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March 6, 2009
Abstract

This study investigated three Southeastern Ohio general education teachers’ philosophies and ideals concerning inclusionary practices for students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities. Areas surrounding inclusion that were assessed included the teachers’ philosophy, amount of training, collaboration with support staff, and planning time. A four-question Likert scale survey was given to the participants, then a follow-up open-ended interview was conducted. The participants’ responses revealed several vital components needed for inclusion as well as a number of challenges general educators face.
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iv.
Chapter One
Introduction

As teachers begin the new school year, there is excitement in the air. All the fresh new faces are smiling up at them; they have planned so many stimulating activities. Many teachers look around the room and feel the anticipation from their students. They are experiencing some of the same emotions as their students, but a wrinkle may crease the foreheads of an increasing number of teachers when they consider all that will be expected from them. Now more than ever, general education teacher are working with students with a variety of skills and needs – it is the era of inclusion.

As inclusionary practices continue to grow in schools across America, many general educators confront the complexities of educating a classroom of individuals with a plethora of abilities and needs. With the intricacies involved in this process, many teachers struggle when faced with these challenges. According to a national survey by Rojewski & Pollard in 1993, “more than 90% of secondary education teachers indicated that their undergraduate education did not adequately prepare them to teach special populations” (Henning & Mitchell, 2002, p.19). This information may explain why the practice of inclusion remains in place for only select students. According to a recent journal article by Cavallaro, Downing, & Spencer, our educational institutions are separating the students according to the level of their disabilities. In other words, if a child has a severe disability, the likelihood of integration is at best minimal (2004).

Although some problems are reported in providing inclusion, it is not uncommon for students with moderate to severe disabilities to receive at least a portion of their education in the general classroom. As inclusionary practices continue to increase, schools are faced with the responsibility of providing an appropriate education for all
students in the general classroom. According to research, teachers have voiced a number of specific apprehensions concerning inclusion: they are “concerned about the numbers of students they already had to work with, how much time it might take to create lessons for these students, and how they would grade students with more severe disabilities” (Sebastian & Mathot-Buckner, 2000, p. 311). Even though educators voiced valid concerns, the majority of teacher attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities were positive. In fact, Lewis spoke to the belief of entitlement for these children (1994). Although teachers may have various beliefs about the issue, it does not alter the fact that inclusion is a current and expanding practice. Educators must find ways to incorporate vital components for success when working with all students, including those with the most significant needs.

Statement of the Problem

The principle issue investigated in this Master’s Research Project is the identifying components of successful inclusion of students with moderate to severe needs in the general education classroom.

Research Questions

1. What are the most significant challenges that general educators face when a student with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities is included in their classroom?

2. What are the vital components needed for successful inclusionary practices?
Chapter Two
Literature Review

When examining the needed supports and vital components for successful inclusion, it is imperative to explore available literature. All literature utilized in this review focused on the various concerns regarding inclusion and the frequently used strategies employed by schools. The grade levels investigated throughout the literature ranged from preschool through high school. The authors incorporated an array of information including teachers’ perspectives, management practices, and educational benefits, to name a few.

These articles used various methods to complete their research. The authors employed such measures as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and observations. Although each provided helpful insight to the challenges of serving students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities, their degree of suggested inclusion varied from author to author and none could guarantee generalization from individual to individual or from school to school.

The benefits of inclusion for all students were declared throughout the literature. According to Sebastian and Mathot-Buckner, all students, abled and differently abled, grew in multiple areas such as tolerance, social skills, and specific skills (1998). This opinion was shared and expounded on to stress the benefits to students without disabilities by many authors. For example, Downing, Eichinger & Williams reported “increased acceptance, improved social and emotional development, and flexibility on the part of the non-disabled student” (1997, p.133).

It is not difficult to understand why students, including those with severe disabilities, would benefit from a quality education. Lewis explored this concept, and
reported that the exposure to quality teachers and meaningful relationships with typical peers produced valuable contributors to their communities (1994). This benefits the entire society. Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook, Dvorsky, Nietupski, & Costanza stressed this principle by identifying more than just the students as beneficiaries but families and teachers as well (1999). In order for this to transpire, children must be exposed to “diversity, friendship development, student achievement, and a positive and supportive environment” (Cavallaro, Cowning, & Spencer, 2004, p.17).

Some literature went beyond the mere educational benefits that students received from inclusion to one of rights and necessities. Brown, Sontag, & Wilcox firmly defended this by stating,

"The only way that severely handicapped and nonhandicapped citizens will learn to live with, and learn from, each other as fully participating members of complex, adult, heterogeneous communities is through long-term interaction during the educational years” (2004, p.2).

Further commitments of inclusion were verbalized throughout the literature as well. A study conducted by Arthur, Foreman, & Pascoe found students that were typically segregated into a special classroom were less engaged than when they were included in a general classroom (2004). In fact, King & Youngs discovered that when included in a general classroom, higher expectations were projected onto students with disabilities (2003). Some teachers believed that all children can become successful as well as important citizens to their community (Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1998). While this may be the case, the child’s learning is shaped by many different aspects and it is important to identify the influences that have the greatest effect (Clough & Nutbrown, 2004.)
Although the benefits of inclusion were well documented, the challenges of implementing inclusion remain. What factors do general educators face when students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities are included in the general classroom? One such issue includes teachers' perspectives. According to Trump & Hange, “The obstacle or barrier perceived to be most significant to the successful implementation of inclusion was negative attitudes of faculty and administration” (1996, p. 16). Regrettably, negative attitudes are found in some parents as well, but this unenthusiastic outlook was narrowed down to the perceptions of the general educators (Downing, Eichinger, & Williams, 1997; McNally, Cole, & Waugh, 2001). In fact, Hastings & Oakford established that “teachers’ attitudes toward children with more severe special needs are more negative than towards other diagnostic groups” (2003, p.88). Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, et al. delved into some key issues that demonstrated these perceptions. The authors found from their interviews that general educators questioned the students’ legal rights and abilities pertaining to inclusion (1999).

Why was there such a discrepancy in attitudes of general education teachers? What are the central themes that trigger these reactions? According to Trump & Hange’s research conducted in 1996 on Tennessee teachers, the main concerns were training and planning time (1996). The two authors completed more research in Virginia and West Virginia, where training again was one of the main concerns (Trump & Hange, 1996).

Training was a recurring theme. Who were the teachers speaking of and what kind of training was needed to ensure success? In the article, *Defining Access to the General Curriculum for High School Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities*, the educators identified themselves as unqualified or the feeling thereof when working with
students with severe disabilities (Dymond, Renzaglia, Gilson, & Slagor, 2007). This notion was further explored by Lewis. Her probes found that

"general teachers feel ill equipped to handle the various special needs in their classroom. Many regular teachers tend to feel thrown into frustrating situations by school systems rushing to include differently abled children in regular classes" (Lewis, 1994, p. 2).

Other authors supported this belief as well. Downing & Peckham-Hardin shared the lack of confidence teachers felt when faced with curriculum modifications needed to keep the attention of the students to ensure meaningful learning (2007). In fact, Bishop, Brownell, & Sindelar exposed an unsettling statistic, “In 2001-02, over 800,000 special education students were served by less than fully certified teachers” (2005, p.35). Vaughn & Schumm warned readers about the dangers of inclusion without the proper training. They claimed that although teachers accepted students with disabilities in their classrooms, they provided few adaptations (1994). Unfortunately, the literature uncovered the potential reason for this issue. West, Jones, and Stevens claimed that the reasons for this travesty were that only a few teachers concentrated on students with severe disabilities (2006).

General education teachers also expressed the issue of training in the area of working with support staff. Paraprofessionals were specifically named by several authors. According to Coots, Bishop & Grenot-Scheyer, these individuals were essential to providing adequate supports for children in the general classroom (1998). As this is such an important component for success in inclusionary practices, it is regrettable that Dover’s survey of 369 general and special educators found that when working with paraprofessionals, “About 26% of all respondents indicated they had received
preparation...Special Educators indicated a higher percentage of preparation (40%) than general education teachers (about 16%)," (2002, p. 35).

Dover recommended various action steps that districts, principals, and teachers can implement when working with paraprofessionals. The list includes the options below.

1. District and schools should develop guidelines & practices regarding Paraeducator management and supervision
2. Districts and school should encourage and increase opportunities for collaboration between general and special education staff.
3. Issues of management and supervision need to be seen as a priority to collaborating teachers and IEP/student planning teams
4. Paraeducator management and supervision topics should be included in preservice course content and curricula
5. Paraeducator management and supervisory topics should be included in school/district inservice and staff development programs.
6. Increase the expectations for special educators to inform general educators of paraeducator management responsibilities.
7. All those who work with paraeducators should be reminded and encouraged to maintain ongoing communication and feedback.
8. Collaborating teams should ask and answer 14 questions (Handout) providing immediate support and management to paraeducators working in inclusive classrooms.
9. Collaborating teachers and planning teams should better define paraeducator roles, responsibilities, and task assignments.
10. Individual and shared teacher management tasks should be specifically defined
11. Teachers should develop written plans for observing and recording paraeducator performance
12. Teachers should be encouraged and trained to provide on-the-job training
13. Paraeducators should attend school workdays and inservice programs to increase teacher contact time and planning opportunities. (2002, p. 37).

Another vital component reported by teachers was planning time. Downing & Peckham-Hardin stressed this need by pointing out that an, “essential component of a quality educational program for students with moderate-severe disabilities is the importance of open communication and working together as a team” (2007, p. 24).

Although time was stated as an essential part in planning any quality lesson, it was not
the only important component when working with students with severe cognitive and/or physical needs. As educators scheduled their planning time, it was essential to include other support staff such as Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech and Language Pathologists, and School Psychologists (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Crutchfield, 2000). In fact, Lewis went as far as to say,

"The strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of inclusion in this school culture were manifested in the cooperation and/or lack of cooperation and mutual planning done by both the regular classroom teachers and the special education teachers" (1994, p. 11)

Regrettably, collaboration has not been a part of the educational process in the past. Woods discussed the isolation between the general educator and the special educator due to fostering the concept of teacher individualism (1998). Consequently, it was no surprise that Goessling found difficulties when first implementing inclusion. The author referred to a "spirit of collaboration" or "defensiveness and isolation" (1994, p. 14) as the sentiment of both general and special educators. As schools worked towards better inclusion, Lewis' ideas may prove helpful by providing a list of strategies. These include the overlapping of planning time and working through one's anger (1994). Although these ideas may be simplistic, they are extremely beneficial to collaboration.

The literature reviewed has unearthed several vital components that affect the success of inclusion. Such areas mentioned include perception, training, planning time, funding, administrative support, etc. It is important to clarify, that although many of the studies were extensive in their research, they did have certain limitations. Such limitation included small sample sizes, subjective interviews, and a lack of generalization across grade levels. Due to these limitations, more studies are needed to accurately represent a more generalized hypothesis of the vital components of inclusion, if that is possible. It
may also suggest that inclusion's success is very much dependent on the complex set of variables and context in which it occurs.

The intended purpose of this study was to identify the vital components of inclusion as per the perceptions of three local southeastern Ohio elementary teachers. The participants included one first grade general education teacher, a third grade teacher, and a sixth grade general education teacher. The hopes for this study were to assist current and future educators in their efforts to implement inclusion successfully.
Chapter Three
Methodology

This Master’s Research Project was conducted in an elementary school in southeastern Ohio. The participants included three general education teachers – a first grade teacher, a third grade teacher, and a sixth grade teacher. Each of the teachers has had experience working with students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities in the general education classroom. The participants were chosen based on meeting the minimum qualification of having at least a Bachelor’s degree in education, having experience with inclusion, and availability to complete a brief questionnaire and interview.

To answer the questions of this study, instruments were specifically designed based on the information obtained from the literature review. (See Appendix A & B for survey and interview questions.) The surveys were given to each of the teachers with four questions concerning philosophies, training, collaboration, and planning time. The teachers were to rate each section according to their perceptions of these key inclusionary practices. These questions and answer options were 1) How do you rate inclusion: very positive, positive, neutral, slightly negative, or negative; 2) My training for inclusion is: significant, moderate, some, or none; 3) The benefits of working with support staff is: significant, moderate, some, or none; and 4) The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered: significant, moderate, some, or none. If these questions were thoughtfully answered, it would provide an accurate overview of inclusionary practices within this particular school with these teachers.
After the surveys were collected, unstructured interviews were held at the teachers’ choice of times and settings. The interviews were recorded for accuracy. The questions presented in the interview were constructed around the four topics from the survey. They included open-ended questions such as stating one’s philosophy of inclusion, benefits and drawbacks of inclusion to the student, other students, and teachers, training received in inclusion, training areas still needed, working with support staff, benefits and challenges of working with support staff, and enough planning time. The questions presented in the interview allowed the general educators to reflect on and articulate the perceptions and experiences they have faced while participating in the inclusion of students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities.

After the interviews were completed, their responses were weighed against their survey questions to find if indeed their in-depth answers supported their generalized responses. Further data analysis established the commonalities of philosophy, collaboration, training, and planning time. The results of the responses were reported separately under each of the four main components.
Chapter Four
Results

The following chapter examines the findings in the 3 surveys and interviews of the participants through analyzing their statements made when addressing the questions. The function of the analysis was to answer the two research questions: 1) What are the most significant challenges that general educators face when a student with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities is included in their classroom; and 2) What are the vital components needed for successful inclusionary practices?

A brief four-question survey was developed to determine the participants’ general ideas of inclusion. The survey addressed their philosophy, collaboration, training, and planning time. A Likert type scale was fashioned for the survey, which included the answer options of Very Positive/Significant, Positive/Moderate, Slightly Negative/Some, or Negative/None. Subsequent to the surveys, an open-ended question style interview was utilized to encourage a detailed, meaningful response of the participants’ knowledge and ideals regarding the four areas addressed in the survey.

Three elementary teachers at a local Southeast Ohio elementary school participated in the research. Each of the teachers have experience in inclusionary practices ranging from three to fifteen years. The participants completed and returned the surveys and then scheduled a convenient time and location for a face-to-face interview. Each interview took approximately twenty-five minutes or less and was recorded for accuracy. The interviews of each of the participants were transcribed and are located in Appendixes C-E.
After the interviews were completed, the researcher sorted key words and phrases of their responses into two different categories (supportive responses or unsupportive responses). For example, if a participant responded *slightly negative/some* to the amount of planning time on the survey and then responded in the interview with comments such as - it's not a lot of time; that would be considered an unsupportive response.

Following are the results of the participants' responses to the surveys and interviews divided into the four survey categories. The first category relates to the participants' philosophies of inclusion. It includes survey question 1 as well as interview questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. The second category relates to the participants' thoughts on their training as it pertains to inclusion. This category includes survey question 2 as well as interview questions 5, 6, and 7. The third category of the study relates to the participants' thoughts when working with support staff. It included survey questions 3 as well as interview questions 8, 9, 10, and 11 are included in this section. The fourth and final category relates to participants' reflections on planning. This section includes survey question 4 and interview questions 12, 13, and 14. Following are the results of the study in the respective sections. For clarification purposes, the following scales have been provided.

The following sections first outline responses by each of the 3 participants (A, B, & C). Table 1 below provides an overview of survey and interview responses for participant A.

*VP/SI* = Very Positive or Significant  
*P/M* = Positive or Moderate  
*SN/S* = Slightly Negative or Some  
*N/N* = Negative or None
Table 1. displays participant A’s responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
<th>Supportive Responses</th>
<th>Unsupported Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate inclusion?</td>
<td>VP/SI</td>
<td>-Socialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training for inclusion is</td>
<td>SN/S</td>
<td>-Like to have been offered more classes</td>
<td>-Have personal experiences from different organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Took one college class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Like to have more information about day to day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Like to meet the family ahead of time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of working with support staff is?</td>
<td>VP/SI</td>
<td>-Services of the Intervention Specialist, Aides, Guidance Counselor, -School Psychologist, -Past Teachers -Helps to know what works -Gives more information -Extra resources</td>
<td>-It’s more time -It’s more planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered?</td>
<td>SN/S</td>
<td>-Not enough time</td>
<td>-It’s a little bit of time everyday -It’s not a lot of time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data above were further analyzed to determine if the participant was consistent with her responses across the survey and interview. The following rating scale was used to establish consistency of responses.

- **VP/SI** is consistent with all but one positive response or service provided; if criteria were not met then the responses would be considered inconsistent.
- **P/M** is consistent with mostly positive responses or service provided; if criteria were not met, then the responses would be considered inconsistent.
- **SN/S** is consistent with mostly negative responses or not provided; if criteria were not met then the responses would be considered inconsistent.
- **N/N** is consistent with all negative responses or no services provided; if criteria were not met then the responses would be considered inconsistent.

According to the data obtained from the survey and interview questions in category one, the survey question asks, *How do you rate inclusion.* Participant A’s responses were consistent. She gave a *Very Positive or Significant* response to the survey question and provided all supportive examples in the interview session. In the general survey question for category two, the question asks, *My training for inclusion is.* The participant responded with a *Slightly Negative or Some* response when asked about their training for inclusion in the survey. The participant provided three supportive responses and two unsupportive responses. This indicates consistency as per the rating scale. In category three, the survey question asks, *The benefits of working with support staff is?* Participant A’s responses were consistent with her survey question of *Very Positive or Significant.* She gave eight supportive responses and one unsupportive response. In the fourth and final category, the question asks, *The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered?* The participant responded to the survey question involving planning time as *Slightly Negative or Some.* The interview responses were not consistent
with the participant’s survey response. The participant responded with one supportive response and two unsupportive responses.

Next, Participant B’s survey responses and interview overview is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Participant B’s Responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
<th>Supportive Responses</th>
<th>Unsupportive Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate inclusion?</td>
<td>P/M</td>
<td>- I am for it.</td>
<td>- Major meltdowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- I think it’s great</td>
<td>- Disrupts class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- They get to work</td>
<td>- Scares the kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with other kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Make new friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training for inclusion is</td>
<td>SN/S</td>
<td>- Received no training</td>
<td>- First hand experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Need training on different disabilities</td>
<td>- Prepare through paperwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Need training in making things better for them when they have meltdowns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of working with support staff is?</td>
<td>VP/SI</td>
<td>- Services from aide, Intervention Specialist</td>
<td>- Difference of opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- plan and modify with Intervention Specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Share responsibilities of report cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN/S</th>
<th>-Get ideas and opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Share conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I don’t think teachers every have enough time
- Always thinking about it
- It does not take a whole lot of time

The data obtained from the survey question *How do you rate inclusion* and interview questions in category one for participant B demonstrates consistency with the response of *Positive or Moderate* for the first survey question. The participant provided a total of four supportive responses and two unsupportive responses. The participant continues to demonstrate consistency in category two with the response of *Slightly Negative or Some* when asked in the survey *My training for inclusion is*, and then followed with three supportive and two unsupportive responses in the interview.

According to the data obtained from the survey and interview questions in category three, participant B’s responses were also consistent when asked *The benefits of working with support staff is*. There were four supportive responses and only one unsupportive response in the interview, which is consistent with a response of *Very Positive or Significant* in the survey. Finally, in survey question four, *The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered*, the participant responded with *Slightly Negative or Some*. This was consistent with the participant’s interview responses. The participant gave two supportive responses and one unsupportive response.
Finally, Participant C’s responses to the survey and interview questions are provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Participant C’s Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
<th>Supportive Responses</th>
<th>Unsupported Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you rate inclusion?</td>
<td>VP/SI</td>
<td>-Best model of every student</td>
<td>-When students really struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Students interact with their peers</td>
<td>-Not enough assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Socialized</td>
<td>-Treated differently by other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Gives them goals</td>
<td>-Little distracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Boosts self-esteem</td>
<td>-May appear to other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Life Sills</td>
<td>unfair attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Compassions</td>
<td>from teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Desire to want to help</td>
<td>Activity level of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Teachers are more focused on all students’ needs</td>
<td>-Sometimes forget...students in MH room...to include them ...last minute scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Pick up new techniques that are helpful for all students</td>
<td>change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My training for inclusion is</td>
<td>P/M</td>
<td>-Very little inclusion training</td>
<td>-One class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Not adequate</td>
<td>-Few workshops on differentiation in gifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Need training for how to team teach w/ inclusion teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Need training on how to set up classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Don’t feel very prepared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of</td>
<td>VP/SI</td>
<td>-Services provided by</td>
<td>-If the teacher is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the data obtained from the survey and interview questions in category one when asked *How do you rate inclusion*, participant C’s responses were inconsistent. She responded with *Very Positive or Significant* in the survey. She did provide 10 supportive responses but followed up with 6 unsupportive responses. This does not meet the standards of consistency. In the survey question for category two, *My training for inclusion is*, the participant’s responses were consistent with her survey response of *Positive or Moderate*. The participant provided five supportive responses and two unsupportive responses. In category three, *The benefits of working with support staff is*,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working with support staff is?</th>
<th>- Intervention Specialist, Speech Therapist, Guidance Counselor, Specialized teachers, Aides, Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Plan lessons w/ Intervention Specialist</td>
<td>focused on own area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Modify curriculum and homework w/ Intervention Specialist</td>
<td>- Some teachers may have an “Us against them” philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give lots of really good ideas, pointers, &amp; tips</td>
<td>- Different styles/philosophies and can not agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered?</td>
<td>VP/SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sometimes quite a long time</td>
<td>- Not enough planning time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difficulty determining appropriate modifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
participant C's responses were not consistent with her survey question of Very Positive or Significant. The participant presented five supportive responses but also gave three unsupportive responses. In the final category, The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered, the participant was consistent between the survey response of Very Positive or Significant and the interview responses. She provided three supporting responses.

The key responses of the 3 participants were compared to one another and common themes were identified by the researcher. Following are the results.

Further data analysis established the commonalities of perception, collaboration, training, and planning time between each of the 3 participants. The results of the responses were reported separately under each of the four main components.

The commonalities of category one includes socialization, needs of students, and disruptions. All 3 participants mentioned socialization in some fashion. The terms or phrases included the following: “work with other kids”, “make new friends,” “interact with other peers,” “compassions,” “desire to want to help,” and “life skills.” Another commonality between the participants’ responses was the needs of the students. Two participants focused on this topic by using phrases such as: “when students really struggle,” “not enough assistance,” “could be negative if it is not done with all the needs of the child in mind.” The last commonality between the 3 participants for category one was disruption. Two out of the 3 participants mentioned this in their in-depth interviews. The terms and phrases included the following: “disrupts class,” “scares the kids,” “major meltdowns,” and “little distracting.”
In the second category concerning training, one common point addressed in the participants’ interviews was a “need for more training.” All participants commented on the need for more training. The terms and phrases included, “how to set up classrooms,” “how to team teach with inclusion teacher,” “training on different disabilities,” “day to day issues,” and “training in making things better for them when they have meltdowns.”

The third category of working with support staff also displays commonalities among participants. The first similarity mentioned was professional and support staff. All 3 participants spoke of services provided by Intervention Specialists and aides. Two participants added a common response of services provided by a Guidance Counselor. Another commonality between the participants’ responses included shared responsibilities between professionals. The terms or phrases include, “modify curriculum and homework with Intervention Specialist,” “share responsibilities of report cards,” and “share conferences.” Sharing ideas was another area that was addressed by 2 of the participants when considering the benefits of working with support staff.

The fourth and final category focused on the amount of time scheduled for planning. The first common theme that arose was the agreement of not enough time. All 3 participants verbalized this concern through making such statements as, “I don’t think teachers ever have enough time,” “always thinking about it,” and “sometimes quite a long time.” Although all 3 participants made responses to the effect of not enough time for planning, two of the three participants responded with statements that would seem to contradict their statements. These responses include such phrases as, “it’s a little bit of time everyday” and “it does not take a whole lot of time.”
The results from the above surveys and interviews supply information on some common practices and philosophies of inclusion. The following chapter will further examine the information given; analyze, compare and determine relevance; and present implications and recommendations for further study.
Chapter 5
Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusions

This research was designed to determine the most significant challenges that general educators face when a student with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities is included in their classroom; and vital components needed for successful inclusionary practices. First, a discussion of findings by each of the three participants was outlined. Secondly, similarities in responses across the three participants and the relevance to other studies were made. Finally, limitations and future research recommendations were provided.

Participant A’s responses to the survey and interview questions indicated two specific challenges when faced with the inclusion of students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities: lack of available training and time constraints. The first challenge revealed in the interview referred to training. Participant A referred to completing only one class throughout her formal undergraduate and graduate education and even mentioned the lack of availability of special education courses for pre-service general educators. She stated,

I did have a class at (local university), too – (instructor’s name.) I think it helped. I definitely think I would have liked to have been offered more. When I was in school, and unless you were going into special education, there wasn’t even extra classes you could take. I think if you’re planning on being in a district that supports inclusion; it would definitely be nice to be at least offered more classes.

Participant A’s concerns for training went beyond the formal educational training in Special Education that encompasses a wide range of issues; she also indicated a desire for her specific classroom as well as information that would help in the day-to-day activities.
She also demonstrated an understanding of family dynamics when she discussed the desire to glean information from the family. Although Participant A spoke of the challenge of training or the lack thereof, she did not neglect the importance of personal experience in understanding how to work with and include students with disabilities.

The second challenge Participant A mentioned was the lack of time. She referred to this issue during two different interview sections: working with support staff and planning. This concern was consistent with the literature. According to research, time was needed for individuals from various disciplines to plan in order for success to be obtainable (Hamre-Nietupsski, et al. 1999.) Although Participant A did mention time as a challenge when working with support staff and planning, she did not over stress the issue. She stated, “a little bit of time every day and I think that instead of trying to do it in one big chuck at the end of the month, just a little bit along the way makes it a lot easier.” This statement indicated that Participant A has made concerted efforts to deal with this challenge in such a way that allows for success for herself and the student with out being overwhelmed by the task.

The vital components for success of inclusionary practices mentioned by Participant A included the collaborative efforts of the various professional and support staff and training. Participant A identified many of the professionals she has worked with over the years including the Intervention Specialist, Guidance Counselor School Psychologist, past teachers, Speech Therapist, and aides. When discussing their supports, Participant A gave examples of suggestions, techniques, etc. they provided. She went on to credit them for their help by stating, “That’s something that could have taken me a long time to figure out”...and...”they’re a wealth of information.”
Although Participant A reported collaboration of many of the professionals available within the school for supports, she made the most comments concerning the students' aides. The participant did not give any indication as to the reason for the account. It could be deduced that since the aide is in the classroom with the student and is available to the teacher for the greatest amount of time, more collaborative interactions occur between the general teacher and the aide. This is one possible reason but it cannot be established with this study.

The second vital component addressed by Participant A for successful inclusion was training. Although she did list her personal experiences and the participation with different organizations as a training method for inclusionary practices, she mainly focused on the lack of availability of formal training for general education teachers and special education at the college level. This disappointment is consistent with the literature. According to Lewis, general education teachers stress dissatisfaction in many of the areas but emphasize the lack of training (Lewis, 1994). It is interesting that the participant did not address professional development seminars and conferences that are available to all teachers. One may question the reason for this exclusion. The participant's responses seem to indicate a genuine interest in learning more about inclusionary practices; therefore, one may speculate that the participant is unaware of these opportunities.

Participant B specified three challenges to inclusion: disruptive behaviors, lack of training, and a lack of planning time. During the interview, Participant B referred to disruptive behaviors multiple times. She made statements such as "I think the only circumstances that I run into as a regular ed. teacher is when there is a major meltdown
with a child and it kind of disrupts the class” and “it really scares the kids at first until they’re aware of what’s going on.” The challenge of behavior problems related to inclusion is consistent with the literature. According to Trump, disruptive behaviors are the primary negative effect issue concerning the inclusion (1996).

Participant B went further in her discussion of disruptive behaviors by expressing her thoughts on how to bring about acceptance for students with behavior disorders. She stated, “I do encourage parents to share their child’s disability with the rest of the kids because I think when kids know, they are so much more accepting.” This ideal was supported by Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer. They concluded that both the teacher and the students needed time to become accustomed to one another as well as the situation (1998).

The second challenge mentioned by Participant B was the lack of training. She stated that the only training she had received was her classroom experience. This challenge not only affected the participants in this study, it was a consistent theme throughout the research. In fact, Trump & Hange found that many teachers did not believe themselves to be adequately prepared for inclusion based on their training (1996).

The third challenge addressed by Participant B was a lack of planning time. When asked if she had enough planning time, she responded, “No, no I don’t think teachers ever have enough planning time.” Although this was an expected response, the answers to the follow-up questions were enlightening. Participant B did not seem to connect the lack of planning time with challenges of inclusion. For example, she stated, “It really doesn’t take a whole lot. There really isn’t anything more than a normal child.” But then she continued by stating, “it always has to be done in advance”...and...”always
thinking about whether a test needs to be modified." The responses seemed to indicate that general education teachers view planning for inclusionary practices as just another component of planning not a separate, overwhelming aspect of inclusion.

During the interview, Participant B mentioned two specific components that are vital to inclusion. She discussed the benefits of the support staff and the need for training. Support staff was a major theme throughout the literature. According to Wood, the collaboration of various individuals across disciplines benefits the inclusionary practice. It encompasses the knowledge and experience of multiple professionals skilled in specific areas, which is highly improbable without collaboration (1998). This sentiment resounded in Participant B’s responses. She stated, “It’s just so nice to talk to somebody else and just run my ideas by them or theirs past me. And when we have meetings with parents, it’s so nice to have two opinions.”

Training was another vital component discussed by Participant B. She not only identified training, but also separated the training into two separate components: a general knowledge and specific knowledge. She stated in her response,

I think we need to be trained on the different disabilities and on the different special needs… and… When I know a child is coming into my room that has special needs, until I know what his functioning level is, it’s hard to get prepared. I’m not saying that I don’t get prepared but until he is in the room and you know what level he’s on, it’s difficult.

Participant C gave three challenges to inclusionary practices: lack of training, different philosophies, and lack of planning time. As Participant C responded to
questions concerning her training, she provided three separate events that covered her formal training concerning inclusion. She spoke of one class in undergraduate school, a few workshops for mainly gifted students, and one inservice day provided by the school district several years ago. In fact, Participant C acknowledged that the training she had received “was not adequate.” The statements made by Participant C was supported by Trump (1996), - teachers see inservices on inclusion as an important professional development activity.

Another challenge addressed by Participant C was the issue of differing philosophies when working with support staff. She verbalized her concerns by speaking of how difficult it can be if the majority of individuals involved have “a strong philosophical difference and opinions on how students needs can be met and what’s the best place for students and the least restrictive environment.” She also acknowledged other territorial issues that arise from time to time. For example, during the interview Participant C disclosed another teachers statement, “Well, the special ed. students have their special teachers and their assistants and their support staff and so I’m the only person standing up for my regular ed. kids so I’m going to stand up for them.” Lewis (1994) identified the same territorial issue in her research.

The final challenge addressed by Participant C was the lack of planning time. She stated that she did not have enough planning time and then listed some of the tasks that required extra time for modifications. She gave an approximate time to “just look over a normal lesson’ of ten minutes then went on to describe the process she goes through when modifications are required. She explained that the process did not end with the modifications but she continued with the consideration of the student’s finished work.
She stated that she examined the student’s work and attempted to determine if the assignment was adequately modified for the student. She went on to speak of more meetings with the Intervention Specialist in which the process continued.

Although Participant C spoke of training and working with support staff as possible challenges, she also identified the two areas as important and beneficial to inclusion. When considering training, Participant C identified several specific areas that would be helpful for the general education teacher. She mentioned differentiating and modifying curriculum, team teaching, and classroom setup. During her interview, Participant C made the very acute statement,

“I would say that I don’t feel like we really do inclusion, full inclusion with our students but I do have students that come in just for subject specific with their aides. I feel like just from practicing over the years that I’m prepared for that and for the way we run that system such as modifying tests and having their aide if they need to take notes things like that. I guess I don’t feel very prepared to have a full inclusion class where you team teach and have the intervention specialist is in the room also instructing because I haven’t really had any instruction in that area or practice.”

This statement would seem to demonstrate Participant C’s understanding of the various ways in which children with disabilities can be included in regular education. She acknowledged the limitations of the system in which she works, then reaches beyond what she has experienced to a broader more encompassing inclusionary system that is available and attainable through training.
When addressing staff supports, Participant C identified six different personnel available to the general education teacher: Intervention Specialist, Speech Therapist, Guidance Counselor, specialized teachers, aides, and parents. She expressed her appreciation of their expertise and gave examples that were of great value to her such as strategies, pointers, tips, and ideas. She went further by communicating her relief of having a professional available with whom to brainstorm when perplexing issues or situations arise. She stated, “So that whole kind of collaborating, brainstorming, teaming - it’s not just you on your own, you’re not an island of one going I don’t know what to do.”

To further examine the information gleaned from the three participants, the commonalities between the participants follow. In the first category relating to the participant’s philosophies and beliefs concerning inclusion, the three common components identified were socialization, needs of students, and disruptions. As stated earlier in chapter four, all three participants referred to socialization in some manner during their interview. Socialization was not only a common theme for the participants but also in other research. In accordance with the participants’ statements, Hamre-Nietupski, et al. found that the teachers in their study suggested that the socialization component was the most consistent positive theme to inclusion for all involved (1999). The benefit that encircled all involved was consistent with the responses of the participants. They each gave examples of the benefits for not only the student with disabilities, but also for the students without disabilities. The benefits for students with disabilities included communication, collaboration, relationships, and life skills. In fact, Participant C gave a great example of how being including in the general education
classroom might work towards building up their self-esteem and giving them the confidence of their own abilities. She stated, “I’ve had students come in to be included that other students have fought to get on their team for review games and jeopardy games because they’ve know that that student knew the information and knew that their disability didn’t keep them from being one of the best students in the class.”

Not only did the participants respond with benefits for the students with disabilities but also for the students without disabilities. They referred to increased empathy as the primary benefit of these students. Some statements included, “they see that people may have different needs but they are still people,” “it builds that understanding at an early age,”...and...“they can start seeing them as people not just the disability.” Again, this idea emerged in the researches conducted by Sebastian and Mathot-Buckner (1998); Downing and Peckham-Hardin (2007); and Cavallaro, Downing, & Spencer (2004).

The second common theme between the participants was the needs of the students. Two of the three participants addressed this concern making statements such as “getting less of that one-on-one time” and “when students do really struggle.” Clough & Nutbrown (2004) address this issue. They argued that the decision of how a student is included should encompass the total needs of the child, not be included just for the sake of inclusion.

The final common issue regarding the philosophies and beliefs of the participants involved possible disruptions when students with severe disabilities are included in the general classroom. Two of the three participants mentioned this issue using phrases such as “a little bit distracting,” “major meltdown,” and “scares the kids.” In fact, Trump
spoke of this, citing that not only the disruptions from some of the students with disabilities were challenging but the seemingly different behavioral standards and expectations for these students were distressing to teachers and other students.

Within the category pertaining to training, the common theme of “need for more training” developed during the interviews with the participants. All three participants referred to the first common theme “need for more training.” Participant A and B spoke of a need for general information concerning disabilities and conditions while Participant C stated specific areas that she thought would be beneficial. These included “differentiating and modifying your curriculum,” “how to team teach with the inclusion teacher,” and “how to set up your classroom.” Downing, Eichinger, & Williams (1997) supported the need for more training in their research. They argued that the school district should be taking this challenge on and providing educators the needed training on a continual basis.

The third category of working with support staff demonstrated three different commonalities: the identification of available professional and support staff, shared responsibilities between professionals, and idea sharing. All participants identified the Intervention Specialist and the aides, Participant A added the School Psychologist, Guidance Counselor, former teachers, and School Psychologist. Participant B added to the list by identifying the Speech Therapist and specialized teachers to the list of staff supports. None of the participants identified the principal, Director of Special Services, Occupational Therapist, or Physical Therapist. This seemingly unintentional disregard for the above-mentioned staff may have be due to the limited or lack of time communicating directly with these individuals about inclusionary practices. The reason
was not clear from the research but may be inferred by the responses of the participants with the most consistent support staff identified as the Intervention Specialist and aides.

Shared responsibilities were another common theme addressed by the participants. They mentioned joint parent/teacher conferences and the modification of materials. In fact, according to Wood (1998), and Dymond, et al. (1997) the sharing of responsibilities was critical to inclusion. Although the theme of responsibilities was mentioned by the participants, they did not discuss the specifics such as the division of responsibilities. It was not evident from the responses that the participants in this study had a plan of action but instead they seemed to go with the flow of the system of communication in place.

Another common theme referred to by the participants was the sharing of ideas across disciplines. They all spoke of sharing as a huge benefit for the student with disabilities. Participant C went further by including this benefit to reach beyond to all the students in her class as well. She stated, “they have great techniques and adaptive and modifications type things they use in your classroom. You see it being used and you’re like ‘hey that can work for everybody’ and so we steal their ideas.” Downing & Peckham-Hardin (2007) gave support to this as they addressed the far-reaching benefits for all students when teachers participate in brainstorming sessions with various professionals.

The fourth and final category of planning time had one common theme - not enough planning time. Sebastian & Mathot-Buckner (1998) and Lewis (1994), found the same challenge to inclusion in their studies. Although all the participants stated that they did not have enough planning time, two of the three did not relate it to inclusion. Only
Participant C stated that it took “quite a long time.” It is unclear as to the reasons for the discrepancy between the participants. One possible explanation may be the difference of grade levels. In fact, Participant A stated, “in a first grade room a lot of things are hands on and they allow for kids to use different intelligences and different strengths...It’s not like we’re all sitting in rows at desks and all have to do the things the same way so this allows for more freedom and more independence and more flexibility which is perfect.” Another possibility may be that the participants do not identify all the modifications as specifically related to students with disabilities but just an aspect of teaching a classroom full of students with various abilities. Unfortunately, another possibility may be that they rely on the support staff to make the needed modifications for the student.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The limitations of this study were primarily the small size – three general education teachers. Furthermore, all participants were Caucasian females in their late twenties and thirties and represented one school district. All participants worked with the researcher and although the participants were encouraged to be straightforward with their responses, it cannot be established with certainty that the researcher’s relationship did not have an influence on the participants’ responses.

Another caution should be exercised when determining generalization of the findings is the inter-rater reliability. One individual, the researcher, examined the responses, and identified and sorted terms and key phrases into different categories. Although efforts were made to be consistent, a certain amount of subjectivity may have influenced the findings.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this study more research is recommended to gain a greater understanding of inclusionary practices. An area of interest includes the philosophy of school districts. It would be helpful to delve into their philosophies to discover how it supports or lacks to support inclusion and how their philosophies are implemented within the schools (i.e. support efforts of the students, teachers, and staff through professional development opportunities, purchasing of materials, allocating time for collaboration, financial resources, etc.) Further depth into the research may consist of how the district’s philosophies impact and influence the school’s and teacher’s inclusionary practices.

Additional research to further understand the inclusionary practices may include the amount of available training to pre-service general education teachers as well as professional development opportunities for current general education teachers involved in inclusion. All participants in the study claimed they had little to no training in inclusion. It was unclear if the participants were unaware of opportunities or indeed few to no training opportunities were available. If training was available, who and how was it promoted and who was financially responsibility for the cost of the training?

Further investigation into the collaboration methods of general education teachers would yield valuable information concerning inclusion. It would benefit teachers and other professionals to understand the current methods in order to enhance the existing system in place. One may discover the optimal amount of time needed, needed structure for the meetings, and other components that produce success.
Finally, it is recommended that future research could be conducted on the planning component of inclusion. The participants' responses were not conclusive as to the exact amount of time needed for inclusion. All participants stated not enough time for planning but two of the three participants then stated that planning for inclusion did not take that much time. More research is needed to fully understand the planning component when working with students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities.
Chapter Six
Implications for Practice

As school districts continue to participate in including students with moderate to severe cognitive and/or physical disabilities, they must recognize the need to develop a philosophy of inclusionary practice beyond the legal mandates of IDEA. Based on the research in this study, teachers are supportive of inclusion but seem to lack some direction that could be provided by the school district. The philosophy should include the district’s commitment to the students as well as its commitment to the staff. They should actively communicate their dedication through the areas of providing in-service training, administration support, and all other means necessary for the success of all involved.

For individuals considering a career in general education, inclusion is a common occurrence in many schools. One should consider their choices of colleges carefully prior to enrollment. Some colleges may provide more courses and training than others concerning special education issues such as general information, collaboration with support staff, discipline issues, etc. Furthermore, pre-service teachers preparing to graduate and beginning their careers may want to investigate the school districts they are considering. They should inquiry about their philosophy of inclusion and the districts expectations of the teacher.

For current general education teachers, continued training is essential for successful inclusionary practices. If their school district does not provide in-services on inclusionary practices, one may be able to locate other opportunities such as local conferences or seminars. Also, the teacher may be able to request financial reimbursement from their district for the cost of the programs as well as travel expenses.
It is important to investigate this prior to participation due to the limited amount of funds or possible approval requirements. Some possible beneficial training identified through this study included how to collaborate with various professionals across disciplines, modifying curriculum, setting up a classroom conducive to various needs, disciplining students with disabilities, and general and specific knowledge of disabilities.

Another critical finding of this research includes the support staff and its involvement with inclusion. Based on the findings, the various professionals are a vital component to the success of including individuals with disabilities. Teachers should investigate the related services and providers that are available in their school district and make every effort to collaborate with them.

Finally, the factor of time has been found a serious matter for the general education teacher. All the participants resounded the literature’s claims of not enough planning time. If inclusion is expected to be successful, adequate planning time should be incorporated into the teachers’ daily schedule to facilitate collaboration across disciplines, planning of appropriate activities, and making adequate modification to materials. If the times are not available during the school day, extra time should be allotted before or after school with financial compensation for the extra time.
References


Trump, G. & Hange, J., (1996). Concerns about and effective strategies for inclusion: focus group interview findings from West Virginia teachers (Appalachia


Appendix A

Teacher Survey

1. How do you rate inclusion?
Very positive  positive  neutral  slightly negative  negative

2. My training for inclusion is
Significant  Moderate  Some  None

3. The benefits of working with support staff is
Significant  Moderate  Some  None

4. The amount of time scheduled for planning would be considered
Significant  Moderate  Some  None
Appendix B

Teacher Interview Questions

1. What is your philosophy on inclusion?

2. What are the benefits/drawbacks of inclusion for students with disabilities?

3. What are the benefits/drawbacks of inclusion for the students without disabilities?

4. What are the benefits/drawbacks of inclusion for teachers?

5. Have you received training in inclusion?
   a. If so, what and who provided the training?
   b. Was it adequate?

6. In what areas do you believe more training is needed?

7. How prepared are you to implement inclusion?
   a. In what ways?

8. What support staff is available to the student for needed supports?

9. Do you work with any support staff to plan, implement, modify, and/or accommodate lesson plans? How does that usually work?

10. When working with support staff, what are the benefits?

11. When working with support staff, what are the challenges?

12. How much extra planning time does it take to make the accommodations/modifications needed for students with disabilities?

13. Do you have enough planning time?

14. When planning your lessons, how do you determine the needed supports?
Appendix C

Participant A's Interview Responses

1. Well, I believe in inclusion. I think it is important. I think that the student that has special needs benefits from it and the students in the classroom benefits from that experience.

2. Well, I think the benefits are socialization-being part of the classroom, having relationships, and communications. I think the drawbacks are getting less of that one-on-one time if they don’t have an aide or if they’re not being pulled out at all. They are not getting that one-on-one that they need. On the other hand, when they’re part of the classroom that’s very important, too. So, I think there is definite positives and there could be negatives if it is not done, I think, with all of the needs of the child in mind. Like, if they’re not being pulled out if they need to be; if they’re not given an aide if they need one; if they’re just kind of put in there without any accommodations. I think it could have some drawback but otherwise I think it is wonderful.

3. Well, the benefits - I think they learn empathy. I think they learn how to communicate better. I think they learn how to be more accommodating and accepting and they see that people may have different needs but they are still people and they can start seeing them as people not just the disability and can get to know that child. The drawbacks, I don’t think for the rest of the students there are drawbacks. They’re part of the classroom and for the rest of the students there aren’t any drawbacks for having them included.

4. For benefits, I’m able to give my students a learning experience. I know when I was at OU and a teacher of mine said she had gone to (a local school) and they were right next door to (a school that served students with disabilities); but they never interacted with the children at the school and she actually was afraid. She didn’t understand it, so she was afraid of it. With young kids- kindergarten, first, second grade - to have these students in their room, they don’t learn to be afraid. They understand and learn to see that child as a child and not a disability. The only drawback I think, and it’s not even a drawback, it takes a little bit more time, a little bit more planning and a little bit more patience maybe, some more conferences with parents just more time, but you may have to do that with kids for other reasons too.

5. I had a class at OU with (instructor’s name), which was fabulous. And then my own personal experiences, I’ve worked a lot with Help Me Grow and through different organizations so actually understanding more about the disabilities and about special needs themselves. So each of the different things - that it could be how to deal with the classroom and just to understand more about autism, to understand more about Down Syndrome so that I actually have a knowledge of it before they come into the room. I did have a class at (local university) too –
(instructor’s name.) I think it helped. I definitely think I would have liked to have been offered more. When I was in school, and unless you were going into special education, there wasn’t even extra classes you could take. I think if you’re planning on being in a district that supports inclusion, it would definitely be nice to be at least offered more classes so you could go into more detail because it was definitely a brief, just overview.

6. I definitely think for the teachers to understand more about each condition or disability of the student would be helpful instead of just saying this child has autism they are going to be in your room. To have time or the training to be like ok, so what exactly does this mean. You know what’s going to help him, what’s going to set him off, what’s going to be most beneficial to him, how is this working for him, and how is his family dealing with it. To actually have more information about his day-to-day and not just at school but just in general, I think that would help.

7. Well, I think that as it comes to me then I prepare myself; so if I know that I have a child that has autism, then I would personally want to meet the student and family ahead of time. I would like to know preferences – likes and dislikes, and just kind of get to know the student before hand and to be able to have extra planning time with the special education teacher. I guess, basically set up a game plan for what we want to do and how we want to do it. What’s going to be most beneficial. What can we do.

8. Well, there’s you, and the aides are a good resource especially the ones that have spent a lot of time with us. They know that student’s likes and dislikes and what’s going to set them off, how they’re thinking, how they’re feeling, and even if you’re not using words they understand. For me this year (aide’s name) been wonderful. They are help by providing statements such as - OH, well when he goes to the bathroom, we use flashcards. That’s something that could have taken me a long time to figure out. Also, I think our guidance counselor, actually I haven’t gotten to use (Guidance Counselor’s name) much this year but with (former Guidance Counselor’s name) was really helpful. (School Psychologist’s name) is a wealth of information too, and past teachers so if you know the kindergarten teacher they had or the preschool teacher, that would be helpful too.

9. Well, this year I talked to (general education teacher’s name) about some things that worked for her last year and some things that were working with speech. Let’s use the microphone and see how that works - which is nice to have. Its nice to have (aide’s name) say, Oh well last year I did this and it worked really well. That is perfect because that’s not something he can tell us, so whoever can give us this information, that’s wonderful.

10. Well, the benefits are having more information and being able to help that child and have the extra resources.
11. Drawbacks, again it's more time planning but that's really the only thing that I could see.

12. It's not a lot of extra time. It's a little bit of extra time every day, to kind of make sure that you're taking care of everything such as does the aide have the papers that she needs to keep up with his things? Also when you come up and say, 'Oh let's try this', you just set up a little bit of time so that she can come in and show me how something works or we can talk about how things are going. It's just a little bit of time here and there and a little bit of time for me each day to kind of reflect. I try to consider what worked today, what didn't work today, and what can we try tomorrow? I try to consider what he got excited about so that we could try this again tomorrow but in a different way. It's just those little things a little bit of time every day and I think that instead of trying to do it in one big chunk at the end of the month, just a little bit along the way makes it a lot easier.

13. No! Oh God, no.

14. Yes, and you know in a first grade room a lot of things are hands on and they allow for kids to use different intelligences and different strengths - anyway which works out really well. So it kind of allows the students that freedom to do it in a way that is going to work for them. It's not like we're all setting in rows at desks and all have to do things the same way so it - this allows for more freedom and more independence and more flexibility which is perfect.
Appendix D

Participant B’s Interview Responses

1. I’m very much for it. I think the only circumstances that I run into as a regular Ed. Teacher is when there is a major meltdown with a child and it kind of disrupts the class, which I have a little bit of this year. When this happens we just take it light hearted. I just walk back in and say, oh, (student’s name) having a bad hair day and the kids love him. They’ve gotten to the point where they overlook a lot of things, so I think it’s great.

2. I can’t see drawbacks. I think the benefits are great because they get to work with the other kids and make new friends. I’m just sitting here trying to thinking of drawback - I can’t see a drawback.

3. A major benefit is that they can see that not everybody in the world is made the same and that people have some special needs. As I’ve said with the drawbacks, the only one is major disruptions. It really scares the kids at first until their aware of what’s going on.

4. The benefits are the same as the kids. I think we all need to be made aware of special needs and it’s nice to learn about those things. The drawbacks are just the major meltdown but we just kind of work through it and keep on with the day.

5. No, no I haven’t, my training has been through having kids in the classroom. It’s been first hand and you learn a lot of things such as how to deal with it with the other kids. I do encourage parents to share their child’s disability with the rest of the kids because I think when kids know, they are so much more accepting. I think it’s like my little boy this year, I think if they understood from the very beginning what his need was, I think that none of this would have bothered them.

6. I think we need to be trained on the different disabilities and on the different special needs. When working with a child with autism, aspersers, and I know there is a wide range, I think we need to be aware of it - how to deal with it, how to make things better for them when they have a meltdown. I think we need to be trained on how to deal with different children. I think education makes all the difference.

7. When I know a child is coming into my room that has special needs, until I know what his functioning level is, it’s hard to get prepared. I’m not saying that I don’t get prepared but until he is in the room and you know what level he’s on it’s difficult. I think the whole thing is when we know what the need is, we can prepare for it. If we need wheelchair accessibility. I like to brush up, I like to have their paperwork so I can read over it so I’m aware of at least some of their needs.
8. For us this year, I have a full time aide. She’s great to come in and help out with everything. The support from (Intervention Specialist) has been great this year. I’d never worked with (Intervention Specialist) before so I had no idea. They’re right there to help out if he has a little bit of a meltdown, they’re right there to work things out. So I think the MH teachers, any of the learning disabilities teachers, anything like that is great here.

9. I work with you, (Intervention Specialist’s name) downstairs right now, because I have (two students’ names). We don’t make a whole lot of modifications for the little boy but we have for her - we modify tests. The Intervention specialists are always more than willing to come up and help and we just sat down and did report cards together, so it’s kind of a collaborative thing.

10. It’s just so nice to talk to somebody else and just run my ideas by them or theirs past me. It’s almost like a team. And when we have meetings with parents, it’s so nice to have two opinions and to deal with things like that.

11. I don’t have any. I suppose if you had a difference of opinion but the support staff knows so much more than I do about the specialties, I’m willing to listen to what they have to say. I think the biggest thing would be if there were a difference of opinion.

12. It really doesn’t take a whole lot. I haven’t had a child that required a whole lot of modifications. And for the most part I give the Intervention Specialist teacher the test and they will modify it. Any modifications she’s more aware of in certain subjects so she modifies towards that. There really isn’t anything more than a normal child would be.

13. No, no I don’t think teachers ever have enough planning time.

14. I guess (aide’s being in here, I may have to plan to modify a little bit but as for planning for support, I don’t. I mean somebody is always here with him so I don’t have to. It may not be the regular aide but it will be somebody else. So, I guess it’s right there in place. The aide knows what to do. I may give her paperwork in advance to go over and we may talk about something afterwards but other than that, that’s kind of the way it is. I guess I’m just thinking, do I plan extra? We may modify things but other than that… it always has to be done in advance, you’re always thinking about whether a test needs to be modified, shorten and if writing lessons are a little bit too much, so things like that.
Appendix E

Participant C’s Interview Responses

1. My philosophy on inclusion, is that I think it’s the best model for every student as long as the student is able to succeed at their highest level. I enjoy or think that full inclusion, if possible, is the best so my philosophy is for inclusion.

2. I think one of the main benefits is that students are with their peers. They are the same or about the same age, umm and they are socialized very well that way. They have the benefit of seeing students work at a higher level so it gives them goals. They also have the benefit of seeing students without disabilities that sometimes work at a lower level than they do so they can see that they’re not always the lowest in the class, so that sometimes is a boost for self-esteem. I’ve had students come in to be included that other students have fought to get on their team for review games and jeopardy games because they’ve known that that student knew the information and knew that their disability didn’t keep them from being one of the best students in the class. I think some drawbacks would be when students do really struggle and sometimes, in a full inclusion class don’t have necessarily enough assistance or enough aides to work with if there are multiple inclusion students with only one aide. And also, sometimes, it’s a drawback that they have to, kind of put up with or sometimes are treated a little bit differently by other students in the room who don’t necessarily get the modification that they have.

3. I think that it is extremely important that student without disabilities interact with student with disabilities for multiple reasons. Such as fair isn’t always equal and if students learn that at an early age, that fair is not always the same, what’s fair for some students isn’t always fair for other students that it helps as a life skill to know that. I think that being able to work with students on multiple levels with disabilities, multiple IQ levels, and multiple disability levels helps students be able to look at the world and work and live in the world as adults even better. They’ve been exposed to not everybody is the same - sometimes people need extra help. I think it builds compassion in those students and builds a desire or a want to help other students and to be able to say - ok everything is not exactly the same for everybody but I can live with that and also when I grow up there are going to be people that I have to help or I have to take care of or part of the money from my pay check is going to go to help people who maybe need help. So it builds that understanding at an early age and that compassion. I know that I’ve had regular ed. students, who when they were working with and developing relationships with those students with disabilities have decided that they want to be a MII teacher. They want to work in the help class and that’s the job they really want. They want to work at (local school that serves students with disabilities) or they want to work in a classroom with students because they find they have a deep level of desire to help them learn and grow and succeed and that’s something their really good at. So, I think some drawbacks have to do with when a student with disabilities is in a classroom, it can be a little bit distracting.
Sometimes students feel left out because they don’t have a disability because sometimes it appears, even though it’s not, that the teacher gives more attention to or that they get more help or that they get more second chances than other students. But then again I think that its understanding that equal isn’t always the same for everybody. And sometimes that can be a distraction. Sometimes students with disabilities who are having a bad day can be a distraction to students in their learning when they’re being loud or when their being physically more active than normal.

4. I think that some of the benefits that I find as a teacher, of having students included, is that I already have multiple levels of learning in my room. I change and modify for those specific students in the room. This helps me develop and focus and modify curriculum for students who also need some changes or modifications to their curriculum but maybe don’t have an IEP but just are working on a level lower than the grade or higher than the grade that I’m currently teaching. It helps you to stay aware of and focused on those different levels that come into your room. Another thing is that sometimes I just pick up techniques that the students, aides, or teachers use with them like 1, 2, 3. I had a student who the teachers always asked him – 1) he understood it, 2) he kind of understood it but could go over it again, or 3) he didn’t have any idea. So, I use that as a real short formative assessment in my classroom all the time and that’s something that an aide use to do in my classroom. It is a benefit to see how teachers who are specialized in special ed. They have great techniques and adaptive and modifications type things they use in your classroom. You see it being used and you’re like “hey that can work for everybody” and so we steal their ideas. I think some drawbacks can be that it is mostly just time. Sometimes you forget that I have students in the MH room, out of my room, but they’re in my home room. I want to include them when we do things like buddies or birthdays and at the last sec…movies, you know when we do like a reward for behavior, and at the last second I’ll remember. ‘Oh gosh, I forgot to go tell their other teacher that I wanted them to come in for this, I hope they don’t have anything scheduled for that time.’ So the organization of it and also the planning - of making sure that every thing is differentiated on the student level, plus the regular classroom, plus the gifted student’s level. So it’s a lot of planning, a lot of organization, a lot of cooperation among other teachers, and really working together as a team with the Intervention Specialist that you have… that is assigned to that student.

5. I have received very little inclusion training. I think I took one class and it was called adaptation and modification for the middle child or something like that. I mean it wasn’t even a full inclusion class. I’ve been to a few workshops on differentiating, but not on the level of inclusion for special ed., more on differentiation for the gifted student. The district actually provided that differentiation training on a district inservice day four or five years ago. I’m not sure who the person was, someone they brought in. It was not adequate.
6. I think that differentiating and modifying your curriculum is very important. Also, training on how to team teach with the inclusion teacher - that it’s not just an aide coming in and sitting with that student so that they can do the work for them, but how to actually team teach so that that student doesn’t have to have an aide doing work for them. That they’re being met at their own individual level and if it’s something they need - a scribe or something - that’s totally different. Having the knowledge or the ability to team teach and to make sure that you are meeting that student’s needs, you’re on that student’s level. Because sometimes in inclusion, in certain areas, students might function super high and they don’t need that much modification, but I may not know that until they take the test and ace it all and they can answer all the questions, but their intervention specialist would know that. And so having more training and how to work together in those areas that might not be spelled out in the IEP because you can’t write everything in that area. Also, I guess training in how to set up your classroom so that everybody is very comfortable with having inclusion in the room. And so that students don’t make comments that they don’t mean to make that seem insensitive. Having that ability to set your room so that there’s an area that tests can be read and its not a distraction; or an area where students who if they have a walker that your room, how to set up your room so they can easily flow through and not constantly trip over students.

7. I would say that I don’t feel like we really do inclusion, full inclusion with our students but I do have students that come in subject specific with their aides. I feel like just from practicing over the years that I’m prepared for that and for the way we run that system such as modifying tests and having their aide if they need to take notes things like that. I guess I don’t feel very prepared to have a full inclusion class where you team teach and have the intervention specialist is in the room also instructing because I haven’t really had any instruction in that area or practice.

8. Well, we have our Intervention Specialist, we also have an aide. We have, of course, the Speech Therapist and the Guidance Counselor, and then our specialized teachers - the aides go with them to their special classes and our MH teachers and our LD teachers.

9. I work with the intervention specialist - the special ed. teacher for my students on my grade level to know how much for each student to modify the tests. We work together on pointers about who can handle different types of questions and how many options for those questions - to modify tests and curriculum. We also work with a teaching assistant. I work with her on modifying tests for her specific students. When I work with the MH students, I work with the whole staff in the MH room on modifying tests, assignments, and homework. We have some fairly active parents who also join in on whether they feel that modifications are too little or too much for their child’s ability to.
10. I think the benefits are just having someone else to have ideas with. Someone whose a specialist, who works in that area all the time, whether it’s the teacher or the teaching assistant, the speech teacher, the counselor, that’s their specialty area and so they can give lots of really good ideas, pointers, and tips. It might be something that I’m looking at going, ‘I don’t know what to do about this’ and they’re like ‘Oh that’s easy, here’s what you do.’ So that whole kind of collaborating, brainstorming, teaming - it’s not just you on your own, you’re not an island of one going I don’t know what to do, or I’m going to pick this but I don’t know if this is the right technique or the right strategy. I think that’s a huge benefit having a support staff that’s very specialized in their areas.

11. I think that the challenges can be that sometimes we get really focused on our own area. In the regular classroom you sometimes hear teachers say, “Well, the special ed. students have their special teachers and their assistants and their support staff and so I’m the only person standing up for my regular ed. kids so I’m going to stand up for them. It can sometimes be an us against them – ‘Well, that’s not fair for my kids or that’s not fair for your students. Sometimes there can be that conflict because you feel a sense of needing to protect your students in whatever area. Some other disadvantages can be that teachers sometimes have different styles or different philosophies. You have to both be willing to find a happy medium ground to benefit the students. Sometimes that’s difficult to do if you really have a strong philosophical difference and your opinions on how students needs can be met and what’s the best place for students and the least restrictive environment. They are people so there will always be conflict. You know, not everybody will agree 100% if the time.

12. It usually takes planning a normal lesson maybe ten minutes more just to look through and make sure that it’s enough modification but not too much modification. Just to change my plans and to modify, when I do my tests depending on the amount or I guess the degree of disability, it can sometimes take quite a long time - I’ll use the test generator, and change questions, change options. If I can’t use the test generator sometimes I physically cut off the heading and glue it on a new piece of paper so it looks the same. I take out options so if there is four multiple choice options for a question, I’ll take out two. If I can’t just point and click on the computer, I have to white it out and make more copies and change things and then I will run it by someone like their assistant or the teacher upstairs, their intervention specialist, to say, ‘Okay do you think that its right on their level, not too difficult, not too easy.’ You know I don’t want them to have a piece of cake test but I also don’t want them to be able to succeed on the test or the material that we’re covering. Some areas are a little more sensitive because I teach Social Studies so some students with disabilities aren’t ready to talk about people who’ve been executed or not able to because of the strong emotion that they might have about things like 9/11. You know that’s part of our curriculum, and so seeing the towers fall and knowing that people are killed sometimes they actually re-live it and so it’s a little more difficult so I run those types of things by their teaching assistants usually. It does take some time
and it takes some planning, but day to day it’s not overwhelming. For test writing and exam writing assessments sometimes it takes a while.

13. No

14. When I look at what we’re reading, for example, we are doing Mexico right now, a lot of the terms and the words we are using are Spanish based, which is difficult sometimes for students with disabilities who are still working on grasping and decoding words that are in the English language. I look at is this too much information for them to try to read and work through on their own. Should we read it out loud as a class? I look at the reading level or the reading ability, how much assistance they need with the content, is the content on a level of maturity. Can they write well enough on these tiny maps, do I need to have it giant so they can write it, or do I just need them to do it verbally to their assistant or does she need to read the test to them, does she need to write the answers they give to her? At first I just go by their IEP, but then I determine what I see them being able to do in class also I look at their ability level and their formative types of assessment that we do in class. It could be as simple as like the 1,2,3’s - do you understand it. And they close their eyes and all participate. When I look at their homework or their work, if I can tell that mom and dad wrote all the answers down for them, or the assistant had to write down all the answers down for them, why was that? Could they not physically do it or could they not write that much? Was it too much, too big of a chunk to answer for them to do? Should we break it down into smaller sections so that they can finish that up? A lot of times I run the material by with their Intervention Specialist - Is this on target for them? Are they going to be able to do this or are they not going to be able to do that? When I modify their test, is this a good test, is this not a good test, because I lean towards modifying too much. I run maps and graphs and things that are always on the Social Studies tests - latitude and longitude, by the aide to find out if this is too abstract for the student. Some of them have been with their student since kindergarten and they’re in sixth grade. They know those students well so I use other people that work with them to help me gauge the appropriateness of their levels.