not be classified”. That
would be one.

Wait, would you say that again?

“This child will not be classified”, even before we finish the process...

...or even before the process begins...

or even if, it’s ongoing...

...and I’m seeing this at 4th grade levels also. In 5th grade and I was having kids who
weren’t classified and who needed it in 5th grade.

And I’ve heard teachers say that you know, they’ve done everything with that child, and
they still don’t get the services, and they feel like they’ve failed the child. And I don’t
think the teachers should feel that way. Especially when they’ve done everything that
they can.

Kindergartners?

No, I’m talking about, I’m talking about upper grades...

No, I’m saying, in addition to...

In addition to, kindergartners would have heavy duty kind of, um, evaluation indicating
that something should be done and it was not. Kindergartens did not get, do not get, we
just try to work with them in the classroom.

Hmm,....

...because they wanted additional speech and language work, and in order for a child to
receive language, any kind of language intervention, they must have a full, complete
child study team evaluation, and it was just decided that we would wait to see what happens.

Ohhh...

Very lovely.

That's even with the language? With everything?

With everything. Because you see if you have speech...

So then are they referred over the summer for 1st grade because there are kids coming into first grade that are...

No, we...

...that already have

...it just, paperwork in some spots ... it's done and it's over.

Right.

Oh my gosh.

Does this frustrate all of you?

Oh yeah!

It's, it's it's....

Quite frustrating...

Even more, it's just, every year it gets worse so it feels like...

Well, I feel like things like things are being put in, to kinda tell us "OK, now you're differentiating, so now you can handle all these different needs with this lesson because that's what you're supposed to do."

Right.

So I almost feel like that's, like, supposed to be our answer or something. I don't know. I mean, that could just be my opinion but.

.... The children here aren't, the children here in this district who are special services, aren't really, aren't really that needy, aren't that needy if you compare them to children in other districts.
That's true.

That's true.

And so, but you know, you only know what you have.

What you have, yeah...and if you feel it yourself...

Especially when in the classroom, with all these really bright kids, and that one child is just average or just slightly below average, may seem like the real special needs child when he or she isn't.

But that is true...

But that's a really good point.

They are. That's the problem. Because they're in with that ??

That is, that's very interesting.

We are a very ambitious district.

Yeah, yeah. Anything else on that? Um, when you hear the term inclusion, what comes to your mind, like what attributes would make it successful or unsuccessful? I mean, I just, I, what comes to your mind. Let's say successful...what, what would be successful inclusion, say here? Anything that comes to mind?

An assistant teacher who helps those children and maybe in the classroom....

..in the classroom...

Do you have that here?

A couple of teachers are doing that...

I've actually had that, I've had it in my classrooms in the past...

I've had um, a resource room teacher as an assistant teacher for a certain amount of time each day...

Just for a certain amount of time...

Right, well, I'm sorry, go ahead...

No, and then we have two aides here that work with individual children...
...individual children who are special needs...
...that are here all day, with the regular classroom teacher.

I know that the principal and I had talked about it last year, at least with the first grade teachers, about maybe having someone in the, you know, in terms of inclusion and having an assistant teacher in there.

Full time?

No, not full time, no, not at all… to rotate.

Rotate around?

Right. But that didn’t happen.

Oh, it didn’t happen?

No.

Do you balk? Can you balk about it? Can you ask? Or no, you just have to, what comes your way…

I’ve never had it so I don’t know…

Oh.

...um, but I think that you know, regular, if you’re going to have a child like that, then they, you know, they, they can’t just throw that on you without giving you some kind of...

...preparation for...

...preparation for it because as you’ve heard, a lot of us haven’t taken special ed classes in a very long time. We’re not trained as special ed teachers...

A great segue into, oh, go ahead, go ahead…

...there’s a very different, to me it’s two different things, having an inclusion, a child, inclusion child, having a child with special needs in your class and having a special education of that child is to receive handled in class…

Mmmhm...
...two different things. Um, I think it's hard, it's hard for all of us to think about having the special, how do we, how do we adapt ourselves to another teacher? to have it as a good experience for everybody? To have his special needs taught by the special education teacher in the regular classroom.

Mmhmm...

Uh, I think, I don't think having the special needs child in the classroom is that much of the problem. Somehow the teachers cope, we just, we have this coping capacity...

...gotta be flexible...

...very flexible...

Flexible, yeah!

I don't think we're really doing any inclusion teaching if his special needs aren't being met by the special methodology that he needs to learn.

...that he needs to learn...

good point.

Well...

Go ahead...

Well, I was just going to comment...

Yeah, please...

I had um, a resource teacher in my classroom but it was for seven separate children who were all classified in one particular area.

How many? How many kids?

Seven.

Seven?

It was all for language arts and so we team taught the lesson and it was taught in such a way that it met their needs because of the design of the actual lesson but, at the same time, if you were to walk into the classroom, you wouldn't, you probably wouldn't be able to identify unless you worked in the building and knew us, which was the special ed teacher or which students. So it was set up to be more of a team teaching experience than it was a one-child kind of a guide. Just, I think it made a difference...
Help in a different way?

Yes. We met and we planned the lessons on our own time I might add there was no planning time incorporated into it...that's another problem....

Oh!! Yeah!! Yeah!

...and the time for planning is not there. So we actually, like, spent time outside of school together. We'd go to dinner and plan a lesson. I mean, we're talking...

Oh! On your own time? I'm glad you mentioned that because back to the question where I said about are you receiving the necessary support from administrative staff, part of that, it didn't even, it just got kind of wordy, but you said it...planning time. Do you have the planning time? So here you do it on your own.

...a lot of planning time, um, even just amongst grade level teachers kind of plan things together. Most of the ....

...half an hour is not enough for the day.

And so with special needs students...

...that gets additional, it's additional preparation.

Well, the preparation could have lasted a lot longer, maybe graphic organizers or different things that you need for the lesson and we're not really...

At least, I know the three of us are there, are here until like 7:00 at nighttime. It's embarrassing, isn't it??

It is!

Is that right? Is that right?

Because the copier is free at 6:00.

I actually got a gift, a little card and a gift from a parent saying you work, they saw me here at 7:00 at night, and sent me a little card with a little something saying "this is a little token of our, my appreciation for your hard work."

Oh, that's lovely.

So, I was like... that is rare, but I mean that just goes to show you how unusual it is. They were like, floored, that I was still here.
You, um, uh, do you get, you don't get prep times or not enough?

Not enough.

Not enough. But you do like...

...An hour, at other times like 45 minutes.

The half hour works out to be maybe 15 minutes....

2 phone calls if you're lucky...

...take your class, go to the bathroom, God, if you have an after lunch ??

...fixing the copier...

...but the little kids getting the.. yeah...

15 minutes, and then if you have phone calls to make, if you get phone calls, then that's it, you have no time to do anything for yourself.

Uh, do you feel that success, we haven't really defined successful inclusion, but do you feel that inclusion could be successful without university training because, now we've established that you haven't had courses, but and you need training, you need supports, you need knowledge. Do you think it could be successful without university training?

I just have to clarify something. Inclusion, are we talking about inclusion with an assistant teacher in the classroom or are we talking about just...

Tell me...

I don't know what....

Oh, well, it could be...

...what your definition of inclusion is.

Well, ahh, you yourself, let's say, without an aide, yeah.

Without an aide? I think it'll be very difficult without the necessary training. And, and we do it but it is difficult. I mean, we do struggle. And we do go to the...

Without the training...
Special ed teachers and "what do you do if, if they don’t know how to do this?" and we constantly refer to them. We, we, you know, we say, "well, show us how" or "can we see the materials for this?"...right?

Yeah.

I don’t even know if I had the university training, I think we need like hands-on training...

Workshop...

Like, do it!

So the more, the more inservice and workshops, right?

Because to me, university, you study, you study and study, everything looks great, now go and do it, that’s another story, and that’s my...writing a paper...

I like university training but...

...not after school. Release time during the day... like a 4 day, a 4 hour day and then you know... during your regular day. After school is a lot to ask for.

But I’m tired after
But I do think, though, that changes have to be made in the preparation time that we’re given for things. The times to meet with the necessary people, if we have to meet with other teachers or whatnot to do it, I really think that that, that is necessary to make it work.

Mmhmm.

Do you feel that dual certification would be beneficial for new teachers, prospective teachers, you know, with the stars in their eyes that want to be teachers. What do you think about dual certification, um...

I think it’s beneficial but not required.

No, no, not required, but you think it would be beneficial.

Oh sure. I mean, I would, sometimes I think I would, it would be nice if I had gifted education background, and special ed education background. I mean, you know? It’s beneficial to have anything in addition to regular classroom.

Yeah, you see, when I graduated, I had to have ... my degree was elementary ed but then it was either English or history.
Mmmhmm.

My other major was English with a minor in history, but we had to carry a double major. My junior year was like a nightmare.

But any special ed, no special ed? No...

A course here or there, but no, no, back in those days, you know it really wasn’t that ??

Yeah, yeah...

Back then I had the double major...

Yeah...

Double major...

When I did mine, my degree is separate from my college degree, so I guess I kind of have two majors but I have a degree in English and psychology as my undergraduate, which was a dual. Plus I have my English, my certification ...

Would you, would you elect to become certified in special education. See, the, the "I" word, the inclusion, ahh, if there’s and more kids coming into the system that are classified and I even hear that you know if you’re holding back referring them, but would you elect to become certified in special education. Now, I’m looking at you, and you, I know you have backgrounds...say it, say it, say it....

I’m looking towards retirement.

Ok, I ask this in particular, I ask this specifically because of, of different levels in careers. And that’s important that I know this. So what about you, would you elect to become ...

Ahhh, my husband would kill me because I just finished, I just got my doctorate in administration, so...if I went back to school, I think he would just divorce me, um, but I guess if I had to do it over again, I mean, I do see the benefits of having a special ed back...it seems like there’s more and more of these kids coming in. I don’t know why that’s the case, if it’s in the water, but there are benefits of course.

Benefits, yeah. How about you?

I’m taking a couple of more graduate classes in special ed so that I would feel more comfortable with those kids and how to deal with those parents.

Right. That’s a component also. Uh, but you haven’t.
I haven't.

Is it in your, you just finished something so I hear that, but would it be in your near future to, you know, to help facilitate the needs of the kids?

Yeah, I thought about the idea.

Yeah?

Yeah, taking a couple of classes in this and in gifted education because in Westfield there are so many advanced learners in this district that I feel like there is that low, for that special ed, the special needs child, and there is the high for those, they also have special needs.

We can pause if you need to (a lot of background noise, some truck is parking).

The, um, to me, the idea of going for the, the extra credits or the degree in that is not a bad idea at all, it's just a matter of time. We put so much time into our work, I don't know if I can fit it in right now with everything, and I think that's what we would also say...

Exactly, we're in the same boat.

But I'm sure it's also hard to fit in with everything and I think that, I also think it's very hard like affordability is hard, because it's not like, you know, we would have to pay for the degree...

We have to pay out of our own pocket.

...and that's expensive so I think it really needs to be set up so that there is...

...easier for us to do. There's not enough incentive and it's just, it's just very difficult....

...financial support...

...there's not enough support financially or time-wise. Like, to give up those hours each day to work on that program, versus the ones in my classroom, you know, where does that leave me?

...something financially even with the reimbursement program...

...$1,000...

well, yeah,...

it's nothing compared to the real cost...
...per year...

Is that what you get here if you work...

A thousand dollars per year, for graduate school, for graduate class.

So you know, it could take you like 20 years to finish your degree. So you will be retired by the time...

...or you become poor like me...

...it’s not in our realm of thought.

So, you know, the two things—the time and...

...I wouldn’t either...

But, it is, you do agree that you think, I mean, that it would be um, an ideal situation that for let’s say the starry eyed student coming out of, um, you know going into the teaching profession, it would be a good idea to have dual certification or what about, what about, what are, what are your thoughts about both special ed and regular ed in one degree? Like to change the system? What do you think?

Well, I’m sorry...

Not the dual major but, but in a four year...

Yeah, to have them both combined...what do you think?

I don’t think it can hurt.

Exactly.

If it’s still four years and not six years.

Yeah, right, right.

Six years would hurt.

So what they’re actually doing is just putting more coursework. They would be required to take more courses in special ed than what they are now, which is one or zero.

Right.
One or zero...

Seems kinda silly that we didn’t even do it odd. I mean think about it, you’re supposed to be teaching children, ahh, not a molded child...

But that’s how we were all taught though...

And also gifted children. We didn’t, I didn’t take anything in gifted children, or, I didn’t take one course...

...the whole program...

...not one course in my certification...

one course, we had three classes with them that one course and then it was just a mish-mosh of things. Seminar class, that’s what it was called—it was whatever you could throw in, gifted—someone from the gifted department come to speak with us, someone from special ed, you know....

One TESL...

Yeah, that’s how we were exposed to special things outside of the regular mainstream classroom.

That was within your regular ed coursework?

Right.

Oh, so, so if they do that, then they kind of...

It was called seminar class.

Seminar class, so then they can say they covered that then.

Pretty much.

But I didn’t cover it at all.

Nothing at all?

Not one course on special ed, not one course on gifted, all children are the same according to my degree. So I mean, I came...

...9, 10 years ago...

...I came into teaching and just learned as I went basically. Which I mean, ....
...are the programs different now?

...I mean this was recent. This was only 5 years, what I graduated 6 years ago, it's not like it was that long ago.

No, that's not long ago.

Right, that's what I'm saying.

Yeah....!

So, but that's the way it was. I had to take 30 credits and none of them included special ed.

Did you go to a university in this state? Was it in New Jersey?

Mmhmm.

Did everyone here go to school in NJ?

Not me, I went to school in Pennsylvania.

And I have to say the program itself was excellent. I mean, I really think I learned a ton, but it did not have that component. So....

So what are your thoughts about that then. Now that I've brought this nastiness to the surface, um, what are, what would you, what do you think would help you as teachers and the students. What are, I'm trying to pull something out here....

Well, I think, I think if they're going to do more inclusion, then I think you have to have more aides hired. I, I think you have to, you need another pair of hands...

Right.

We need training.

And more training...we need more training.

And more incentive to do the training...

More hands on training.

You really have to have more than one person.
Training. Explain. What kind of training?

Training. Workshops. I mean, there are plenty of teachers that I know of that over the summer for two weeks would be happy to do some type of like, you know, inexpensive thing, or even, if it were sponsored through something from the school to go to it for training. I mean, there are a lot of people who don’t have...

...different methods of, different teaching styles, that are appropriate to certain type of children.

Hmm, mmm, I’m actually trying to like, create, in our district, usable material, I think it’s important because I think they sometimes teach it to you and say this is what you need to do but ...

Teaching about it and actually doing it are two different stories, and you need that guidance when you’re trying to do it the first time. I think that’s part of the downfall to some of the training we’ve received....

We need guidance.

Yeah. Like, don’t just tell me this is what you need to do, OK, now have us do something so that we have to show it to you and, we can test it...does it work? You know? Doesn’t it work? Why doesn’t it work? That kind of thing. There’s no follow through.

Now, where, so that would come from who? Who, who would be best to...?

Administration.

Well, the administration and the district. They have the money, to back up the extra support...

I mean, it is kind of ironic that out of all the different fields, we probably get the least incentive to further educate ourselves and we’re educators.

And I can’t tell you how many times people have questioned me about that, from the outside world. Business people or whatever. Well, why is it that you don’t get paid for training when you’re the ones teaching people? I don’t even know how to respond...I don’t know what to say to them...

So, it’s too bad that she had to leave, I had something I want you to write down something, but um, I hear, like summing this up, that it would be beneficial to get university training, but, after you’ve already had your training, when you’re on the job, am I right, am I correct in my summation that inservice, ahh, right where you’re teaching, that would be most beneficial to you?
Right.

And there’s a lack of that?

Right. Even without the university training, you know, because that’s what we are right now. Um, we need that support, we need the training, we need a preparation, to be successful. I mean, we try so hard to work with these kids, and, but we always run into a roadblock. And we either go to the principal and ask him “well, what do we do” or we go to the resource room teacher, or our colleagues, who are very helpful to one another. But we definitely need support.

So you can, so that’s a good thing that you can bounce off of each other, at least for support, yeah....

And things, like you know, we’ve had children that were for some reason we’ve passed them on to second grade, like what did you do with them last year that worked well? Or what didn’t work?

Now, is that asking a special, a special ed teacher or just reg...

No, no, just regular, the previous teacher, the past year’s teacher...


Yeah.

Uh, I’m going to give you a pen, you have a pen, and a piece of paper, and I’d like you to jot down a phrase, a sentence, that um, ok, this is a phrase or a sentence that best, um, describes your position on what we’ve been talking about. A phrase or a sentence on your position, ok, um, teacher preparedness for inclusionary practices.

...only if thoughts come...that’s, you know...

I’ll be doing this in two other schools. I’m looking for common themes and ideas and I already, I shouldn’t say this (off the record!) I have a feeling I already know the themes, common ideas and themes that I’m going to be hearing. And, you’re passionate, and, I, about this and I could hear it, I kind of know what it’s going to be.

Well, you know when I worked as an aide for those two years in the older perceptually impaired class, um, but perceptually impaired is a euphemism to cover for, there were kids in that group that were emotionally disturbed, and um, I learned so much from being an aide in that classroom about just dealing with kids in general. But in dealing with special ed kids, um, but not everyone, I had the advantage of that, of being not the person in authority but being able to help that person in authority and learn from that person, and work, but work directly with the kids. Which I think has helped me, you know, when I became my own master of my own domain, and had those kinds of kids in my room.
Um, but not everybody gets that and I, I think that, I don’t know if, if maybe in teacher preparation, teachers should serve like an internship in a special ed classroom, so that you’re not the person responsible immediately...

...that’s a good idea...

...but that you can kind of help a person who’s skilled in that area and watch their classroom techniques, their organization...I still use organizational techniques that I learned from, from the teacher I worked with during that time. Um...

Did that teacher have um, specialized training in special ed?

Yes, she was.

Yes?

Yeah, she’d had many years in special ed. Um...

University or just on the job experience?

No, university. Yeah, yeah. She was a very experienced teacher. Um, but I, but I have a very good friend who teaches in another district, in another school in the district, who has a self-contained, younger PI class, and her group next year is going to be 14 kids. She’s getting like 4 autistic, 2 or 3 bi-polar, so they are, and she’s beside herself, because she’s not used to that.

She has no training?

Well, she has some but you’re talking a 30 year person here, teaching for 30 years....

Oh, ok, someone very experienced, but not, but not university trained in special ed?

Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

Yes. Ok. Is that why...

You know, I mean, that’s a whole different ballgame, you know.

Is that why she’s getting this amount of ...?

I don’t know or if they’re bringing in rather than sending them out of district which is...

Right, right...

The money....
That’s, that’s, that’s a very interesting point you just brought up. And it just, it brings to mind an additional question. If you, if you went out and got university training, now, do you think this would bring on more classified kids in your classrooms? If they find out that you, oh you went and got...

Yes, yes, absolutely.

I, I think that....

Absolutely.

And that’s what’s happening. And then what’s also happening at the high school when I took this course is like, last year, they’ve brought back to the high school, four kids that had been in an out of district placement, and they hired two teachers to work with those four kids. Now, had they done that at our level, they could have prevented that from happening.

Exactly.

And better serve the children because through....

Better serve....

...Elementary and middle school, and then maybe classified at such a late age that it...

right...

..it’s like you’re failing them. They feel badly about themselves, their parents don’t know what to do with them...

Exactly. And then you’re dealing with teenage issues.

Exactly.

And then these kids are getting to college, and they’re being classified in college now. There was a whole thing in the news recently about how many kids need, have special needs at the college level, because they still haven’t gotten to the point where they don’t need that special help. So what does that tell you?

College? That’s a new one on me....

Yes, college. It was just in the news in the last month, a whole thing about that, and I was shocked when I heard it.

That’s a new one...
Although I don’t know why I was shocked, I should have predicted it...

Yeah, right, but they keep pushing these kids further, you know. It’s like well, here’s another thing, oh they’re in fourth grade this year? Well, don’t worry they’re going to be in 5th grade next year and then they’re going to be off to the middle school.

Right.

So don’t worry about it.

Ohh, oh,

It’s like, push it elsewhere and we, I mean...

I would say an affluent district so why are they holding back on referrals?

That’s a good question. We don’t know. It just seems that...

Every year, it’s like well, less and less....

It’s maybe they’re getting more and more of them and they don’t numbers that high? But I also think that people seek this district out because the district has a reputation...

...of a good program...

...that’s good. When they figure there’s the money there in place. As a matter of fact, I heard some people talking about this earlier today, and and the um, it’s an ideal place. People move here because they know that their kids have special needs and they want them to be in. So if that’s the case, then we’re going to get an extra high number of them to begin with.

I have heard that. That people from New York, Long Island, Brooklyn or wherever. Even if they can’t afford the homes here, they’ll live in the um, apartments nearby and there are pockets of, you know, lower economic groups here. Where we bus them in even.

Right.

Umhmm. So they’re assuming...

They’re seeking out this district because they, they know that we have special ed programs, they know that we a district, that we have the money to spend on...

We have a good reputation. People from, I’m talking not even just New York, from other countries, oh yes,
Oh yeah, I just heard that today...

...that's right, Costa Rica....

Um, Costa Rica...

Uh-huh.

So they...

On the internet.

They research it on the internet to find out about us.

So, then it sounds like uh, the pressure's on, on you guys, if you're not getting the training and the help that you need.

But we've dealt with it for so long that we're used to the pressure.

We're used to the frustration of it all.

Right, and we're used to having to go to other people for help and, you know, especially if we can't refer them to get what they really need. Into the resource room.

Well, we now have a student assistance counselor. I mean, in the days before that,

A what? A what?

A student assistance counselor...

Ok.

...who's great.

And what, what is that position?

We only have him 2 and a half days per week. We share him with another school. We could really use him full time.

Oh... what, what are his, what is his role? That's a title I don't know.

Well, he facilitates the PAC meetings that we have...

Oh, oh ok.

He does small group...
...that's actually an added on role that he got. Originally, I mean, his role is actually...

Right, right.

...to work with students who are having emotional or mainly emotional issues in the school. Wouldn't you say, right?

Yeah, academic, behavioral, emotional and behavioral...

And social issues. Not the academic really.

However, um, when the, when the budget meeting, were you here at the budget meeting?

Nu-uh.

When the budget was being passed? Um, we had a budget meeting here and the topic came up about student assistance counselors. And um, it was said at that meeting, that, that they were instituted because of there were so many referrals. And that they were, that that program was to cut down. I mean, that was the statement that was made. And that's not what they...

...that's not their primary job...

...that isn't because...

...they added that job on to it. I feel badly for them. They have to be here early in the morning at 8:00, they stay till like 4:30 or 5:00 for PAC meetings...

...he's the one person who's here after me when I leave at 7:00, OK?

You still see his car here some nights...

And he's doing two schools.

Two schools...

One on the other side of town.

Now, I know there are six elementary schools, so do they, do the other, so there's a couple of other ones that...

He just has two schools.

You share.
Right.

And that's basically to keep down that, so his role is to...

Facilitate these meetings...

And take, and take the place of referrals and...

Of an assistant principal who's supposed to be doing some of this work.

Right.

 Basically.

And the principal, which is, what I like is that the, at the PAC meetings the principal is there.

Ok.

At every meeting. And I think that's important because he needs to know the history of these children as they go on. Whether he agrees or disagrees about referral.

Yes, yes. Do you, do you ask for more, do you ask for more support, more, are you allowed to or is there like a suggestion box or something that you can ask for more staff development...

...that's a good idea...

...for facilitating the needs of special needs kids? Can you ask for it? Ah,....

You know what they're always telling us? The budget is the way it is. You know, we don't have enough money for things. They're always telling us we don't have enough money for things. Right?

Uh huh.

We can't order the cartridges because we don't have the money. Petty cash is $50.

The high school, the high school gets all the money.

Exactly. Technology is taken over by the way, and so everything goes into technology.

Instead of pouring it in at the foundation level, they're pouring it in the opposite end, you know, and you could probably save a lot of money if they put their resources in here.

Right.
At the elementary level, and into special, special needs.

In special needs or anything, even technology. All the money...

We don’t even...

We’ve gotten, all the bond referendums, all the money’s going to technology at the high school.

Yes.

All the teachers have their own laptops.

We don’t have laptops but they have laptops.

They have computer labs.

Here, kindergarten, first and second grade have never gotten brand new computers except from the PTO.

Right.

That’s just a problem.

Gotten me on the wrong subject!

That’ll be my post-doctoral work!

Every year they promise the first, second grade teachers and the kindergarten, you’ll get new computers, you’re going to get three, or you’re going to get two. They’ve never gotten down here. It’s so unfair.

And now the fourth grade...

...that’s just a bigger problem, that money does not funnel down here. Money goes up there.

Mmmhmm.

Goes to the high school.

And they even messed up the fourth grade computers, by ah, taking an extra year in the contract because one fifth grade decided they wanted to do something with … so the fourth grade computers are going on an extra year when they’re all breaking down.
Yeah.

So they’re not going to make it.

That’s another problem, so, anyway…

Yeah, budgetary reasons are usually…

Yeah, there’s always an excuse. I mean, I don’t know if it’s an excuse, but it’s always their reason that things just don’t happen. We just don’t have the money for it.

Well…

But they really don’t come and ask us.

Yeah.

They really don’t.

They make decisions…

..about what they…

...with no, with no feedback…

..or they ask for feedback…

..some of that inservice about media with Steve Abudato….

...what a waste of time…

..what’d you think about that one?

We had this whole inservice with Steve Abudato,

Oh.

Oh, oh I know, I spent a week

Oh, I saw that in the hall…

Ok, he was good to look at but that was it.

And we had no idea, after the presentation, the inservice of three hours, we didn’t know why we had this inservice. And after everybody walked out, the next day we were like, “so, um, what’d you think?” um, I don’t know. What was the point of that?
"I don’t remember what it was about."

Well, he’s um, I just spent a weekend with him…

You remember looking at him, right?

I only remember his name…. 

Easy on the eyes, yeah, easy on the eyes, but I did it for public speaking, an entire weekend with him. So what, this was about, what was the subject?

I can’t remember.

Media violence or media of brainwashing the children, on, you know, teaching the children how to be selective about what they watch and what’s real to them and what’s, you know, not real. They showed us clips on like wrestling, WWF…

I don’t think I took a single thing out of that and applied it to the classroom.

Yeah, yeah, like I said, it was not…

He was going through a divorce….and he was, no, I’m serious, and then he was like he had no clue about his own child. That’s what I got out of that.

…need to watch less television, which I already knew going into it.

In conclusion, they don’t really ask us what we want for these inservices.

Ok.

It’s what they want to do.

Very little teacher input at all.

Um, I um, I had a long question in here. How about um, how about if you received a deaf child, a blind child, is that, does that, is that a case here? Does any…

I have one…

Yes, and what did you…

He was, he wasn’t completely deaf…

Uh huh…
He was able to hear a little bit in one of his ears...

And how did...

So I had...they gave me...

What kind of help were you given?

...the uh, headphones, Chris had this child after me...

yes, I remember this...

and ah...

Adam, right?

No, Anthony. Anthony and he had these um, hearing aides where I would have to wear my headphones so that he could hear me more clearly.

Oh!

So it was, he was hearing at a much higher decibel.

Oh, alright, so that’s the only assistance that you received...

...and that he was going out for um special, uh you know, for his resource room.

Right. Right. Ok, so they didn’t bring anybody in to help you. It was just the paraphernalia.

Yeah, well, the person was just supposed to show me how to use it. And when I talk, when I speak with him, I should look at him.

Was it enough for you? Was that enough?

They...I thought it was fine because that was his main problem, not being able to hear but um, I think he had other issues.

How do you also handle without formalized training, how else do you handle the needs of the regular ed kids with the special ed kids, because if you don’t have a special ed teacher working with you, how do you handle...are there problems, mixing those regular ed and the special ed because of their needs?

This lady here is after school, working with kids who, sometimes 5 kids? Like Monday afternoon? To work with those kids who really need the extra help.
I'm sure...lunch group or whatever, I mean when I was in first grade, we did lunch groups. Once a week or more, morning reading groups for those kids who were really struggling. Who were maybe not classified yet, or where, you know, they refuse to classify them.

Ok.

We all spend our extra time, our minutes doing that with the kids. And sometimes, you know when the other kids are doing things that they can pretty much be independent with, we pulled those kids aside and worked with them. You know, just a small group of 2, or one.

So it comes from your, your hearts.

Exactly.

Oh yeah, exactly.

...from your hearts, yeah...yeah...

or sometimes you have to give, like the really advanced students who are going to be finished way before the other kids....

...there are special needs on both ends, I agree.

...you give them some type of interest activity.

The gifted needs, and then the special ed needs...

Oh...

We're constantly trying to balance two...

Exactly. You have the kids who know everything already, you have to give them little projects to do, plus then you have to reteach the same lesson in a different way for the child who needs to....

...without overlooking the middle kids...

Exactly! And then you have to ....the average....

Teaching is a hard job.

It is. It is, and it's, it's the most, I mean, I mean, the...teachers are, teachers are wonderful people. And what you have to, what you have to put up with and I just think without, I'm not supposed to put my opinion in here, but I think we're beyond this
though, we’ve gone beyond the questions, but, but um, without the training, without the supports, and then you have to kind of like, uh, it’s like kind of like feeling your way along in the dark, to see what...

But I also think we have to be a part of the decision making process, and we’re not.

That’s a major problem....

If you felt that you were part of the decision making process, and that your voice was heard, and some of what you said was taken into account, because you’re the person actually doing it, you would feel, you would feel better about it.

Right, even if the result is not what

If you had the opportunity, how would you implement that as a leader? Teacher leader, because there’s a lot of literature now on teacher leaders, how would you, what would you do with, um, regarding special needs kids? If you were a part of the decision making process, what would you recommend? What would you, what would you do with it?

For the children or for the staff?

Well, um, I’m, I’m, I’m kind of concerned about both ends because um, your needs I’m concerned with and that facilitates the needs of the student. The happier and more uh, adept you are at facilitating their needs, they benefit so, if you were a teacher leader and were asked to participate in the decision making, what would you recommend?

Well, first of all I think you have to listen to your special ed teachers. We’re the, they’re the experts in the field and you have to solicit their opinions first. Um, I think you know maybe regular ed teachers and special ed teachers sit down together, without any administrative people there, and come up with a plan or suggestions or methodology of doing this. And, and then, you know, the two of you present a unified voice, so you’re coming from the specialized people and the people who are going to be, you know, taking on, on the other hand, you know, that task, and using their expertise. You know? Because a lot of us just don’t know, you’re just, you know, you’re going blind.

Like, not even the new teachers. What do you do with them...

Yeah!

Do they go to this, the resource room classroom or do they not?

Yeah.

You know, when, am I supposed to teach math if they’re getting replacement math?

It’s very confusing for them.
Very confusing.

Very.

And then the schedule in the middle of the year all of a sudden gets changed and then they don’t realize that they need to move around their schedule because certain kids that are supposed to be in your room for this subject are now not in the room. You know, that’s happened too. And they, of course, had no idea.

But Patti brings up a good point, that you need to have the regular classroom teachers meet with the special ed teachers…

Mmmhmm.

…whether to, they should give us suggestions on things that they’re seeing that really work with their kids. That, you know, that would hit like certain learners, the kinesthetic learners, you know, if you want to learn the /a/ sound, this is definitely the way to go or you know, if you want to work with a child that’s doing math, this is touch math is the way to go…

Yes, and I only learned about touch math…

…one day or….

….because I, I tutor. And, and one of the people that I tutored with showed me the touch math. And, I mean, you know, we don’t have the time, you know, you don’t know about all these things….

We don’t have any more time! We, we rarely sleep sometimes.

You know?

….stay until 9:00!

I know!

Geez…

….first go home and we start doing grading….

Until 12…

….until 12!

Dinner would be nice…
So I, you know, I really do think there, there has to be more, um, decisions made with teachers, not for them.

Mmmmm.

I think if you have a voice in the final decision, even if it's sometimes not the way you want it, if you felt like you were heard...

Yes.

...and they took into consideration what you said before they made the final decision, that helps. Because a lot of times they make the decision and then they ask for your opinion...

Yeah, that's what we have...

....and like, why do you bother asking me, when you already made the decision?

And that just gets us angry, because now we've wasted all this time when the decision was already made anyway.

Exactly. We could have been grading, planning, whatever...

...working with those special needs kids.

Right.

Because then, you could ask for more help, more assistance if, if you're not allowed to make the referrals, then you could ask for what kind of assistance you needed...

Right, or if someone can come in and show me how this should be done.

Right, right...

Because a lot of times they tell us at these PAC meetings, "well, try this one"....Ok, well, that sounds all nice and great, but, but...

But no one's...

...but how do I actually do it in the classroom?

No one shows you how to implement it?

No one actually shows us.
Or it's something that's so unreasonable that you couldn't possibly have time to do each time you go into a lesson...

Oh, I know...they give you these recommendations that are out of this...

...and, and, and I'm sitting there thinking and when am I going to prepare this for each lesson that it would pertain to? You know, it's just, it's not even always doable.

And sometimes when you forget, and then when somebody yells at you, that doesn't feel good either.

No. No.

I also think we should be getting, we should be given a written minutes of the meeting....

And also, you know, they, they're keep pouring, uh, more and more curriculum expectations

Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

You know, you, you just don't have the time that you used to have years ago. You kind of have like uh, a a calm period in your classroom where you could be working calmly with some of these kids, you know, which we did have years ago. But now the curriculum...

Curriculum? Spanish??

...they're just pushing...

and the Standards? And the standards?

They can't speak English properly, but let's do Spanish.

Are you given the, uh, are you privy to the New Jersey Core Standards for the Disabled? Do they give you those?

I think we do have those.

We have the NJ Core Standards for the K-5, right?

Do you have for the disabled?

I think we do have something...

Because they are, they're modified...
On the internet...

I'm pretty sure that we do have them.

Are you given....

I've seen them somewhere....

Yeah...

Let's put it that way!

They're, they're a take-off on the, the regular core standards but they're modified. That's another thing, do you get, uh, are you given, if the kids aren't classified with an IEP, are you given any modifications, accommodations for them?

Well, that's a part of differentiation.

We're supposed to modify...

Ok.

We're doing it, even though they don't have an IEP

Ok....what was that?

...even though they don't have an IEP, we still modify things for them.

Ok.

I know that you, in grading, ...

I modify in my class...

...in the final grades for their report cards, show like an asterisk next to grades that are, even though...

...there are some that are below grade level, but I'm giving them a B because their self-esteem goes out the window once you give them....

Are a lot of these kids that you give differentiated instruction to ones that you would put in for referrals?

Well, I do it like for the whole class.

Not necessarily for many.
No.

No, they're just sometimes, they're just a little bit below average, and they need the extra push.

Right, ok. Alright. But do you, how about, do you have any kids in your class that you would make a referral for?

Oh yes,

Yes.

Oh, you, you do.

Several.

Several?

I have one.

I have four.

Four that you would? Make referrals for?

I had meetings, and meetings, and lots of meetings....

And you have one?

I have one that I would...

And have you gone to the records that there were meetings and meetings on...

Oh, there have been meetings and meetings and many of them in the past

Teacher number 3, how about you? I almost called you by your name. How about you? Would, are there kids that you...

Yeah, I mean, I have one this year that ... three years...

Oh, three years....OK...

I've actually had parents go outside of the district to get paperwork to get them, their curriculum modifications approved, without going through the school system. I have two in that situation.
Hmm.

How do you deal with the parents then?

How do I deal with them?

Yeah...

I tell them that I’m happy to modify what’s necessary so that their child is a successful student. I mean, what else am I going to say? I’m not going to tell them, “let’s ruin the school year!” so, you know, I do the modifications and I try to document it as carefully as possible in the report card just so that other teachers looking back at it can understand that modifications were made. For example, I have a student that I orally test on all her tests, which is not written anywhere...

Oh, OK, alright, you’re making your own...

...so I wrote, I wrote in on the report card and it says that this student benefits from oral testing following every written test, and the grades are modified as such. It says that on her report card.

Yes, we’ll, we’ll wrap this up...I, I was going to ask you is there anything else we should have talked about, but we went right into that without me even asking you, and um, if you will, if you have anything else to say to me, send this to me...

Oh, ok...

...if you have another comment, and the um, the other teacher, teacher number 4 that was here could you give her this, and just ask her if she had something else....

Sure...ok.
Group 2

Ok, teacher 3, how many years have you been teaching?

4 years.

Teacher 4?

17

Teacher 2? How many years have you been teaching?

4 years

Teacher 5?

18

Teacher 6?

5

Teacher 7?

5

Teacher 8?

This is my 7th.

7th? Ah, Teacher 2, how many years have you taught special needs students in a regular classroom? Special needs and/or classified, we can combine those.

As a classroom teacher, or...

Yeah

...as an aid and a classroom teacher?

Yeah, tell me anything.

Total? I was an aide for 2 years and a teacher for 4, so a total of six.

OK, and you’ve had these kind of kids, OK...Teacher 3?

4
Teacher 4?

5

Teacher 5?

I, I have to think because...

OK

...I don't know how many years I, I probably, I have to estimate...

oh yeah, that's, that's okay

...i would say probably, yeah I'm trying to think, probably like 15 out of the 18 probably.

OK. Teacher 6?

5

Teacher 7?

??

Teacher 8?

About 7??

OK, um, my next question, uh, you can just, one at a time, just answer. I wanted to get those particulars but, have you ever taken, anyone here, have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level and when? How recently?

I'm currently a master student in the special education department at Kean, concentration in learning disabilities.

OK.

??

How recently?

For the past it's taken me 5 years to get my master's so, I would say within those five years I've taken basic skills classes, learning disabilities classes and stuff.

OK, anyone else?
Bachelor's level 90-97.

Ok, uh, describe any on the job training, in-service or professional development experiences that help you to facilitate the needs of special needs students. When I say special needs, I know some haven't been classified so we can, you can, um, you can distinguish that or just lump it all together, um, so describe any kind of inservice training or professional development that you've had to help you, as a regular ed teacher.

Well, last year didn't we have that PLM training as a part of our...

...PAF training...

...we did it as part of our lunch/inservice...

...you could pick some and...

...oh, ok...

...I know first grade we all went to PAF training and that's the traditional one of Orton Gillingham...

Oh, Orton Gillingham...

ok, academic failures and lots of writing, handwriting...

...and training's ?? . Just working with the resource room teachers and uh, staff members banging my head at lunch, trying to get ideas from other people and that type of thing. That's where it's been.

This is the kind, this is the kind of like, nitty-gritty stuff, the head-banging things, I want to hear, you know, cuz you know um, I'm leading to something you know, and I don't have an answer, it's just you know certain questions that I want answers to, but um, any other training?

I, I've, I'm new to the district this year. I took, um, a class, a professional development course specifically designed for special needs kids. I took a brain research course, too, that I think is applicable in multiple learning type stuff. The district I came from had a lot of special ed and special needs courses as well that I took there.

And we also had some after-school, at faculty meetings, that, that one video that's very powerful, that I can't think of the name of it...??...We've all seen that and talked about it, but...

The Child Study Team has also given professional development courses on administering tests uh during classification, what they administer to the children, sort of taken us through how they administer the tests.
We have a lot of contact with them.

Oh, actually, that’s where...you can sign up and have someone contact you from the Child Study, within what? 2 days?

But even new teachers to the district are part of the new teacher institute and there is like a little session on um, the brain and then there was also one from the Child Study Team member who told us about ?? so....

I see ...

Um, how did that help you? How have any of these experiences helped you? Or did they help you, with your special needs kids in the classes?

I think more for the resource room kids that I think tends to make up the majority of, of who we have contact with. Um, it just makes you understand better, because sometimes it is real difficult to remember that they can’t do this because of their disability and sometimes it doesn’t seem to be directly related to the disability um, but um, it’s just, it makes you more apathetic. Because unless you have one yourself, you know any time you have something yourself, you can relate more to it. So unless you’ve grown up with a learning disability, you really can’t see it until there is something that’s very visual and somewhat powerful like that movie.

It gives you tools, just more tools in the bag, a little more understanding and how to deal with it in different ways to approach different kids.

And, um, I have a son with a learning disability. He’s 27 now, but so I’ve been at both ends, you know, because I was at the receiving end when, you know, people just, you can’t just say “work harder” to a child that can’t do it. That, that means nothing. So, you know, I’ve been a big advocate for you know understanding what the learning disabilities are.

Uh-huh, OK. What about when he was like 7? Did, you didn’t have the same kinds of things available?

No, and he went through the school system, and this is his school.

Oooh, interesting, interesting.

And what happened for me is I eventually took him out of the public school and put him in private school, because I felt that I needed to help him where he was. And he went to college. He graduated and works on Wall Street, so.... He has a severe learning disability.
Mm,hmm. So the programs that you have taken part here, with your knowledge, have, have you, have they helped you?

Yes, but I have um, for me, I feel like I have a better understanding of the kids that are in the class cuz I know that they feel stupid. Because that's how even today, he'll tell you that he always used to feel stupid. And not, it was, it's hard to explain to ....

No, no, no...it's just that your brain doesn't work exactly the way everybody else's does...

Yeah, you know, I mean, they just, they just can't get rid of that.

Anyone else? On, ah, in-service or staff-development? OK....

I think, actually, Mary touched on it, you don't even think about it cuz we're so used to having the Team step in. We go to them all the time and they'll give us handouts or they'll just talk to us. I think probably they're the most valuable resource.

And the other staff members....

Right, that's true...

Like I talk to the third grade teachers, because I teach fourth grade, about some successes they might have had on an individual, case-by-case basis. And, uh, you know, try to go from there. That's, that's one of my biggest resources. I can't say, I can't say that training classes that I've had, because I haven't had a lot.

Well because every kid's different so until you have that child and you find out what works best for them, I mean, the theory behind what you're supposed to be doing is great, but it's really the practicalities of it, of each different child. And also I have to say that I've had a number of parents who, who are very in-tune with their children, who come to me when I have their child and give me a lot of good advice. ...and it's usually very helpful. No, it is very helpful.

The next question, kinda it goes along with this about do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate the needs of say, you know, because of inclusion, a blind child, a deaf child, learning disabled, emotionally challenged. You know, this about this, along with the staff development question in-service. There are many different special needs, and uh, do you feel sufficiently trained?

I don't feel sufficiently trained, but I feel like I would have people to go to if I was in that situation. I would feel some competence in knowing that I would be backed up at times with places to go, but I don't necessary feel like I have the training for every different situation that might come up.

Think of your buddy a couple of years ago...
Right, I had a Down's Syndrome child and I mean, I knew nothing, and just learned as I went. And it was a very positive experience but I felt that you know I just learned as I went and asked questions all along the way.

Although until about what, 3 or 4 years ago, we had a self-contained class where um, where you know the problems were more severe and we had the kids, especially I think in the primary grades, we had those kids in our classrooms a lot. And we had absolutely no training and, um, not a lot of help quite frankly.

You mean just being mainstreamed?

For lunch, well for science, for specials...

But also for science I had one, I had a child for math one time, he was my 28th student, and that was not a good situation. We were given no help in having that many kids.

I had trouble with, not trouble but I just felt like I was not helping him very much, the one, actually two little guys that came in for science.

Right, like they were just kind of there and it was more social...

It was, and that's what it was unfortunately.

They weren't really there for the academics as much as they were for the social. Still felt very inadequate.

Yeah, and had I known what I was doing...

And I feel like the supports need to be in place before ?? special needs, I mean, severe. I had cerebral, I had a child with cerebral palsy in my class and I felt like he was just put in my classroom with an aide and it was my second year of teaching. So I had to go and take a class and I was supposed to set up the classroom and he was unable to walk. He did not write. We did not have a computer with an enlarged mouse so I thought the supports weren't there, whereas now if I were going to have a child with that severe of a disability, I would make sure that all those supports were in place before. Like, I knew who I was going to go to.

How, this isn't one of my questions, I'm just interested, how far ahead do they inform you that you would receive a child like this. Would it be the first day of school? Or you're informed in the summer?

No, I, I teach kindergarten so I had to meet with his preschool teacher, um, the prior, the year before in June. So I knew all summer. But the aide was not assigned until the end of the summer, so I didn't meet with him until the first day of school.
OK. Anyone else with anything similar? Um, I hear now, that I hear that you, several of you mentioned that you’ve received, you receive, um, a lot of support from the Team. How about do you feel that you receive the necessary support from administrative staff? You mention the teaching, the teaching staff, how ‘bout administration? And also, like, support from them and um, how about enough planning time, for special needs, to prepare for....

I think there’s definitely NOT enough planning time.

There’s never enough planning time.

Well, there’s. The resource teachers...

not at all....

If you’re having a special needs child that you know is receiving some support from the resource room, I think there should be common planning time with the resource teachers, and there’s none of that.

Yeah, as it is, they just show up in your classroom in the middle of a, whatever lesson.

Do you have a minute? Yeah. Ok, this is the only chance I have to speak with you. I will take this minute and, “hang on, do what you’re doing, be right there,” and you go and, like, try to figure out what you’re doing and then you go back and forth with notes, like I have a lot of my kids who go down, come back up “I’m not sure what you want to do” they go back down. It’s...if you had a common planning time it would be very ... 

Or the resource room teacher will show up for in-class support and she’ll be like, “Oh, well, what are we doing today?” Because you weren’t able to meet so how were you able to plan and accommodate for what you’re coming in to assist with?

It’s just because of scheduling like, that we have no common planning time like amongst our, you know, team ....

Grade level...

The grade level.

But I think that’s probably an issue everywhere. I mean, with, you figure you have a lot of, a lot of children that are classified and they need to schedule that time. Then you have “now we have gym, now we have Spanish, ahh, we have music, we have art, we.. you know, you don’t have Spanish...”

No, I know...still do though a couple of days...”
But I mean to try to coordinate with four sections of most grade levels, four or five, this, I mean, I think, that uh, our administrator does....

Right, it's nobody's fault...

...the best that he can and he's very supportive of what you need but there's, you know, I mean, how many hands do you have?

And it's even something as simple as the resource room, well, I don't have any this year, but down at the other end of the building, and I'm down at this end, and the walk is.....

...10 minute walk

and, and,....

...For kids who get distracted easily

..it could take over 25!

Well, I wasn't talking about them, I was talking about me. I can't walk down the hall and you know, by the time I get down there, she's not there for me to talk to, I've made my trip of the day. Like, you know, it's really hard.....I do get distracted on the way.

Number 3, any comments?

I think what has an impact on it as well is whether you're the only one with in-class support or, or just supplemental, or, or pull-out replacement. Um, here, this year, and I'm new to the district this year, I have just kids that go out to the resource room. Um, we'll find the time, often at lunchtime or whatever, but yeah, never a common planning period to address any special needs or send the kids down with work that they need to do. The district I came from I had both in-class support and resource room and yeah, I would agree, that most often, not to anybody's fault, but just, I guess, the lack of available planning time, that was the common complaint that here you see this person in your room, "what's up today?" and you know, you teach the lesson, you try to you know address everybody's learning styles, and talk to the other teacher who's there to assist you in the lesson with the kids. I agree.

Anyone else on, on this? I heard somebody, a couple of you mentioned about um, assistance from other teachers, so has that been a help? To get support from, like, like, OK, if you have a child, like you say, what are you, fourth grade teacher did you say, so the third grade teacher...

Second....

Ok, whoever dealt with those children as they were...
But, I mean, that is one of my biggest helps, and I just ... but we have, we have, a ... staff

And when do you get to do that, though?

Lunchtime, in the hallway, in the coffee room, when I run into you in the hallway and you’re taking your class to gym and I’m taking, I mean, you know... you do what you can. You shove it anyway....

Um, alright, now. You don’t have to do this, but um, close your eyes, and you don’t have to, but um, this was one, this was on of my interactive questions. Close your eyes and when you hear the term inclusion, like what comes to your mind? Describe the attributes that make it successful or unsuccessful. Somebody?


Elaborate. Elaborate then.

Like for the most part, now, we don’t have any kids who come from somewhere else who are mainstreamed into our classrooms. We have our own kids basically and resource room kids. We don’t have any ...

Yeah, that’s true.

But I think, in the building this year anyway, we don’t have any...

Special ed....

Well, we have special ed but they’re,...

...yeah, but not the self-contained...

...but they wouldn’t be called inclusion...

inclusion meaning there’s no resource room, there’s no speech, there’s no occupational therapy...

...and we don’t really have to... the only I think inclusion we would say is if we have in-class support I suppose that...

yeah, that is ....

But that’s not....

The only time....

By definition...
When we used to have a NI class here and they were in our classrooms a lot, that inclusion, for me, was very, always very frustrating.

But even that’s mainstreaming, not inclusion.

Yeah, yeah, that’s true…

Believe me, the teacher was never there.

I mean you could have a kid on a gurney you know...yeah...

We have, and really, I have to say when the NI class was here, and we had them come into our classrooms for different things, I mean, you’re right, that’s mainstreaming, not inclusion. We, we really have mostly a pull-out program.

So, so what would you um, how would you describe um, this to be successful or unsuccessful?

The student, ?? student focused when the student feels comfortable to participate and advance answers that, that, he feels comfortable making. In other words, not, not clammed up, but um, offering, offering the student that chance and him taking, or her taking advantage of that chance to participate, even when they may not feel 100% right, that they’re part of the class.

Yeah.

Anyone else? Can you add on to that or offer something, something different, that um, even unsuccessful?

I think, it’s sometimes it’s a day by day, like almost an hour by hour thing, I just need to keep reminding myself when I find myself...

She’s had a tough day today...

Yeah, I had a particularly difficult day today, and I was so, I was, I reached such a frustration level, that I mean, part of me was almost like you know, I can’t do this, I need help, like you know, this is ridiculous that I have to try to do this when, I mean like, I was very angry, I was like a psycho today.

Well, were these kids....

And yeah, and I don’t have the training. But I mean, like I took this boy today where I was almost in tears and I was like OK. It was a math lesson, and uh, granted I’m
hormonal which cannot discuss. Um, but I, I almost, I got to the point where I was like, almost like mad, that I had to teach this way. And I was just like “uuuughh!”

Like what?

I have 19 kids who are so “yeah, yeah, yeah,” the lesson’s going, and then I have to stop because, you know, like, you know I just got, and I was just like, I got, I started to like freak, and then I was like just kinda calming down myself, and OK, hey, you can’t, it’s nobody’s fault, like see what you can do. So I kinda regrouped at lunchtime, and after lunch I went back and I had some of the class working on something and then I took a group of 2 to a little private area and we went over it again together and everything was fine. But, you know, that was after like going out to my car, taking a nice drive, coming back and I was windblown and I was like “OK.” I have an idea, I’m just going to take a small group, and that was actually successful, but I was like, I was really...you saw me when I got back from lunch, I was so frustrated. And I haven’t been trained.

Right. Right, that’s what’s happening. They’re putting special needs students in the classrooms with regular ed teachers that haven’t had specific training. At all, or any.

I mean, because I’ve been a teacher for a long time and I have my master’s so there’s really no reason for me to go back unless I would have a special needs kid who would...you know, it’s not required, and it’s difficult to find the time to do this.

Nice little segue into my question number seven....Do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training?

I can say without university training, but I think it needs to be, some training, and it has to be in a timely manner. Like, you can’t have taken it 12 years ago and expect for it to be current.

Yeah, right, it needs to be very current.

Yeah, I don’t know that you need to necessarily take, cuz we have good professional development courses, and again then I think you’re relying on your colleagues or, or maybe if you go out to a workshop or whatever it might be over the summer, but um, it needs to be current and it needs to be, I think if you could be taking it either right before you have a concerned student or at the same time, so it’s really what you’re working with now, as opposed to what might come down the pipe. I’m just one of those hands-on people that unless I’m experiencing it right at that moment, you can give me all the theory you want but I’m, it’s not really going to sink in.

That’s true. It has to be a combination. I mean, you could have all the textbook knowledge in the world, but if you don’t apply it, it’s pointless. I mean, you need to....

It’s like student teaching.
...be able to apply it. I mean, they say that when you graduate college with a teaching degree, I mean, yes, you know all these things, you know all these theories, but 90% of what you actually know how to do is what you learned hands-on on the job so, I think it has to be a combination.

Anyone else, can you piggyback on to that? How about you, number 6?

Yeah, I agree, with number 8. It's great to have the background and the training but again, you know, you just learn so much when you're in this situation and in some situations I don't know how much you can be prepared for it by textbook or by training... by doing and using your resources.

I, I've been in a couple of different courses. The type of training that you get is important, too. I've been in professional development courses where they'll talk until they're blue in the fact about "here's what an NI looks like" or "this is neurological.." You know what, it doesn't matter what they are. What I need are tools to use, that I can take into the classroom tomorrow, strategies to use, what will work. Not a discussion of what this disability looks like versus this but here's what you do with it...

...here's some ideas to help them.... Yeah.

Yeah.

IEP has, or if they have certain disabilities... running around was tested for auditory processing and I got very poor response from the doctor with you know, this, this, this and this. But you know what's funny is, I was doing that.

That makes you feel good though.

Yeah, like I was like "whoo-hoo!" I was being vigil. I was doing this, but I mean, I don't know.

I need a higher number.

310

Yeah, add them together.

That's 103 now.

Well, I, I hear you saying, you know, hands on, on the job experience. What would you feel about for new teachers, prospective teachers, with there's more and more inclusion going to take place. How would you feel about dual certification for prospective teachers?

I think that's absolutely...
We were talking before, yeah, I was just thinking you know that you really, I don’t, I don’t think I’ve ever taken special education classes, and I, but I got my master’s like, I don’t know 15 years ago, so it’s been a long time since I’ve actually taken a university course. But I think that you either should have, I think everybody should have to teach kindergarten because you start out so basic but maybe along those lines, maybe a special ed kindergarten.

Number 7, what, how about...

I absolutely agree, it should be dual certified. I have a sociology degree, and what am I ever going to do with that?

Dual certified before you get a teaching job?

Dual certified before. I think you should add an elementary level, if you’re going for elementary education, you should not have the option to pick psychology, sociology, journalism. You should have to have elementary ed and special education. Because there are so many children in the classroom that... and it’s the law. We have to do it; we have no choice. So we should definitely be doing it.

Anyone else have any thoughts on that?

I think in theory, that’s a wonderful idea. Um, I think, had I ended up the way I was I still would not be teaching because it would have taken me another five years which it took me to get my first certification, because I was working full time.

You didn’t do undergrad?

No.

You did alternate route?
No, I got a master’s in elementary ed. I have an undergrad from years before. So, should I have taken 10 years of schooling to become a teacher or should I have gotten my certification and should my district have sponsored programs to train me in special ed? That I think is a better alternative. Well, you know, I understand, I think it’s important that the teachers get the training but so I’m going to go and I’m already 20 grand in debt from my master’s that I took for regular so I should be 40 grand in debt...

But I’m not saying...

...to get a job that pays....

...I’m saying as the undergraduate....

Yeah, dual, dual, think dual....dual certified.
Then what do you do with the people, like in my situation.

I think it should definitely be offered for you, but it's not going to be required. I think coming right out of college, as an...

Is to have an education degree means both.

It should have both, yeah.

A lot of colleges, don’t you have to do one of your student teaching or some kind of a placement at yeah...

I never had to...I chose to, a special ed setting in Trenton, but I never ...

...but they could probably do a similar thing in my circumstance where if you’re getting a master’s in education you’re getting a master’s in both, you’re required to take you know the 100 level whatevers, some of them should be in special ed as part of the basic degree.

Yeah, alright, exactly.

I’d agree with that.

I think, I think another side of the coin that you have to consider as well, and I personally wish that I had more undergraduate training or master’s level training in special education, but I think by picking candidates that offer that psychology degree or business, or whatever, that you’re bringing another dimension into the classroom as well that could be helpful. But I think I see the benefits of both points because yes, that special ed training would be great, um and also however, you know what? So much is heaped upon a teaching candidate starting out that perhaps the districts, too, need to look at their function and their role in providing and supporting their teachers that it shouldn’t just be, “hey, you want to work here? Go back and get a dual certification.” Yeah. It’s a lot of merits, but I ....

Well, that’s why I mention for prospective teachers. Now, not that particular question was for the what starry-eyed wanting to, teaching is what they want to do, and uh, how do you feel about this?

I was trying to think back because I mean, I agree with what you said, number 3, and what number 7 said, um, I do think they’re both very important points. I think you should have some sort of special ed training from a university level, but at the same time, I really believe you should also have that choice of what subject area you want to pursue. I mean, I chose English when I was in college as my second, and I mean, I love literature so maybe one day I would want to teach in a high school level and that would be my forte. But, at the same time, you know, I agree with what she said, that you know, it is...
But I was trying to think back, I, I, was under the impression when I was at Kean that once you had your undergraduate degree, you could go back and, in 15 credits, which is just simply 5 classes, you would then be certified in special ed. That wouldn't be a master's, of course, it would just be....

...but that would count dual...

and after the 15 credits, you know, that's nothing....5 classes is....so, that's what I just got. I just received my teacher of the handicapped by 18 credits, and I'm applying that towards my master's, so I'm just going on. But it was just 18 credits....

...so it's absolutely do-able.

That could be doable, because then your district is paying for your classes, or paying most of it at least 80% of it. I mean that is, that is definitely do-able. And then you still have a choice, then, you know...then... just continue it.

Yeah, it's just a certification

You could even, if you could do it, you could extend a semester on to your, you know, take 4 ½ or 5 years, and take those 5 classes and be done with it before you even get out there in the field.

Just for information sake, if you work in a private school for special needs kids, you could have any degree, in any subject and just teach with just getting the teacher of the handicapped....you don't need a teaching degree, you just, just the TOH. Just a little FYI. So now, my segue goes, would you, anyone here, well, this is kinda what, piggyback on what #8 said, um, question 9 for 8, would you elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionsary practices more successful. So, this kinda, this is kinda leads into what you were just saying. Would anyone here elect to do that?

If I didn’t have two kids...

To go back to school....

Yeah, to elect to become certified?

Who's paying for it? Because right now I have, I have a brand-new Saturn, I don’t have the money to do it.

OK, well that’s what I want to hear, these are the things I want to hear.

If the district paid, definitely.

Well, they do..
Cuz I'd be interested in doing it, but ....

Down the road it would make life so much more easy. Especially if you're working with the real young grades where you're responsible pretty much for identifying you know, identifying and working with. It's always tricky.

Number 4, you're pondering.

Well, yeah, only because I've signed up to with the Orton Gillingham to be certified Orton-Gillingham this summer. And I'm waiting to see if the district is going to pay me because it's, it's $1,000..., $1,100 or something like that.

Oh, that's the 3 days....

No, it's a whole week...

Is it up in Connecticut? Are you going to travel?

I have to travel, but I can't remember where it is.

Because like I know the district doesn't pay for like overnights.

No, it would be someplace I could travel everyday. And I'm anxious to see if they do because I have had a lot of children that are not going to learn to read the way the rest of the class is going to learn to read. So I'm hoping that that might be something.

But even if they don't, you would still do it? You're signed up, so you'll still do it?

I'm signed up to do it. Yes. Yes.

So that would be a perk if they do?

I had taken a quick, well, no, I'm not going, I'm not going to spend $1,100 if they don't do it, if they don't pay me.

Well yes, but I want to make sure they're going to reimburse me.

Right, right. Ok, OK.

But I had taken a short Orton-Gillingham class years ago, when my son was learning disabled, because I needed to know the strategies for him. So, um, which you know, were different because he was a little bit older cuz I wanted to learn how to handle certain things that he wasn't ever going to be able to do. And then how would I, you know, make the strategies for him? But um, this is the first year, because I teach first, and Number 7 teaches kindergarten, you know some of the kids aren't coming in with the same skills that we're used to. Some of them are missing a lot of little links. While it's
hard when you’ve got a class of 21 and you have some that are reading on a 3rd grade level and some that can’t identify their letters, and I’m responsible to teach them all to read. So I need to have another path that I can use with some of the children. So that’s what I’m looking for.

Number 3? Anything?

I, I just am occupying my thoughts listening to number 4 as I teach at the fifth grade level and I’m sort of inwardly thankful that by the time the kids are at my doorstep, most of the issues, or a lot of the issues are identified and have been worked on for a number of years. I’m just thinking, “man am I fortunate!”

That’s true.

I feel the same way.

By fourth grade, either, like the parents have like spoken with like two, three, four years and like something’s been identified and there are already measures in place.

Thanks, guys.

No, it’s nice to...

Even first grade... Even by the time they come to second, they’re...

Well, nobody, no parent wants to hear that their child is not going to be like everybody else.

And the expectations are, are so much greater, so much earlier that what perhaps I was identifying in second grade years ago because they need to be able to pretty much, they have to read by the time they come to second grade. They have to, they have to be reading. That’s, that’s just the way it is. Whereas before it...

Surprise, surprise!

That’s what I understand, but anyway, they do have the burden on their shoulders.

Ok, um, on this piece of paper that I handed out to you, and this is, this is, just so you have the topic of this, of my dissertation in front of you, I’d like for you to jot down uh, one phrase or a sentence that describes your position on teachers preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools. That’s a mouthful, that’s why it’s here. Take a little time to think....sentence or phrase....

Can I have another sheet of paper please?? It’s hard to believe I’m the principal, isn’t it?

Strike that from the record, please.
We’ll notate that that is number 3.

Could you write any more, number 5??

Very prolix, I just love to say that word. I didn’t stop the tape because I know I’d hit the wrong one to get it going again, so I’m just letting it roll.

(comments about leaving the sandwich behind for them the following day if there’s a refrigerator in the faculty room)

Is there anything else we should have talked about with this topic? We went off a little bit which is good, I mean I like to go off on the tangents. But, ya know, you mention something, but is there something else we should have talked about, that I should have included in this question route?

Does anybody think that the numbers of special needs kids is growing?

Oh, yeah, ....

Yeah, it was funny because...

..exponentially....

how many, yeah, how many years have I had special needs. Like in the first number of years I was here, I didn’t, I didn’t have any.

I mean, I don’t think...before anyone had the tools to identify you know what help each child needs. Now that we’re starting to understand how the brain works and everything it’s just “choo,choo,choo”

Well, I think that’s part of it, but I think part of it is just that the expectations. If you think about what we used to teach in first grade and what we expected them to do and what we’re expecting them to do now, and just, a lot of them just aren’t developmentally ready for it but...

It just seems that they’re going from one in a classroom to five or six in your classroom and it just changes the whole dynamic. It’s, I don’t know, it’s just...

Are they classified, or they haven’t been referred? Can you, can you elaborate on that?

By fourth grade, they’d better be...

By fourth grade, they’ve been referred.
I have a lot of students in fifth grade that it's the first time that they're going to be tested over the summer and they're in fifth grade.

Where they here for the rest of the grades though?

One was, the other one was in this district, but in a different school.

Well, I think there are an amount of kids who are classified in third or fourth grade because that's when the independent learning and content start. And it's much more difficult. A lot of our kids who are classified are supplemental, which means they just need a lot of organizational

Right, replacement....in a room of 22.

But I have...

My class isn't that tough, considering that it's May and I had my first meltdown....

...if they bring all in the district, they'd say their goal is to bring children back to the district for the money.

...right, right, right...

so we're bringing more special needs children back into the district, so obviously we're going to have these children included in our classroom and it's going to grow, but you were talking about numbers, right, and growing, and it's going to grow even more. It's going to get larger but, they're not, you're not, I mean, you'll know because of the IEP, but they won't ever be removed from your...

Right, I know....

So it's going to get even...

Will that be in class support then?

Inclusion. They will be in class for the entire day and, I mean, I observed in a district that said they were inclusive and they were on their way to being inclusive. They were still pulled for math and speech and OT, but full inclusion means that those students are going to be in and not pulled. All of those services will be delivered in the room.

But someone will deliver them other than the classroom teacher?

Oh yeah, other than the classroom teacher. And that's another thing. All the, they're going to have to hire more resource room teachers, more speech therapists, more occupational therapists, which is more money. So they're bringing them back into the
district but also going to have to hire more help because they can’t just let you struggle. They have to.

Well, they could!

One on one aides... so that’s what they’re going to have to do also.

I, I just, you know I just always thought those kids, cuz when you read about the place... I was just wondering if they were older...

And then they’re placed out of district?

Yeah.

No, they’re not!

They’re, he’s seventh grade now.

Right, there are at least 4 kindergarten???? who are out of district, right?

And a fifth grade?

Right, because generally that’s the case ???

The types of students who are placed out of district.....

And that isn’t what??

Identified until later.

OK.

That was just, we we we don’t know the kids as much as we know the case. Like I mean, you can read about where they’re being... I guess, you can read about where they’re sent and that’s where I've gotten my information. Nothing about personalities, I just look at the schools they’re sent to and think oh, those are older kids.

But even the NI children?

Well since I’ve dealt with that before....

In the classroom.

I mean, what they should be. That’s the ??? should be.
Number 6, anything to add to that? I threw her off by her number... forget your number, six??

I'm just thinking, they're going to talk about that, they're going to be in the classroom and they want us to differentiate the curriculum, well, there's really no choice....

Exactly.

Different kids mean different things.

Gifted and talented's coming into the classroom too, honey, so, you've just got those levels...

...the growing numbers, too, like already I feel like my kids that go to replacement or supplemental they're going with other kids from other classes and I don't know how much they're benefiting because my kids might be doing one thing and the other kids might be doing another thing and how does this one teacher in a half an hour helping both of, all of these kids, that are doing all different things. And even kids from my own class that are going for supplemental, one might need extra help on the math when the other needs some science help and how is she helping both of them fully with two totally different things? And then if you add more kids to it, they definitely will have to hire... special ed.

Anything else on that? No. OK. There's, so nothing else to add to this, um, we'll wrap it up then? Alright.

(END OF TAPE)
Group 3

Number 3, on the machine.

Ok, um, number 1, how many years have you been teaching?

15.

15. Um, number 2.

23.

Number 4?

8.

And you are special ed resource room?

Correct.

Have you always taught in that capacity?

No, actually, I taught 5 years in a self-contained, class that was resource

OK, number 5?

2 years.

2 years. Number 6?

4 years.

Number 7?

31.

31? Number 1—how many years have you taught special needs students within a regular classroom? Special needs can be kids that are uh, have been referred, they’re classified, or just they have special needs that maybe need to be referred. Ballpark it.

Maybe 5.

5.

I think every year.
Every year? Of your career?

And number 4, well, that’s what you do. Uh, number 5?

Both years.

Both years. Number 6?

4 years.

4 years? And number 7?

Um, when I first started we didn’t have it. So I don’t know what you could say, but probably since I’ve been in in this district, umm, 19 years.

Ok, ok. Ahh, number 1, how do you, well actually this is for anyone who wants to, I’m not going to go around again, but just, just answer however you want. Have you ever taken any special needs, ahh, special education courses at the university level? And how recently?...except number 4.

I’m actually dual certified, elementary and special education.

Oh! Well, that throws a chink in my chain....we’ll get to that, we’ll get to that! Oooh, that’s great! Anyone else?

I took one general special needs class at the university about 5 years ago now.

Ok.

It was a requirement of the university.

Um, without, I don’t know if I can name, well, it would be cut out of this, but, were these universities both, either one of you, in state?

No.

Oh, they were out of state, ok. Mmmm...anyone else? Any other special needs courses? OK. Are, is, is your certification, is your background your degree from...

In special ed...

From New Jersey?

Yes.
Ok, anyone, describe any on the job training, inservice or professional development experiences that have helped you to facilitate the needs of any special needs students.

Learn as you go.

Learn as you go?

Um, I’ve had a student come into my class with a, a very, uh, bad hearing disability and there was nothing to warn me about that, no classes, no conversations with anyone, she was in my class and, and, and I read up as much as I could and learned where to stand and how to stand and how to speak and what level, and, you know, the two of us found a way to communicate with each other, but nothing came to me because of that. Same thing happens, uh, when you have a student in your class that comes from another country or speaks another language, a lot of it is just learn as you go.

Hmm, ok. So, um, have you um, did you, how about any other inservice training or professional development for anything else?

No. I’ve had students over the course of the school year that are classified during the school year and then go out for reading or math to the resource room, and there is no training or how to schedule that, deal with that, plan for that. You know, alter your work, that kind of thing.

Uh huh...ok. Anything to add?

I do. My biggest resource has been the resource center teachers. I was very lucky last year to have Number 4. but I did work with a student in my class and um, I deferred almost every decision I made to her to get her opinion, to get her thoughts, she truly was a go-between for the parent and I, although the parent and I had a wonderful relationship, it was still easier for me to say how would you handle this, what should I do? She was invaluable to me, so I have to say, our resource center teacher.

I’ll second that motion. I’m also working with Number 4 this year. It’s true. They are excellent resources. I mean, I’ve had some IEP’s, especially my first year with a heavy special needs load in my classroom that I wasn’t sure what to expect after reading a lot of the IEP’s initially, all the resource center teachers helped out a lot. Also in our, we have a new teacher institute training, where it’s for teachers for the first 2 years that you’re working in this district, and I believe right before our first year, in our first new teacher institute training, they had an overview of a lot of the different disabilities that we might be coming into contact with in the classroom. They basically just outlined them for us and let us know what to look for, symptoms and ...

Ok. Did you find that helpful? I mean, that was just an outline, but, that was...

It was helpful. I mean, I’d had some training before, so it was kind of a review for me but it was ok.
Ok. Anyone else? Any…?

I took a course in ahh, a professional development course in town. Tony Dernaso gave it on ADHD. It was excellent, a couple of years ago. Um, and I have, I don't get a lot of resource kids in my classroom. I think I push too hard and I don't get them. Um, but I did get the NI kids.

Can I ask you what you mean by that, you push too hard so you don't get them.

She doesn't want them. She makes is known that she doesn't want them so we don't give them to her.

Oh.

I haven't gotten them the past couple of years. And I don't know how that actually happens. I used to get all the NI children in my class.

Mmmmm...

And I never got any of the resource room children. Um...

But you get the NI...

But I do get the NI kids.

But those are different.

Yeah.

That's a completely different range, because resource center children are working in the mainstream classes. So they're getting the curriculum that is, that is the mainstream curriculum, as opposed to the NI students that are going as more of an experience in a regular mainstream class. They're, they're goal is to just be a part of the social aspects and to gain whatever knowledge they have...

They do the projects, they do the homework, they give...

...severely modified, and um, they're not graded. So there's a lot less pressure. Also on the classroom teacher. ?? to not have to. Not as great.

I do grade.

I graded last year's....

But not this year's as much..
It’s really all on an individual basis. You really can’t say, you know, all the NI kids are being graded and maybe they’re not all graded. But for the most part, um, the NI students are the responsibility of the homeroom teacher. And they work with them a lot.

The resource room teachers, um, the resource kids are really the responsibility, the base, which is the regular ed teacher.

Mmhmm.

Besides professional development, which the district does offer, it’s at, you know, the teachers discretion to take. It’s basically like in one second you’re just thrown into the fire with … I remember my first year. I had one child who was severely, you know, classified and things like that, and it was, I just relied on the resource room teachers for help and trying to figure out, trying to figure out what an IEP is, and well, you’re just thrown in. And if you’ve had no special ed basis, it’s very daunting to have that… you have to, kind of, save yourself.

Oh. Yeah.

By the time you get a firm grasp on the students needs, the year is more than half over.

That’s true. That really is true.

You kind of figure it out.

Yeah, as the year progresses… um, this is off my question root, but it’s like when you don’t have the training and you get in a situation like this, like, what is your first impression? Never having seen an IEP before and uh, is it frightening? Is it, yeah?

The IEP’s are very intense, and there’s a lot of parts to it…

Uh huh.

…and not having worked with one before, I remember the first time seeing it was overwhelming because of all the things you had to accommodate for the child and all the goals that are set by the IEP, and not understanding, you know, how to work with ?? is very…

But in a way, it makes it easier in the long run, because it’s laid out and you know exactly what direction you’re supposed to go.

The only thing I found is that when you have more than one resource center student, which I’ve had, um, it, it makes it tough to keep it all in your mind exactly what you have to do for each child. And, oftentimes, again, the resource teacher will say, “Don’t forget he needs more time, she needs to come down to take the test in the resource center.” And that was my fear, especially before I actually had, ah, these children was putting into my
memory all of the stuff that's in the IEP that I needed to know. There are things I don't need to worry about, but there are things I need to know, and that's tough when you have more than one and you have the academically gifted children and you have the average children or you have the immature children...it's a lot to handle.

Right. Hi, welcome. Hi. Nice to meet you. Thanks for joining us. Um, you know what, I didn't um, I don't want to lose train of thought but I didn't ask you, number 1, what grade you teach.

First grade.

First grade. And number 3? Or are you number 2? Number 2, excuse me.

I teach third grade.

Third grade. Number 5?

I teach 4th grade.

Fourth grade.

Fifth grade.

Fifth grade.

Fifth.

Fifth grade.

Fifth grade.

Fifth grade. Ok, thank you, I, I, I meant to ask you all that. Oh, I knew yours because you wrote that down when you signed the thing, thank you, yeah. OK, um, how many years have you been teaching?

Oh, about 35.

Ok, and uh, out of those years, how many, about how many years have you taught special needs kids within a regular classroom. Special needs, kids with special needs and/or classified kids.

Probably every year.

Every year?

and
...they were out, they're special needs. I taught the gifted program for 13 years.

Ok.

Well, they're special needs.

They are.

Um, have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level?

No.

No. Ok.

I've had blind children and deaf children.

Ohhh... can you elaborate?

Well, I was teaching fifth grade and uh, they just told me I was going to have a new student. This, that was, well, the second blind children... I have to tell you this, because we were giving New Jersey State testing at that time, and they just brought her in to me in the middle of the, my class was being tested. And she had never been in a classroom before. And she was quite like a wild animal. I mean, she had never ever experienced being in a classroom before, and my children are taking this timed test that she is throwing over desks and everything, and uh, it was quite an experience. She, you know, she cursed a lot, she had a lot, we had a lot of learning to do with her, but she, you know, as the year went on, things got better. And another time I had a boy, who, ah, the whole family, uh, the mother didn't realize it but she had many children, and then they all started going blind. And he was blind in fifth grade. Yeah. And I think they eventually all died.

Ohhh...

Yeah, that was....and then I had one who was deaf.

And, uhh, what kind of, what kind of help did you, what kind of courses to help you?

I just...didn't have any courses, no, I just, ah, I think at that time they had a special teacher who had translated our books into Braille. And that was, you know, every, every text book we had was translated into Braille. And I think for some reason, um, children were writing about disabilities or something the other day or talking about... and um, how could he play gym? And I remember, his name was Tommy, um, we played kickball, and I would have, he'd know where the ball was and I'd have someone hold his hand when they ran. And it, that's just common sense...
Uh huh....

...And then when we did other things, if we were doing something he couldn't do, I would stand next to him and tell him what was going on. But, you know, you just do that kind of, you know you wanted him to be included....

Yeah...

So you just did that.

Wonderful.

And they chose me for the deaf child because my voice was deeper. They said that uh, the sound of my voice was one that would be best for him. So that's why he was in my class.

Very interesting. Hmmm....any comments or questions regarding this? Ok. Um, then we were, right when you, when you came in, we were just on my question number 4, describe any on the job training, inservice or professional development experiences that you've received over the years that might have helped you to facilitate the needs of these children. Anything?

No. Majored in English....

Like, in school though, any professional development or inservice...

At that point, no. I hadn't had any.

And more recently?

I haven't yet...on special needs children. No.

When I was teaching the gifted, I did take, I went to many conferences, I had much training for teaching the gifted. But not for the, ah, blind and you know...

Help yourself to the sandwiches and soda.... Uh, alright, um, wow. We kind of rolled right into my next question, but I just want, I'm going to propose it to you and just see if there's anything else that might come to mind because, number 1 and number 8 already went into this. My next question was do you feel sufficiently trained to facilitate any type of special needs student—blind, deaf, learning disables, emotionally challenged....

Perhaps no....but I could certainly do it. Because faced with that situation, I would use all the resources in my building, the teachers that have more experience than I and have been through this before, I would start with them. I'd go to the resource team teachers, I'd go to the principals, so could I do it? Absolutely. Would I be scared out of my mind?
Yes. Would I be overwhelmed? Yes. Would I be worried that somehow I wouldn’t do enough or give enough? Yes, but I, I could do it.

Great. Can anyone elaborate, add to that?

I feel the same way that number 1 does.

I think I look at it as a challenge, I kind of like it. I just, I just feel, I mean, that’s, to me, this year I have probably the most difficult IEP that I’ll face in the next few years, and it turned out to be the most phenomenal student that I’ve ever come across in my entire life. So, it almost seems that the more demanding disability, the more of a challenge it is, the more ...and there are many resources out there, like Number 1 says, to go to and if you go to them you will succeed. Based on all of the teacher’s experience

Mnhmm.

Yeah, but sometimes that’s the hard part.... I had a little girl a couple of years ago that, who just couldn’t do it. We tried everything.

What was the classification?

It wound up being emotionally disturbed.

Oh, emotionally disturbed. Ok.

no. but you couldn’t, it’s almost like our hands were tied. And there were circumstances why that happened, but I mean, it got to the point where I got a phone call at night, had to be in school at 7:00 in the morning, they take every sharp object out of the classroom, um, and you know, she was dangerous. She was a danger to everybody in the building and everybody in the classroom and she went wild on us on a regular basis. Unfortunately one day for her the police had to take her away. You know, there are times that you don’t, no matter what you do, and God knows we tried, but.

Mnhmmm. Anyone else?

Nobody prepared you for that either. I don’t think, I, I mean I was frustrated and God knows you guys know how frustrated I was, but even the administration was very frustrated.

When I taught, we both taught at another elementary school previously, and they had educable classes there and trainable classes and they mainstreamed the educable ones. And we had them all the time. But we worked closely with the teacher. But they were...
they really, you know, and then the trainable ones, my class always went down and worked with them at lunchtime, so they had the experience of working with the autistic and all kinds of problems.

But we have in our class regular.

But now the shift is to bring those types of students out of district.

There’s...

Right...

Because we’re taking these kids, putting children into special schools so that they’re better serviced, so we’re not getting autistic, we’re not getting the blind or, or the um, the severely hearing impaired children that really need special attention, more specific. And even our emotional students, they’re classified, we do send them out of district so that...

For a while though, we, they weren’t, they wouldn’t call them...

They wouldn’t classify them.

And then they’d come into our regular classrooms...

...they were not classified as emotionally disturbed.

I had one that was brought into my class and the psychologist, we had a regular psychologist in the school system, and he told me that, um, to you know, not let this boy sit by the window because I was on the second floor. And that it would be, you know, a real...and the boy said to me, um “you don’t have to worry because, um, if I fly out the window, I’m going to take you with me because...” and he brought a broom to school. I mean, he was really emotionally disturbed, but I had to teach him all year. One day he brought a suitcase and he told everyone he had a bomb in it. Nowadays....a shoe salesman at lunchtime...used to sell shoes to teachers.

What kind of supports did you have to help you?

Well, you know, at that time, we didn’t have too much support. You know, the psychologist told me about this boy, he was living in, in a different school district but that’s what they would do. They would take him out of the school that they lived and put them into a different school. And he just told me told me that, you know, he’d be a real problem and to watch out and from thereon in it was my job. I wonder what became of him.

Do you feel that you’ve received the necessary support from the administrative staff. You’ve mentioned teaching staff, team support, so do you feel you’ve received uh, the
necessary support from the administration and also um, enough planning time? Those of you that have special needs kids...

Well, we don’t get any more planning time...

No, there’s no extra planning time. Nothing’s built into your schedule if you have a child with special needs to allow you to meet with the resource room teacher or with other teachers on your grade level. You don’t have any extra, extra time like that, no.

And as far as getting support from people, getting support from the staff and your fellow teachers, absolutely 100%. Um, as far as the administration goes, I myself over the past couple of years in talking with administration have seen a push towards taking more classes and more professional development that meets the gifted child as opposed to the child that has some type of disability. There’s a real big swing to aide the gifted and teach the gifted and how can you help her and how can you help them excel and what can you do more for them and there’s a big, there’s a lot of concentration on that as opposed to helping kids that are struggling in some way, shape or form.

You see, in the upper grades, I’ve seen it as just the opposite.

Do you?

Yeah.

In the lower grades, it’s....

...towards the child who has special needs rather than the gifted like that, in the regular classroom students.

That’s interesting. Maybe if they put that push in the early elementary years, we wouldn’t have ....

I think one of the most frustrating things is trying to get a child help when a child really needs it. Um, you know, I do, don’t you find that? I mean, this year I’ve got two in my class who should’ve been referred three...three years ago?

Yeah, it’s all, you know, it’s, to tell them they get to fifth grade and their problem is not even addressed, and that’s sad when that happens.

Are you not allowed to...?

As a middle or younger grade teacher, you present this to the parents first because you need their permission. Not necessarily first, but you present it to them, and oftentimes they don’t see things the way you see them, although you see this child in the classroom situation, they see them at home with an individual or one or two, and they don’t see what you’re seeing or are not willing to um, look into that at all.
Anyone else?

Yeah, sometimes it takes a long time to convince the parents that you believe there's a difficulty that needs to be addressed, and then once you do finally convince them, then there's a list of meetings and things that you have to go through before you can actually get this child help, so it is conceivable I can make my way through the year at first grade and not get somebody tested until the summer after their first year of school when I could've told you in September that this is what should be done but, there's nothing I could do about it. First I had to convince the parents, and first they had to feel confident and they had to trust me, and then we had to have all our meetings and fill out all our forms and, and, time passes before you know it.

More frustrating, I mean, that's true, you have to, you have to, do the follow up and whatever, but then, I've also had in my class this year a child who just, quite honestly, wasn't getting A's, and that wasn't good enough for the mother so they come in and they initiate testing and it has to be done within 30 days, and it's like, ok, this child we knew even before he was tested that nothing was going to come of it. But that, because the mother initiated it, boom, it got done within 30 days, and then the other ones...I know, but we should have said to the, why don't you just say to the

It's ridiculous. I mean, and the kids who really need help, nothing is happening, and then the one who, you knew darn well, it was like money down the toilet because there wasn't anything wrong with this child. I mean, that's what came up at the meeting. Your child is an average student.

On the mother's request?

On the mother's request, and ... Don't know what to do, whether they should do it or not. But, um, you know, I don't know. I mean, that was done immediately, and then the one that took us from September 1st until April, yeah April, to get the referral and the testing and everything done. It's frustrating.

But in other...focus on the, because we have to all of the resource room children, you know, our schedule has to be built around them.

Well that just started this year.

Yeah, but I mean, that's something new that's happening. That can be difficult in many ways, because we have to, in fifth grade we change classes for science and social studies and we have to first make sure that the resource children won't miss any of it. So a lot of focus is given to them now.

I would have to agree. In the upper grades, it is mostly the resource room. They, they do get more attention.
Yes.

And the sound field, something that helps us, I think, I've had the sound field system in my room now for five years for ADD children, but they're also for the emotionally disturbed.

Mmhm.

And I think that really helps the whole class.

I don't have one.

I had one one year, the year that I had the little girl who was deaf, and I loved it. I've asked for it every year since then and I've never gotten it again, and it's....

Well, you get the child that goes along with it.

That's right, you have to get the child...

What is it?

It's a microphone with speakers, so you do talk through the microphone and, and no matter where you are in the classroom it comes across...

There are four speakers in the classroom and one on each wall

...and so the sound surrounds you...

...you just have to remember to turn it off when you leave....

Ohhh...

It becomes habit after all these years.

Well, that's a new one for me.

But it really is very good for everyone in the class. You know, one school in town, I believe Jefferson, the PTA bought it for every teacher. But for us, I think it's still the children who have...

Yeah, they just connect the system...

It's a lot for auditory processing ??

Uh huh...excellent.
It really helps. I think. I would really like to see it in every class.

Anyone else?

I just feel, I mean, going back to your original question, there isn’t a number, a great deal of out?? Coming from the administration unless you seek it. I feel pretty comfortable that with our administration in this building that if you need that support, you can go and get it, especially with our principal’s background.

Oh good.

So there is a comfort, but it’s not readily available at your fingers. If you go and look for it…

Oh good, mmhmm. Anyone else on…

I’ve, I’ve had a lot of support with I have one student this year who is definitely ADD and the parents refuse to, they took him off medication before he was put in my class he had been quite a problem, and I’ve had a lot of support from our administration.

Oh good. Good. Um, you don’t have to close your eyes, but I just, close your eyes if you want and when you hear the term inclusion, what comes to mind. Successful or unsuccessful attributes. Just when you hear the term…and you can just, just say things out, bombard, comments…what comes to your mind?

It can be wonderful, and I think for it to be wonderful, I think you have to have two teachers that work well together…because otherwise I think it can be very difficult. If two people are trying to, to lead the ship, so to speak, but I, I’ve had it both ways, and although Number 4 was not in for long periods of time last year, the time that she was in with me, I have to say, even though it wasn’t in the IEP, she checked in with me every single day, and then the two days that she was in there, it was wonderful. Because she not only dealt with this one child, but she helped anybody that needed help, um, and it really was, it was an absolute pleasure, and one that I miss this year. It just didn’t work out that it’s in the schedule but I miss it, terribly.

Anyone else?

I think of a double-edged sword as far as cooperative learning goes. I’ve had experiences with inclusion of our students who were really uplifting to children with special needs, and I’ve also had experiences where children were degrading to children with special needs. I think it really depends on the group, the children, their knowledge of the situation.

What was that, number 6?
The tolerance level, it just depends.

And I think it’s easier like in my class, being a fifth grade teacher, I think it’s easier when the child is classified right from the very beginning. Because if he comes ?, you know, right now I’m having a lot of opposition from…because, you know, it’s new and they don’t, they, they don’t want anybody else to know, although I do have another teacher that comes into the classroom and teaches math with him, and that’s acceptable, but I think you know, especially when you get to the older children, if it’s, if it the norm from the first day of school, that’s fine. But if something gets changed, then it’ hard.

Very, very hard.

Yeah, the special ed teacher is not meant to be an aide in the classroom, that happens at times, especially if you have a teacher who’s very rigid in her ways and really not accepting of the different learning styles….

That’s why I think they need to have, kind of, the same style of teaching…

…yeah, they do. They have to…

…sort of a mesh…

…two opposite styles just don’t go, you just don’t get along…

..you don’t, and unfortunately, and also, you know, the in class special ed teacher does have to work with everyone in the classroom, not to single that person out because the whole purpose of inclusion is not to, to pull them out, to make them feel as if they’re part of the class like everyone else. So if the special ed teacher is not going to work with everyone, then you’re really not doing what it’s designed to do, and the child also has to be put in a class where they are able to excel, and not two or three grades below, expecting that the in-class teacher is just going to miraculously ?? you know, teach them this wonderful way of teaching. So, they really need to be a good fit, not only for the two teachers but for the child and the academic subject.

Mmhmm..

I think that it brings out the best in the rest of the class. Anytime there’s any special needs child, they, you know, they, they want to help the, that’s what I’ve always found. Just makes them better, and better as a group, because of that.

Mmhmm, anyone else?

Ahh, in first grade, I haven’t had the experience of having a special ed teacher come into the class and teach with me. Umm, I’ve had the resource room teachers, um, not resource room, the basic skills teachers come in, and do lessons with me. And, uh, when they’re there, I mean, the children are thrilled to have someone else in the room, and I’m thrilled
to have someone else in the room. I enjoy that, I enjoy having somebody right there to bounce ideas off of and if I'm trying to get a point across and I can see some people are hesitating, it's not clicking and I can look and that person can jump right in and maybe say it a different way and all of a sudden, you know, the light bulb goes off, you know you can constantly bounce things back and forth with each other. I, I enjoy that very much.

Um, let's see, do you feel that now, um, number 5, we're getting into your area here, do you feel that successful inclusion, please everyone give me something on this one, do you feel that successful inclusion can occur without university training?

Absolutely.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yes.

I've never had university training on that.

More than yes...

If the two teachers styles match, I mean, I used to do it with...

Yeah, we did fine...

The principal walked into my room one day, I was teaching, and I said to her, if you're here, you're a set of hands, and I just threw her a compass and I said start teaching. Because it's the first time I ever saw them, and that was, and she, she actually worked out well.

I've never had someone else come in and work with me. You tried to last year but remember, it couldn't fit the schedule or something.

Yeah.

It's when that happens, and then I get a call back...

I think it would be nice but I've never had that experience.

But without training in special ed, so you think it can still be successful?

I do. I do. Because we have a lot of people on our staff and we have resource people that are willing to you know, teach us and help us, and give us their time, and uh, yeah, I think
it can. I think, I think at some point most of the people here have met with success and they don’t have...

...very little of it, formal training.

I think it’s easier, because, I mean, I’ve never had in class support in my class but there are times where I’ve had resource room children in other subject areas of teaching, and I would have loved to have someone in there to work with. Because I think it’s a learning experience itself to have that person, who’s been trained specifically in that, because you can learn from them as certainly you’re observing how they work with the children. You know, explain things and things like that, so it’s a plus.

I think it also goes back to a comment Number 4 made before when she said that the teacher, special ed teacher who’s in the classroom, was not only focused on the one special, or two special ed children in the classroom, he or she will help out everybody. Obviously, Number 4 has been in my classroom before, but if she sees another child as having trouble with something, she’ll help. That allows a lot more flexibility if I need to, if I need some more flexibility for her to pass something out, as small as that, or we’re in a rush to clean up, it just helps. I don’t think you need any special training to succeed in that situation.

Now this is, Number 5, this is, um, this goes right in with what you told me when I, we first started speaking. Do you think that dual certification for regular ed, excuse me, do you think that dual certification for regular education and special education would be beneficial for all prospective teachers?

I do. I do. I feel that way because the training itself is is nice to have, it’s very, it’s nice to have a background, to be familiar with a lot of the disabilities that you come across, but I think it just allows for just a wider variety, a wider, a wider view of everything, of the whole situation. I mean, what I, for example, when I was applying for jobs, I wasn’t only looking at regular ed, I was also looking at special ed. I kind of left that door open for me, it’s another option, it’s another way for teachers to go. It’s a different scenario teaching in a resource room versus a regular ed classroom, and if anyone needed a change or would like a change, it’s always there for you...aside all the insights that you have in the classroom, it helps, it definitely helps.

I actually regret not doing it. I was at a point in college where I was deciding to be either special ed or to go another way, and I went another way, and now I regret not having gotten special ed.

So what do you think of dual certification?

I think it would be very beneficial, you know, the amount of things that I come across now that the training would have been so much more helpful than what I actually...
There are just a lot of small, occurrences that happen that trigger things in your mind. I mean, my training was pretty much split right down the middle. I had to do student teaching in both areas....

Is that right?

...I took pretty much an even amount of courses in both areas, practicums in both areas. You'll just hit something every once in a while that's like, "I remember that" whereas a lot of people who weren't trained in special ed might not. The resources are there for them, but at the same time it's ...

I think also, children who are now classified and things like that, it just makes sense. I mean, because the numbers seem to keep rising, you know.

I think, for me, if they had required it when I had gone to school, that that would have been great, because now I find myself with children of my own, and a husband and a home, and and, a life and it's very hard to get back to college. It's very hard to get back to school and take classes and, you know, get a new certification or a new degree. So if it was built into the, you know, your first four years of school, if that was built into your elementary school certification, it would be there at a time in your life when you have the time and the availability and the energy and, you know, nothing else pulling on you and you can give everything you have to your, you know, your four or six years in college, and ah, get what you need. I think it would be great.

Well, that goes right into my next question. Would anyone here elect to become certified in special education to make inclusionary practices more successful. You already said you're involved now, so, um....

It would be very hard, but would I like to be able to find the time to do that? Absolutely, but it's very hard to find the time to do that.

Would anyone else elect to do that?

To find a way to do that....

Pardon me? What'd you say? You're retiring in two years!

You know, when will they offer it? Will they, could it be something on the weekends? Could it be something that you did at nights? Could it be something during your school time? Could you get time off from school? Could you take a sabbatical of some sort to go and get the certification and would your job be waiting...you know, there's a lot to ah, think about.

I think that, I can't speak for teachers who are experienced because there is no better way to learn than on the job, but I think that from a new teacher's perspective, that without that training there's a certain fear that goes into reading those IEP's and there's certain
fear that goes into having these children coming into your classroom before you actually know about them. Whereas, since I've had a certain amount of training in that area, like I said before, to me it's more of a challenge. I know what to do, and I know what I'd like to do, and I don't look at it as oh no, certain disabilities... in the class. I look at it... and I think it just comes from having experience and working with students with disabilities. And teachers who have taught for a number of years have that experience. Right, right.

It kind of makes me feel more comfortable as a new teacher, because I have another background in that. I don't worry about ...

Do you have anything to add to that?

Um, I agree with what was said. I, I think that nowadays, it would be much more important to have that. I think that anybody who's over 20 years experienced, things have changed, to, even though I've always had special ed children in my room, the kind of special ed child that we had back in the '80's were much different than what we're getting now. And, like Number 1, I have a family and an active life outside of school, and if there was a way to incorporate it during some of my time that I'm here, I would say yes, it's absolutely worth doing. But it's now the time commitment that I'm not able to give. But I do see that the, the special ed children that I'm getting more in recent years, um, are much more needy than the ones that we had before. There are more classifications, an ADD, and suddenly cropped up the ADHD, which that wasn't around. I, I, the first time I heard that I couldn't have a clue what a meant. So, I agree with what's being said but I think it's more important now for people coming out of college now to have a dual certification. Because even as Number 5 said, those of us who have been around, do have the experience of having had different types of children in our classroom.

And always having plenty to raid on. You know, I have children whose parents have sent me in.

That's right.

Uh huh.

...the proactive, the proactivism is great.

Yeah, yeah. You know, you get volumes of um, things that they send you, books and, and that helps.

Used to be very good at that. Always giving us, articles that she would come across um, that you would read. I still have a whole collection of them.

She did that a lot.
You mentioned parents, do you find that most of the parents they send the literature, have you found that, have you found that most parents are available to pitch in if you need help in the classroom? Do they...

You mean to come in and work?

Yeah...

No. no, they’re all working.

They’re all with careers and ...

I also don’t think they’d want their children to stand out any more than they normally would.

Uh huh.

That’s true.

Um, on the piece of paper I gave you...

I have to go now....

Ok, thank you, thank you very much. Thank you... um, on the piece of paper I gave you jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teacher’s preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools.

Yeah, this is the title of my topic, but it’s right here. Just give me um, jot down a phrase or a sentence that best describes your position on teacher’s preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public school.

You can just say that you’re a resource room teacher, that way I’ll know that yours will be different, but it’s not....

...anything, I don’t want to impose any more, but if you want to write me a couple of pages, I’ll take it.

...a little interaction here, shake things up a little bit. No one is eating, this is a non-eating group.

You know what it is, it’s so hot.

I should have brought ice cream. But you’ll have for tomorrow for lunch, OK.
(miscellaneous comments about the heat, food, air conditioning, a 911 call that day)

How many years have you been teaching?

One year.

One year. Um, have you ever taken any special education courses at the university level?

No.

Um, can you, well, in the year, any inservice or professional development that might have helped you...

(end of tape)
Appendix C

Written Responses to Research Question #10
Research Question #10 – On this piece of paper, jot down one phrase or sentence that best describes your position on teacher’s preparedness and inclusionary practices of classified students in public schools.

1. Most teachers are not prepared to deal with classified students. They are required to learn as they go and seek out resources.

2. In my experience it seems that more often than not, teachers come in with general education background and the special education training is learned along the way, through everyday experiences, other teachers, and courses. I don’t think that teachers are totally prepared for all special needs students.

3. I think teachers become prepared once they know that special needs students will be placed in their classrooms. To become prepared, teachers work with other staff members, the IEP’s and the parents. Most importantly, teachers learn while doing.

4. Experienced teachers are obviously more prepared. As a new teacher, dual certification had helped my preparedness, is adequate and at a comfortable level.

5. Teachers are more prepared than they my first realize. They might get frightened when hearing of an upcoming student but by relying on resource room teachers, colleagues, and administration it is much less daunting.

6. I think many teachers are prepared for inclusion or will seek the necessary “tools” needed to help the students.

7. I think that most teachers are prepared to teach students with special needs. I believe most of us deal with these students and are doing a great job!
8. I don’t feel prepared enough for the special needs students, particularly in knowing how and when to identify them. Working with these students before they have been classified is difficult because I don’t know how much to expect from them, what modifications to make. When I had NI [neurologically impaired] students mainstreamed into my room I never felt they were “mine” so I didn’t feel as responsible.

9. Teachers are not prepared for all the children with disabilities that they may need to teach in their room. Class sizes are too large and teachers need on the job training as they have these children in their rooms. Teachers find themselves frustrated.

10. Teachers are well prepared with tools and ideas but could use more insight on what new methods are available to the specific needs of students.

11. Regular classroom teachers need administrative and community support in order to better prepare students for their future and their success. Teachers are already doing so much on a daily basis, and they need more support, (preparation, training, time to learn) to be successful with special needs students.

12. Teachers would be better prepared to handle inclusion/classified students if they were offered more training, assistance within the classroom, preparation time, and incentive(s).

13. Up until recently teachers have had to on their own initiative find and take advantage of various resources in order to get the help, guidance and knowledge they need to work with special ed children with the current trend toward inclusion. I think it would be of great benefit to require special ed training in order to receive your elementary ed certification.
14. Teachers need a certain amount of "professional development" or training to help them hone their skills as they try to accommodate more and more special needs kids into the classroom. It is very challenging to help special ed students, teach "average" students, and enrich the curriculum for "gifted" kids.

15. Teachers need continued preparation to adequately address the varied needs of classified students. Both initial (pre-service) and ongoing training are essential.
Appendix D

Letter to Superintendent & Letter to School Principals
March 25, 2002

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive Ed.D. Program, and currently employed as the Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction at Lord Stirling School in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.

My dissertation topic is: Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Preparedness and Inclusionary Practices of Classified Students in Public Schools. The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers' preparedness (level of teacher training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study will be based on the perceptions of the teachers.

I met informally with the Special Services Director of your district, on January 22, 2002, to ask him if this study was feasible in your district. He felt that it was, and recommended that I write you to requesting your permission to conduct my research in your district if the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board approves it.

The research that I would like to conduct is qualitative in nature. I would like to conduct three separate focus groups in three different elementary schools in your district, on three separate dates; the date and times for each focus group would be scheduled so as not to interfere with other meetings or functions after school. I would also like to request permission to use a room in each school that is in a comfortable and permissive location, one that is familiar to the participants, such as the faculty lounge. I would like 10 volunteers from each elementary school, 2 from each grade levels of 1-5, who teach special needs students or have taught special needs students. A letter requesting permission will be sent to the principals of these three elementary schools. In addition, letters of solicitation will be given to teachers in grades 1-5 asking for volunteers for my research study. The researcher will request the volunteers to identify the grade level that they teach. The researcher will randomly select two teachers from each of the five grade levels by choosing two names out of a hat, according to grade level. They will be given an informed consent form informing them that I will be audio taping the focus group discussions and request their permission to do so. In addition, they will be informed that full confidentiality and anonymity will be utilized in this study. I will act as moderator and will have as assistant moderator with me to take notes, make sure that environmental factors do not inhibit the discussion, to make sure that the tape recording equipment is functioning, and to make sure that the refreshments that will be available are at the participant’s disposal. My assistant will be informed of confidentiality and of the anonymity of the participants, also. The participants will also be informed that the audiotapes will be transcribed in written format for me to analyze the data. They will be further informed that no names or social security numbers or any other identifying measures will be used.

The participants of this study will be solicited on a voluntary basis. If any of the participants should decide at any time during the discussion that they longer wish to participate they may leave the discussion group.

The responses of the participants will be tape-recorded, for which they will sign an informed consent form. The taped recordings will be transcribed into written format.
No names will be used during the discussion or in the transcripts. The data will be analyzed in the dissertation without reference to your district’s name.

The data will remain secure and under lock and key with the researcher, and results will be included in the dissertation without reference to the district’s name or participants. I have enclosed a copy of the script and question route that I will use, for your review.

I would appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my intentions and respond to any questions or concerns that you may have. I would also appreciate a letter granting permission on your district’s letterhead for the purposes of verification. I will remove the district name, as well as your name to ensure confidentiality. I thank you for your kindness and assistance. I will most assuredly share the results of the study with you while ensuring confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Melanie North
melnor@hotmail.com
Work#: 908-766-1786

Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
Lord Stirling School
P.O. Box 369
Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920
May 3, 2002

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive Ed. D. Program, and currently employed as the Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction at Lord Stirling School in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.

My dissertation topic is: **Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Preparedness and Inclusionary Practices of Classified Students in Public Schools**. The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers’ preparedness (level of training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study will be based on the perceptions of the teachers.

I have received written approval from the superintendent to conduct my research in the district. I would like to request your permission to conduct a portion of my research in your elementary school.

The research that I would like to conduct is qualitative in nature. I would like to conduct a focus group in your elementary school; the date and time would be scheduled so as to not interfere with other meetings or functions after school. I understand that teachers have a certain required amount of time that they are scheduled to be retained at school on Wednesdays; so I thought perhaps a Wednesday in May or June would suffice.

My assistant moderator and I would be prompt, beginning our research sessions promptly when the teacher’s after school hours begins. I would like to request permission to use a room in your school that is in a comfortable and permissive location, one that is familiar to the participants, such as the faculty lounge. I would like 10 volunteers, 2 from each grade levels of 1-5, who teach special needs students, or who have taught special needs students. Letters of solicitation will be given to teachers in grades 1-5 asking for volunteers for my research study. They will be asked to identify the grade level that they teach on the returning envelope. The researcher will select two teachers from each grade level by choosing names out of a hat according to grade level. They will be given informed consent forms informing them that I will be audio taping the focus group discussions and request their permission to do so. In addition, they will be informed that full confidentiality and anonymity will be utilized in this study. I will act as moderator and will have an assistant moderator with me to take notes, make sure that environmental factors do not inhibit the discussion, to make sure that the tape recording equipment is functioning, and to make sure that the refreshments that will be available are at the participants’ disposal. My assistant will be informed of confidentiality and of the anonymity of the participants, also. The participants will also informed that the audiotapes will be transcribed in written format for me to analyze the data. They will be further informed that no names or social security numbers or any other identifying measures will be used.

The participants of this study will be solicited on a voluntary basis. If any of the participants should decide at any time during the discussion that they no longer wish to participate they may leave the discussion group.

The responses of the participants will be tape-recorded, for which they will sign an informed consent form. The taped recordings will be transcribed into written format. No names will be used during the discussion or in the transcripts. The data will be
analyzed in the dissertation without reference to your district's name or your school's name.

The data will remain secure and under lock and key with only the researcher, and the results will be included in the dissertation without reference to the district's name or the participants. I have enclosed a copy of the question route that I will use, for your review.

I would appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my intentions and respond to any questions or concerns that you may have. I would also appreciate a letter granting permission on your district's letterhead for the purposes of verification. I will remove the district name, as well as your name to ensure confidentiality. I thank you for your kindness and assistance. I will most assuredly share the results of the study with you while ensuring confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Melanie North
melnor@hotmail.com
Work# 908-766-1786

Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
Lord Stirling School
P.O. Box 369
Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form & Letter of Solicitation
Informed Consent Form

Affiliation:
Melanie North is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive Ed.D. Program and currently employed as the Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction at Lord Stirling School, in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.

Purpose of the study:
The title of the study is Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Preparedness and Inclusionary Practices of Classified Students in Public Schools. The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers' preparedness (level of teacher training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study will be based on the perceptions of teachers. A focus group discussion will be conducted one afternoon after school at a date and time that will not interfere with other meetings or functions, at a comfortable and permissive location in your school. This group discussion will take no longer than 2 hours to complete, and refreshments will be provided for your convenience.

Procedures:
At a set time and destination, approximately nine other teachers will engage in a discussion group that will revolve around a predetermined question route, of which you have received a copy. The discussion will be recorded with use of a Panasonic audio tape recorder and an Olympus digital voice recorder as a back up measure. The use of the tape-recording devices is so vital comments, ideas, and opinions throughout the group discussion are not lost. The assistant moderator will be present to take notes, particularly quotes. However, no names or other measures will be used to identify participants. The participants will have in front of them a numbered tent card, which will serve as their only identity in the group discussion. Please be informed that the researcher and the research assistant are fully informed of the confidentiality and anonymity rules regarding participants' rights.

Voluntary Nature of the Project:
By signing the Informed Consent Form and attending the focus group discussion, I am consenting to participate in the study and am fully aware that my responses will be tape-recorded and transcribed into written format. Prior to completion of the discussion, if at any time I feel compelled to end my participation, I may do so without any resulting penalty or loss of any kind.

Anonymity:
Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. No names will be included in any forms or transcripts. Only the researcher will analyze the data. Any results will be included in the dissertation without reference to your district's name or your name.

College of Education and Human Services
Executive Ed.D. Program
Tel. 973.275.2728
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2684

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THINK THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SOUL
Security of Stored Data:

The taped recordings will remain in the possession of the researcher after they have been transcribed. The data on the taped recordings and the data in written format from the transcriptions will remain secure in a locked cabinet with the researcher, and will be destroyed after three years. No one else will have access to the data. All responses and information will be kept totally confidential.

Confidentiality of Records:

No one will have access to the list of subjects used for this research. No one will have access to the names of the building school principals, the superintendent's name, the names of the elementary schools used, or the name of the district. The analysis of the data will be used in the researcher's dissertation. No mention of any subject's name, name of school principal, superintendent, or school district will be included in the researcher's dissertation. The researcher will be the only person who will have access to any data. This data will be securely locked in a cabinet for three years and will then be destroyed.

Risks:

There are no risks in this research.

Benefits:

There are no benefits in this study, monetary or of any another nature to the participants. The participants will receive refreshments during the research focus group. Participants will be informed that the researcher will donate money to each elementary school utilized in this research study for gratitude of the assistance from the district, the elementary schools that participated, and the teachers that participated in the research.

Alternatives to Research Study:

If any participants are unavailable to attend the focus group discussions, they will have the opportunity to respond in written format to the research questions and return them to the researcher in a self-addressed stamped envelope. The same holds true for this disclosure of information as all confidentiality and anonymity will be respected of the participant.

Acquisition of Further Information:

The researcher may be contacted for further information, answers to pertinent questions, and for information about research subjects' rights by writing researcher at Lord Stirling School, P.O. Box 369, Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920, or by telephoning researcher at the above mentioned school (908) 766-1786.

Permission to Use Audio Tape Recorders:

Please be informed that audio taped recording equipment will be utilized so as not to miss a vital comment, opinion, idea that may add to the breadth and substance of the data. Subjects have the right to review all or any portion of the taped recordings and request that it be destroyed. After the discussion group has ended, the researcher will have the taped recordings transcribed into written format so the researcher can analyze the data. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the taped recordings and the written transcripts of said recordings. The data from the taped recordings and the written transcripts will be locked in a secure cabinet that only the researcher will have access to. The data will be included in the dissertation. All data will be destroyed after three years after completion of the dissertation.

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IRB
SEETON HALL UNIVERSITY
Acknowledgement of Informed Consent Forms:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the procedures adequately safeguard the subjects' privacy, welfare, and civil rights. The Chairperson of the IRB can be reached at (973) 275-2974.

I have read the material above and I agree to participate. I am aware that I will be given a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my files.

Name __________________________ Date __________________

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IRB
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
May 3, 2002

Dear Elementary Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive Ed.D. Program and currently employed as the Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction at Lord Stirling School, in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.

My dissertation topic is Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Preparedness and Inclusionary Practices of Classified Students in Public Schools. The purpose of my study is to determine whether there is a relationship between regular education teachers’ preparedness (level of training) and inclusion of classified students in public schools. This study will be based on the perceptions of teachers. I will be conducting a focus group discussion one afternoon after school at a date and time that will not interfere with other meetings or functions, at a comfortable and permissive location in your school, one that is familiar to you, such as the faculty lounge. This discussion will take no longer than 2 hours to complete, and refreshments will be available to you. I am requesting 10 volunteers who teach special needs students or who have taught special needs students; 2 from each grade levels of 1-5. I will randomly select the 10 volunteers by requesting that everyone identify what grade level they teach on the outside of the return envelope, and pick 2 names out of a hat, 2 names from each grade level.

I have received permission from your Superintendent to conduct my research in your district. I have also received permission from your building principal to conduct research in your elementary school, and to request volunteers for my study.

I am conducting a qualitative study and will utilize a predetermined question route, which I have attached for your review. The question route is comprised of opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions. The questions are mostly open-ended to promote a conversation among participants. I will act as the moderator to move the conversation along, using pauses and probes where I feel they are necessary. I will have an assistant moderator with me who will take notes, make sure that environmental factors do not inhibit the discussion, make sure that the tape recording equipment continues to function, and make sure that the refreshments are at your disposal. Please be informed that my assistant and I are fully advised of the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants of the study. Attached is an Informed Consent Form giving me permission to tape record your responses. The Informed Consent Form will fully disclose anonymity and confidentiality measures. The taped recordings are necessary so I do not lose any vital statements or ideas from participants. Please be informed that the taped recordings will be transcribed into written format so that I can better analyze the data for results. I am looking to discover common themes and patterns from the discussion.

By taking part in the focus group discussion, you are consenting to participate in this study. Upon completion of our discussion, you will be given a self-addressed stamped envelope in case you would like to add more insight or you have forgotten to
mention something. If you should decide at any time during the discussion you no longer wish to participate you may leave the group discussion at any time. Refusal or discontinuation will result in no penalty or loss of any kind.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. No names are included in the transcripts. The data will be analyzed and included in the dissertation without reference to your district’s name or your names.

The data will remain in a locked cabinet with the researcher, and will be destroyed after three years. All responses will be kept very confidential.

There are no risks in this research.

There are no monetary benefits in this study. Refreshments will be provided for all participants. The researcher will make a donation to your school in appreciation of the school and participants’ participation.

The data from the discussion group will analyzed to determine any common themes and patterns in responses across the three focus groups that will be used, hoping to achieve theoretical saturation.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subjects’ privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at (973) 275-2974.

If there are any questions or concerns, or if you would like to receive an abstract of the study’s results, please feel free to contact me at (908) 766-1786 or my email address: melnor@hotmail.com. I will most assuredly share the aggregate results of the study while ensuring confidentiality.

I thank you for your kindness and assistance in my endeavors. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the Informed Consent Form and send it in the envelope provided. Please indicate on the outside of the envelope where indicated, what grade level you teach. This will enable me to randomly choose two teachers from each grade levels 1-5.

Sincerely,

Melanie North

Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
Lord Stirling School
P.O. Box 369 Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920