

ATTITUDES OF ELEMENTARY GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS
REGARDING INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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By
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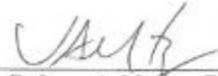
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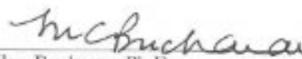
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements..... 5

Chapter 1-Introduction.....6

Chapter 2-Literature Review.....9

Chapter 3-Method.....24

Chapter 4-Results.....33

Chapter 5-Discussion.....49

References.....59

Appendices.....63

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The schools in the United States provided education for approximately 20 percent of the children identified with disabilities in 1970. Laws existed in many states that barred children who were blind, deaf, had significant emotional or cognitive disabilities from attending school at all (United States Department of Education, 2010). Beginning with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 and followed by the modified and strengthened Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities were entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). IDEA also requires that students with disabilities have the opportunity to be educated with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent possible. Under IDEA, the education of a student with disabilities is not the sole responsibility of a special education teacher. According to the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2015), in the fall of 2011, 95% of students with disabilities between the ages of three and twenty-one were educated in public schools. When looking at the 95% of students who attended public schools, over 61% of them spent more than 80% of their school day in a general education classroom (U. S. Department of Education, 2015).

With IDEA mandating students with disabilities to have the opportunity to be educated with children without disabilities to the greatest extent possible, the integration of students with disabilities in general education classrooms continues to become more prevalent. With more students with disabilities spending a larger portion of their school day in general education classrooms, general education teachers have had to take a more compelling role in the education of these students. This practice is referred to by Valeo (2008) as "mainstreaming" or "integration" and is described as the "placement of learners with disabilities in regular classes on a full-time or part-time basis with typically developing peers." Similarly, Patrick Schloss (1992)

defines mainstreaming as “placement in a regular education environment with or without accommodations.” Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond (2008) cite several studies indicating students with special education needs benefited from being in the classroom with students without identified disabilities. One of the studies that they cited indicated that the students with disabilities instructed in a general education classroom performed better than those who were instructed in classrooms without typically developing peers. Inclusion into the general education classroom provides social contact with same-aged peers and helps prepare the student for the world beyond the classroom.

Lee-Tarver (2006) stated that the attitudes of teachers and administrators are linked to the acceptance of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. In the article “Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Classrooms”, Jordan et al. (2009) state that further research is needed to explore general education teachers’ beliefs about their roles for instructing students with special education needs. Olson, Chalmers, and Hoovers (1997) conducted research on the attitudes and attributes of general education teachers who were identified as able to implement inclusion successfully in the classroom. The five elementary school and five secondary school teachers in the Olson et al. (1997) study were chosen based on the recommendations from the on-site principal and special education teacher. Due to the fact the Olson et al. (1997) study was conducted with such a small sample size, the authors of this study suggest replication of the study done with a larger sample size to increase validity. Other researchers have determined a need for in-service training to further develop inclusive attitudes towards students with special education needs (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009).

The purpose of this current research study was to explore the elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms in

the Warren Unified School District (a pseudonym). The Warren Unified School District (WUSD) has adopted a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) as their model for providing intervention and instruction to all students, including special education students. With this model, the general education teacher is asked to provide differentiated instruction using the core curriculum materials implementing the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The implementation of MTSS, which requires the incorporation of students with disabilities into the classroom for instruction in the academic subjects (i.e. reading, math, and writing), has raised concerns and resistance from general education teachers.

When this current study is completed, it will answer the following question: What are the attitudes of elementary school general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) into the general education classroom during academic instruction? The results of this study aspire to highlight the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into their classrooms. Additionally, the results of this study may illuminate the areas general education teachers feel are impeding their ability to successfully include students with disabilities into their classrooms. Information garnered from this study may also inform school site administrators and district personnel with topics for future professional development that address this issue.

Chapter 2-Literature Review

Introduction

In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) was passed by Congress. Prior to the passing of this law, only one in five children with disabilities received an education in United States' schools. In fact, many states had laws that specifically excluded students that had moderate or severe disabilities like blindness, deafness, or mental retardation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The passage of PL 94-142 assured children with disabilities would have access to public education, protected the rights of these children and their parents, provided financial assistance to the states, and put measures in place to ensure the education these children were receiving was effective (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975).

In 1990, when the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was amended by Congress, it was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If it is suspected that a student may require special education services, this law entitles students with disabilities to be assessed by trained professional using materials that are non-discriminatory (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). After this evaluation is completed, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be developed to meet the specific needs of the student. With the enactment of this law, the IEP must provide provisions for a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). A free and appropriate public education means the student has access to the same curriculum as students who do not have a disability. The least restrictive environment entitles a student with a disability to spend as much time of their school day as possible with students without identified disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was first amended and revised by Congress in 1997. This amendment added the mediation process as a method for solving disputes and included developmentally delayed children between ages three and nine to the description of those with a disability (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997). In 2004, this law was revised and renamed the Individuals with Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). The revisions to the law aligned with the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act stating special education teachers must meet their state's certification requirements, increased accountability procedures, and established procedures for identifying students with a specific learning disability (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Each of these reauthorizations of P.L. 94-142 has reaffirmed the belief that children with disabilities should be educated in general education classrooms.

With the enactment of these laws since 1975, the number of students with disabilities included in general education classrooms has risen. Today, 57 percent of students with identified disabilities spend 80 percent or more of their school day in general education classrooms (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Therefore, the teachers in these classrooms have had to take on a more compelling role in the education of students with disabilities integrated into their classrooms. In addition to attending Individual Education Plan meetings, general education teachers have had to vary their methods of instruction, make adaptations to the academic content and assessments, and make changes in the physical arrangement of their classroom to meet the needs of students included.

Research has been recently completed that indicates that attitudes are important factors in the education of all students, but especially in the education of students with disabilities (Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Creating more inclusive attitudes in schools is viewed

as a priority to ensure students with disabilities are accepted (Slee, 2001). In a study completed by Shady, Luther and Richman (2013), they cite a study conducted by Fuchs (2009) which found that teachers who did not exhibit a positive attitude toward the integration of the students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) had a negative effect on the learning and well-being of these students. In addition, negative teacher attitudes and opinions have been found to have an adverse effect on necessary curricular and classroom accommodations (Biddle, 2006). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are also linked to their willingness to embrace the concept of integration or inclusion (Shady, Luther & Richman, 2013). The research question for this study was: What are the attitudes of elementary school general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans into the general education classroom during academic instruction?

This chapter will provide an overview of the history of special education and information about mainstreaming, integration and inclusion practices. In addition, information about the attitudes of general education teachers with regards to inclusion will be included.

Overview of the Context of Literature

Although there are many definitions of social justice, all include the basic concepts of inclusion and equal opportunities. Bell (2007) states that social justice is a process and a goal that results in all groups in society having their needs met. The discussions about social justice have a long history, but current discussions about social justice and its relationship with education focus on the categories of distributive justice, retributive justice, and recognitive justice (Gale, 2007).

The premise that guides distributive justice states everyone who has the same basic needs and resources are allocated equally to ameliorate a deficit (Gale, 2007). Distributive justice in

the educational setting might include providing special classes to help students who have been identified as lacking basic skills (Gale, 2007). Teachers and schools who subscribe to the premise of distributive justice will easily justify making changes to the rules or curriculum to address the needs of individual students often stating to do otherwise is not fair.

Central to retributive justice is the belief that people get what they deserve (Maiese, 2004). Retributive justice in a school setting centers on applying rules fairly and a student's academic achievement or talents are rewarded rather than a student's efforts (Gale, 2007). Since academic achievement is highly valued by society, and students with disabilities often are not able attain a high level of academic achievement, the students with disabilities are often not viewed as being successful. The efforts of the students with disabilities are not recognized or valued. Students with disabilities often require the general education teacher to make accommodations or adaptations to the curriculum to meet their needs. According to Gale (2007), teachers in the study felt students deserve an equal amount of the teacher's time; therefore, they did not feel it was right for the needs of a student with a disability to take teaching time away from the other students.

Another type of social justice present in an educational setting is cognitive justice. Distributive and retributive concepts of social justice focus on the assets of a student and their access to resources (Gale, 2007). Cognitive justice changes the focus from what a student has to what can be done for the student (Gale, 2007). Cognitive justice includes the components of self-identity and self-respect, self-development and self-expression, and self-determination (Gale, 2007). Within cognitive justice, a student is not identified by their differences, they are given opportunities to learn with their peers, and the needs of the student are considered when making educational decisions. Teachers who do not subscribe to the components of cognitive

justice may refer to a student by their disability rather than by their name, don't agree with the financial expenditures that may be necessary to meet the needs of a child, and disagree with the inclusion of students with disabilities stating they did not receive specific education to teach these students (Gale, 2007).

With a need for social justice, the classroom is the place to help students learn to be tolerant and build a sense of community (Hutchinson & Romano, 1998). Social justice can have an important and long-lasting impact on fairness and equality (Bell, 2007). General education teachers and special education teachers have come together to work toward the goals of social justice (Villa & Thousand, 2017).

Your attitude toward something is the way you feel and think about it which influences the way you behave (Collins Online Dictionary, n.d.). In social psychology, attitudes are defined as a set of beliefs or emotions a person uses to judge people, things, or events (Cherry, 2017). According to Daniel Katz (1960), attitudes provide meaning for a person's life, help communicate one's identity, help a person fit into a social group, and protect a person's self-esteem or justify actions that make them feel guilty (McLeod, 2014).

Educators are interested in attitudes because of the link between teachers' attitudes and a student's academic achievement (Simonson & Maushak, 2001). In 1965, Rosenthal and Jacobson studied the effect of teacher perceptions and the effect of these perceptions on student learning. The study determined that when teachers believed a group of students had great potential to learn and succeed in school, the students made improvements on standardized tests. Conversely, when the teachers believed a group of students had limited potential to learn and succeed, the students did not make improvement on standardized tests. This study highlighted the important correlation between teachers' perception and academic achievement.

The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and general education teachers becoming more involved in these students' education reflects a change in educational practices. Inclusion is a value and belief system, not strategies, that is based on the premise that having students with disabilities in the same classrooms with students who do not have disabilities benefits all students (Villa & Thousand, 2017). Research has been completed focusing on the attitudes of teachers toward the assimilation of students with disabilities into general education classrooms and what the impact of these attitudes has on the learning of these students.

In 1996, Scruggs and Mastropieri evaluated 28 research studies completed between 1958 and 1995 on the opinions and beliefs of teachers toward teaching students with special learning needs. The over 10,000 teachers in these studies were representative of teachers in different-sized districts from across the United States, Australia, and Canada. The teacher participants had a variance of teaching experience and levels of education. In the analysis of these studies, more than half of the teachers were agreeable to the concept of inclusion and teachers expressed they would be willing to have a student with disabilities included in their classroom. However, only a small percentage of these teachers felt the typical classroom was the place where optimal learning would take place—most favoring a special education classroom as the ideal setting for students with disabilities. The participants in these studies expressed the need for (a) additional training in understanding different disabilities, (b) desired additional professional development in strategies for teaching students with disabilities, and (c) stated they would like the help of the special education teacher or a teaching assistant when a student is included in their general education classroom.

Surprisingly, during the 37 span of years of the studies evaluated by Scruggs and Mastropieri, the opinions and mindsets about the inclusion of students with a learning handicap did not change. The findings of the studies evaluated between 1958 and 1995 by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) were similar to the results of a qualitative study of six elementary school general education teachers and five elementary school principals (Valeo, 2008). The respondents in the Valeo (2008) study were not against the concept of inclusion; however, they stated since students with disabilities require more help than students without disabilities they did not feel inclusion in a general education classroom was the appropriate placement.

Research findings indicate students with learning disadvantages who spend a portion of their school day in classrooms with student without identified disadvantages were absent fewer days and demonstrated academic skills closer to their grade-level peers when compared to similar students who spend less time in general education classrooms (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). A study completed by Fuchs found teachers with negative attitudes about the inclusion of students with specialized learning needs often acted negatively toward these students and thereby had a negative impact on student learning (Shady, Luther & Richman, 2013).

These studies outline the importance of researching the attitudes and mindsets of general education teachers toward the integration of students with specialized learning needs. The criterion for evaluating the literature was to highlight the relevance toward the research topic and to evaluate each additional study in relation to previously reviewed studies. Studies about teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with severe disabilities were excluded from this review of the literature. Research about the attitudes toward inclusion from a student or parent

perspective, and the studies which focused on settings other than elementary schools was also excluded because these research areas did not correlate with the research question.

Literature Area-Historical Perspective

An historical perspective of the literature about attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion or mainstreaming provides an important frame of reference to more current research on this topic. Although the concept of inclusion of students with learning handicaps may seem like a recent phenomenon in education, this topic has been of interest to educators for many years.

Alexander and Strain (1978) examined 1970's literature to determine what attitudes teachers had toward inclusion and if those attitudes had an impact on student learning. The studies examined found that when additional training was provided for the general education teacher focused on teaching students with disabilities, it made a positive change in the attitudes of the general education teachers (Alexander & Strain, 1978). The study completed by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) as cited by Alexander and Strain (1978) demonstrates how teacher attitudes can have a positive or negative effect on student achievement. Positive or negative attitudes have been shown to have a direct correlation to how teachers communicate with the students with disabilities in their classrooms (Alexander & Strain, 1978). The authors suggest further research examining (a) teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, (b) identifying the specific needs of the general education teachers regarding inclusion, and (c) also identifying training that would addresses those issues is warranted.

Five elementary school teachers were nominated by their site principals to participate in a small qualitative study examining attitudes of teachers toward integration of students with learning handicaps (Olson, Chalmers & Hoover, 1997). As a result of the interviews conducted, the general education teacher stated working in partnership with the special education teacher

was essential to the success of inclusion (Olson, et al., 1997). The participants in this study had positive opinions toward the inclusion of students with learning handicaps in their classrooms, representing a different perspective from the results from the previous research of Alexander and Strain (1978) and Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996). The respondents in this study identified teacher training in specific strategies to support the learning needs of the students with learning handicaps that are spending more time in the general education classroom (Olson, et al., 1997). This identified need for additional training on how best to teach students with disabilities are similar to the results Scruggs and Mastropieri (1997) found in their analysis of over 35 years of research. Due to the small sample size in the Olson et al. (1997) study and because the participants were not chosen randomly, the authors suggest replication of the study with a larger, randomly selected sample group. The focus of the Olson et al. (1997) study was on the social aspects of inclusion rather than academics, resulting in an additional limitation of this research.

An analysis of 26 quantitative studies conducted between 1998 and 2008 was completed to examine attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the typical classroom, what affects those attitudes, and the effects of those attitudes on the inclusion of students with special needs (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010, p. 333). The authors used the components of cognitive, affective, and behavioral as the foundational description of attitudes. The analyses of these studies indicate the majority of teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs are negative or neutral; however, the teachers had more negative beliefs toward the inclusion of students with learning or behavioral challenges (de Boer et al., 2010). When teachers had more years of teaching experience and had received additional instruction in how to instruct students with disabilities, this study found that those teachers had more positive attitudes toward including students with special needs (de Boer et al., 2010, p.

345). Similar results about the relationship between teacher training and positive attitudes were present in the analyses of the research conducted by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996). The authors indicate that although teachers may have positive opinions about the concept of inclusion, this does not indicate the teachers are willing to make the necessary accommodations or adaptations required to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities included in their classrooms. A limitation of this study, similar to the study completed by Olson et al. (1997), it focused on the social aspects of inclusion not inclusion for academics.

A seminal study completed in 1932 measured the positive effects of mainstreaming of children with moderate handicaps. The academic performances of the children who received their instruction in a special education classroom instructed by a special education teacher were compared to the academic performances of the children who received their instruction in a class with typically developing peers (Bennett, 1932). When standardized tests in the areas of reading, math, and spelling were administered, the children who received their instruction in the class with typically developing peers demonstrated better academic skills than the students who were instructed in only the special education classroom (Bennett, 1932). Although this research was conducted 85 years ago, it demonstrates the positive effects mainstreaming can have on the acquisition of academic skills for students with disabilities even providing changing contexts of inclusion over these years.

Literature Area-Attitudes

Attitudes of general education teachers toward the integration of students with identified learning handicaps continue to be an area of interest for current research. When students with learning handicaps are integrated into general education classrooms, they have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with specific accommodations outlined to help ensure the students'

success. A quantitative study of 123 general education teachers from various geographic areas in the United States was conducted to evaluate teachers' attitudes about IEPs and if the IEP was a useful tool for guiding the instruction for the students with disabilities included in their classrooms (Lee-Tarver, 2006). The teachers who participated in this study stated that even though they did not fully comprehend the process in developing an IEP, the IEP was useful in helping to know how to provide instruction to the students with disabilities included in their classrooms (Lee-Tarver, 2006). The analysis of this study revealed that teachers expressed a need for additional training in understanding all aspects of the IEP and that more training on instructional practices that would enhance the learning of students with learning challenges would be beneficial (Lee-Tarver, 2006). The respondents of this study stated a desire for general education teachers to take a more active role in the development of the IEP, because the perceptions were that when the special education teachers and the general education teachers work collaboratively the students with disabilities inclusion is more successful (Lee-Tarver, 2006).

A qualitative study was conducted with six elementary general education teachers to explore the affiliation between teacher attitudes and the inclusion of students with special needs (Valeo, 2008). Unlike the participants in the Olson et al. (1997) study who had overall positive attitudes toward inclusion, the participants in this study had negative feelings about including students with disabilities on a part-time or full-time basis into classrooms with students without identified disabilities (Valeo, 2008). The participants in this study stated students with disabilities included in the typical classroom required too much of the teacher's time, these students displayed behaviors that distracted other students, and they stated a general education teacher should not be responsible for meeting their educational needs (Valeo, 2008). Valeo

(2008) stated conducting the interviews in person, rather than anonymously, may have contributed to the unique results.

At an elementary school in the United States, 21 general education teachers, six special education teachers, and seven other members of the school personnel participated in a mixed-method research study to evaluate the opinions of teachers toward inclusion and to identify professional development subjects that would enhance successful inclusion (Shady, Luther, & Richman, 2013). The participants anonymously completed a survey to (a) determine their attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms, (b) if they felt they had adequate time to meet the needs of these students, and (c) if inclusion of students with learning challenges had a negative impact on the learning of students without any disabilities (Shady et al., 2013). The participants in this study were provided on-going professional development in targeted areas to enhance their knowledge of educating students with disabilities for the purpose of determining if increased knowledge in method of teaching students with disabilities would have a positive impact on the overall attitudes toward inclusion (Shady et al., 2013).

After receiving professional development for a school year, the original survey was re-administered to the participants. After the analysis was completed and despite most of the respondents stating they had gained knowledge about inclusion, a majority of the teachers felt they would not be able to make changes to their teaching to address the various needs of students with disabilities integrated in their classrooms and most felt inclusion may not be the best choice for educating students with disabilities (Shady et al., 2013). Similar to the findings of the study completed by Lee-Tarver (2006), the participants in this study expressed a desire for more information on the components of an IEP. This could also speak to the importance of the type

and presentation of the professional development toward these ends. According to the researchers, completing the survey at the end of a school year when teachers are focusing on end-of-the-school year projects may have resulted in overly negative responses to the survey.

Connections to the Literature

Attitudes of teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom have been researched for many years. The study conducted by Alexander and Strain (1978) along with the synthesis of over 35 years of research conducted by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) provide a historical foundation in the research about teachers' attitudes and the impact they have on student learning. The results of the early study conducted by Bennett (1932) showed students with moderate disabilities who received their academic instruction in a general education classroom made more academic gains than similar students who were educated in classes comprised of only students with disabilities. This historical study highlights the benefits of providing students with learning challenges the opportunity to be educated in learning environments with students who do not have learning challenges.

Research has shown when teachers receive additional training about how to teach students with disabilities they express more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of these students in their classrooms (Alexander & Strain, 1978; de Boer et al., 2010; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), except for the Shady (2013) study. Most research has also shown there is an interconnection between teacher attitudes toward inclusion and how the teacher interacts with the students with disabilities. Teachers with positive beliefs toward the inclusion of students with disabilities have more positive interactions with the students with disabilities (Alexander & Strain, 1978).

Beginning with the early research into evaluating teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities, teachers' attitudes were more negative toward the inclusion of students with more significant learning or behavioral challenges (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). The evidence of negative teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students demonstrating more challenges or students who take instructional time away from other students was corroborated in other research studies (de Boer et al., 2010; Valeo, 2008).

The literature has shown studies evaluating the attitudes of general education teachers toward inclusion have been qualitative studies conducted with a small number of teachers, and with two studies the teachers were selected to be the participants (Olson et al., 1997; Valeo, 2008). The mixed method study conducted by Shady et al. (2013) did not evaluate the attitudes of only general education teachers. The studies conducted with larger sample sizes focused on the attitudes of general education teachers toward inclusion, but they also evaluated attitudes toward IEP development, remedial education, and social inclusion (Lee-Tarver, 2006; Urton, Wilbert & Henneman, 2014). With much of the literature focusing on the social inclusion of students with learning challenges, the literature on attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into a general education classroom has not specifically addressed the inclusion of these students for *instruction* in the basic curriculum.

Conclusion

The literature demonstrates different factors have an impact on the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with an identified disability, and these attitudes can have a positive or negative influence on the learning of these students. The literature also has shown general education teachers express a need for additional training or professional development to assist them in the instruction of the students with special learning

needs included in their classrooms. This study explored the attitudes of elementary general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with an IEP into the general education classroom for instruction in the basic curriculum. The next chapter will outline the methodology, setting, participants and data collection procedures.

Chapter 3-Method

Introduction and Design

In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) was followed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) where the focus became the individual child rather than a group of children identified as handicapped (Individual with Disabilities Act, 1990). With this change, the law now entitled students with disabilities to be educated in a public school in the least restrictive environment and to the maximum extent possible with students who do not have identified disabilities (Individual with Disabilities Act, 1990). With more students spending a greater portion of their school day in general education classrooms, general education teachers have had to take a more compelling part in the education of students with disabilities. This active role includes anticipating and responding to the unique needs of the students by adapting or accommodating the curriculum, changing the process in how instruction is delivered, allowing student to demonstrate learning in different ways, and altering their classroom environments.

In the article “Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Classrooms”, Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond (2009) state that further research is need to explore general education teachers’ beliefs about their roles for instructing students with special education needs. Teacher attitudes have been linked to teachers’ willingness to embrace the concept of integration or inclusion and the willingness to provide the necessary classroom accommodations (Shady, Luther & Richman, 2013). Olson, Chalmers, and Hoovers (1997) conducted a qualitative study on the attitudes of general education teachers using a purposeful sampling of teachers who were selected by the special education teachers and site principals as successfully implementing inclusion in their classrooms. This study was conducted with a small sample of five elementary

school teachers and five secondary school teachers. The study conducted by Shady et al. (2013) included less than 40 general education teachers, special education teachers, and other school personnel at a single site. Therefore, both of the studies conducted by Olson et al. (1997) and Jordan et al. (2009) were conducted using relatively small sample sizes and, as such, these researchers suggested that further research on the subject is warranted with a larger sample size. Based on this information, the decision was made for this study to include a larger sample size of general education teachers exclusively. Rather than a convenient sample, this study was conducted using a stratified sampling method from a larger population of teachers.

The purpose of this research was to explore the elementary school teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms in the Warren Unified School District (a pseudonym). The study answered the following question: What are the attitudes of elementary school general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans into the general education classroom during academic instruction?

To evaluate the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) into the academic instruction in their classrooms, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The design method for this study is a cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey design is an appropriate design method to use when a study is to examine attitudes, beliefs and opinions (Creswell, 2011). Elementary school general education teachers in the Warren Unified School District were surveyed with an instrument that included five demographic questions, twenty Likert quasi-interval scale research questions, and one free-response research question. The details of the participants, the setting,

the survey instrument and survey procedures, and the proposed analysis procedures are included in the following sections of this chapter.

Participants

To ensure proper authorizations were obtained for use of participants, permission to conduct research was first obtained from the school district's Director of Special Education. The participants selected for this study included all 305 general education teachers from 17 elementary schools in the Warren Unified School District. These participants did not include the special education teachers, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, paraprofessionals, site principals or other school personnel at these sites. The participants were general education teachers assigned to teach students in Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 5. Only general education teachers were selected for this study to investigate their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with an IEP into their classrooms. A copy of the "gatekeeper" letter that was sent to the Director of Special Education can be located in Appendix A. The letter granting permission to conduct research in the Warren Unified School District is located in Appendix B.

Setting

The Warren Unified School District is located in a medium-sized suburban city located in Southern California. This suburban city is located about 35 miles north of a major metropolitan area. The District provides educational services to students from preschool through grade 12. The current student enrollment in grades transitional kindergarten through grade 12 is approximately 19,400 students. In the Warren Unified School District, approximately 21% of the students receive free or reduced priced meals. Approximately 9% of this same student population is designated as English learners. In the Warren Unified School District,

approximately 56% of the student population identified as white, 26% stated as being Hispanic or Latino, 10% Asian, 2% Black, 1% Filipino, and 4% identify themselves as two or more races (Ed-Data, 2015). Based on information provided by the District Special Education Department, there are approximately 2,000 students in the District receiving special education services. Please refer to Table A for further delineation of the students with special education services according to their primary disability.

Table A

Percentage of Students with Special Education Services based on Primary Disability

Primary Disability	Percentage of Special Education Population
Autism	11%
Deafness	<1%
Emotional Disturbance	5%
Established Medical Disability ages 3-5	<1%
Hard of Hearing	1%
Intellectual Disability	4%
Multiple Disabilities	1%
Orthopedic Impairment	1%
Other Health Impairment	19%
Specific Learning Disability	32%
Speech or Language Impairment	25%
Traumatic Brain Injury	<1%
Visual Impairment	<1%

The seventeen elementary schools in the District include 33 special education classrooms. Each of the elementary schools has at least one special education classroom designed to meet the needs of the students at that school who have been found to have mild disabilities. These students spend the majority of their day in a general education classroom. To meet the learning needs of students with moderate to severe disabilities, the District has designated six of the elementary schools as sites that have at least one specialized program on their campuses. The

students attending these specialized programs spend the majority of their day in the special education classroom, but are included in general education classrooms to the greatest extent possible. The general education teachers at each of the seventeen elementary schools have the opportunity to integrate students with different disabilities into their classrooms. It was important to maintain anonymity of the teachers from each school who responded, so no site-by-site demographic information is provided here.

Instrument

The general education teachers participating in this research received a survey based in part from previously developed instruments designed to evaluate teacher attitudes toward the integration or inclusion of student with disabilities into general education classrooms. The survey questions for this study were developed and influenced from information garnered from the Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (TATIS), the Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC), and the Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES). The questions were developed by this researcher based on the research question and by information that would be beneficial to the Warren Unified School District.

The Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (TATIS) which was developed in response to the change in the way students with mild to moderate disabilities are being educated (Cullen, Gregory & Noto, 2010). The developers of the TATIS desired to address the need to assist teachers to develop a more positive attitude toward the integration of students with specific learning challenges. The TATIS uses a 7-point Likert scale to measure the attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of students with mild-to-moderate disabilities into the general education classroom (Cullen et al., 2010). Statistical analysis indicated the TATIS was considered to be

both a reliable and valid instrument for measuring teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities (Cullen et al., 2010).

The Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC), which was developed in 1997 by H. Keith Cochran, was referenced in the development of the survey questions used in this study. Similar to the development of the TATIS, the STATIC was developed to discover a way to measure teacher attitudes toward integration and the possible effect these attitudes have on the performance of students with disabilities (Cochran, 1997). Using a 6-point Likert scale to measure teachers' attitudes, the STATIC consists of 20 items measuring attitudes in the areas of the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion, teachers' concerns and beliefs about inclusion, and the physical and resource concerns about inclusion. Based on statistical analysis, the STATIC was deemed to be a reliable and valid survey instrument for measuring teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities (Cochran, 1997).

Internationally, there has also been a change in educational services for students with disabilities, with more of these students spending an increasing amount of time being included in classrooms with students who do not have identified disabilities (Mahat, 2008). In response to this, the Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) was created (Mahat, 2008). The MATIES uses a 6-point Likert scale to measure teacher attitudes in the areas of cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes (Mahat, 2008). Statistical analysis of the MATIES found it to be both reliable and valid for measuring the affective, behavioral, and cognitive component of teachers' attitudes toward the physical, social and curricular inclusion of students with disabilities (Mahat, 2008).

Procedures

As previously stated, consent to conduct research in the Warren Unified School District was first obtained from the Director of Special Education. After initial permission to conduct research was granted, an application for approval of research involving human subjects as participants was made to the California State University Channel Islands (CSUSI) Institutional Review Board (IRB). After approval from IRB, the survey tool was finalized, the elementary school principals were contacted, and the participants were surveyed.

The first draft of the survey contained 5 demographic questions and 20 questions that were oriented to the research question to be answered using a 6-point Likert scale. This format was deemed appropriate to promote greater teacher participation and gain information relating to the research question. The initial draft was presented to the District where suggestions were made to revise wording on several questions, additional questions were suggested and an additional question was added to allow a participant to provide a written comment on the research topic. The revisions were made and then approved by the Warren Unified School District.

To help increase the validity of the questions for this study, the survey was provided to a member of the county Response to Intervention/Multi-Tiered System of Supports (RtI²/MTSS) Task Force. This professional educator has personal experience with developing an inclusive program at an elementary school site. A school psychologist in the Warren Unified School District was also contacted to provide input on the survey. These reviewers offered suggestions for minor revisions.

As a final step in the survey development, the survey was piloted by two general education teachers. One of the teachers currently teaches 5th grade in a different school district.

The other teacher had 10 years of experience as an elementary school teacher in the Warren Unified School District, but is currently teaching at a middle school that was not included in the study. These teachers stated the questions were easily understood and the survey required no more than a 15-minute time commitment to complete the survey.

The final draft of the participant consent (Appendix C) and the survey (Appendix D) were recreated as an electronic survey using Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool. After completing the survey in Qualtrics, an application for approval to disseminate the survey was made to CSUCI. After the Qualtrics survey was approved, it was sent to the elementary school principals.

The Director of Elementary Education for the Warren Unified School District was informed about the research study being conducted in the District. She was informed that the Director of Special Education had approved research to be conducted in the District involving the elementary school principals and elementary general education teachers. This contact was made to increase the participation rate of the elementary school principals. After the Director of Elementary Education was informed about the research, each of the seventeen principals was contacted individually via email. This email included a letter (Appendix E) explaining the topic of the research and the request for them to disseminate the survey to only the general education teachers at their school site. The initial contact with each principal was followed four days later by another individual email which included the link to the research survey. The email requested each principal forward the link to the survey to only the general education teachers working at that school site.

The decision of when to send out the link to the survey was made strategically. The survey was sent after the general education teachers were completed with all necessary

assessments and grades for the first trimester. With minimal extra demands on a teacher's time, it would increase the chances a teacher complete the survey. Since the survey was disseminated shortly before the Winter Break, the window for completing the survey was extended to the Friday of the first week teachers returned to work after the break. The decision for this extended time frame was made with the understanding that before a break, teachers may decide to wait to respond to nonessential emails when they return in the New Year. This extended time increased the possibility of a higher response rate.

A week after the web-link to the survey was emailed to each principal, a follow-up email was sent. In this email, the principals were thanked for providing assistance in conducting this research study. Acknowledging the busy schedule of site principals, the web-link to the survey was again included in this email stating if they had not had the opportunity to forward it to their general education teachers there was still time to do so. If a principal felt comfortable, it was suggested a reminder could be made to the teachers to complete the survey.

The survey responses were collected anonymously by Qualtrics. The surveys contained no information which would aid in the identification of an individual participant. Per IRB requirements, no IP addresses were collected which further ensures the anonymity of each participant.

For this study, descriptive statistics was used to determine measure of central tendency in the data, frequency distributions and percentages of responses in each category of the survey. The complete results and analysis of the survey will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4-Results

Introduction

With the passage of the revised Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004, students with disabilities were entitled to be educated in a public school in the least restrictive environment and to the maximum extent possible with students who do not have identified disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004). By including more students with disabilities into general education classrooms, general education teachers have been asked to take a more active role in the education of students with disabilities. In addition to attending Individual Education Plan meetings, general education teachers may be expected to adapt and modify curriculum, assignments, and assessments to meet the individual needs of the students included in their classrooms and alter their classroom environment.

In the article “Teaching the Teachers: A Study of Perceived Professional Development Needs of Educators to Enhance Positive Attitudes Toward Inclusive Practices”, Shady, Luther and Richman (2013) state teacher attitudes are linked to a teacher’s willingness to provide the necessary accommodations to make sure students with disabilities are successfully included in their classrooms (p. 173). The studies completed by Olson, Chalmers and Hoover in 1997 and Valeo in 2008 also explored the relationship between teacher attitudes and the success or failure of the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms. This research explored in this study investigates elementary school teachers’ attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms in the Warren Unified School District. The results of this research will answer the question: What are the attitudes of elementary school general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) into the general education classroom during academic instruction?

To investigate the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with IEPs into the academic instruction in their classrooms, this study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. All of the elementary general education teachers in the Warren Unified School District were surveyed with an instrument that included five demographic questions, twenty Likert quasi-interval scale research questions and one free-response question. The results of this survey will be presented in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Demographic Results

The five demographic survey questions were designed to understand the respondents' overall educational training and experience, their background knowledge in special education, and their experience with including students with disabilities into their classrooms.

After reviewing the participant consent form (Appendix C), 90 respondents agreed to participate in this research study. However, upon analysis of the surveys, nine of the surveys were not analyzed because they were incomplete. The following results reflect the 81 surveys that were completed in their entirety. With the potential of 305 participants, the 81 completed surveys represent a 27% response rate.

Of the survey respondents, 74 (91.36%) stated they have been teaching for 10 or more years. There were two (2.47%) respondents with seven to nine years of teaching experience and three (8.70%) stated they had five to six years of experience. One person (1.23%) responded they had three to four years of experience and an additional one person stated they had one to two years of teaching experience. None of the survey respondents reported less than one year of teaching experience. To determine if the percentage of survey participants with 10 or more teaching experience was reflective of the experience of elementary school general education teachers in the District, the most recent seniority list of certificated employees was analyzed

(Certificated Senior List, personal communication, March 24, 2017). The analysis of this document indicated approximately 86% of the elementary general education teachers have 10 or more years of teaching experience. The years of teaching experience indicated by the survey respondents was similar to the years of teaching experience of elementary general education teachers in the Warren Unified School District. There were 57 participants (70.37%) who have earned a master's degree. For 24 out of the 81 respondents (29.63%), a bachelor's degree was the highest level of education they attained. None of the survey participants reported obtaining a doctoral degree. The majority of the respondents of this study are well-educated with many years of teaching experience.

To delve deeper into the background knowledge of the participants, they were asked about their special education training. The majority of the respondents report they have received no special education training or have only received informal training by a local county office of education or the school district for no college credit. Please refer to Table 1 for a detailed explanation of the special education training of the survey participants. Since respondents were able to mark all areas of training, the number exceeds the total number of completed surveys.

Table 1

Description of Special Education Training

Type of Special Education Training	Percentage of Respondents	Number of Respondents
No special education training	29.63%	24
Informal training by the county/district (no college credit)	33.33%	27
Informal training-earned continuing education units from a university	14.81%	12
1-2 college courses for credit in special education	27.16%	22
3-4 college courses for credit in special education	8.64%	7
5 or more college courses for credit in special education	1.23%	1
Bachelor's or higher degree in special education	6.17%	5

In addition to indicating their special education training, participants indicated how many professional development workshops they have attended that focused in part or entirely on the inclusion or mainstreaming of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Of the 81 participants, 31 (38.27%) reported they have attended no workshops that focused on inclusion. Additionally, 23 of the 81 participants (28.40%) indicated they have attended one to two workshops, 12 of the participants (14.81%) reported they have attended three to four workshops, and 15 (18.52%) participants have attended five or more workshops.

The survey asked participants how many years of teaching in which they had at least one student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) included in their classroom. The two-thirds of

the participants in this study, 54 (66.67%) indicated they have eight or more years' experience having a student with an IEP included in their classroom. Another 16 (19.75%) have five to seven years' experience with the inclusion of a student with an IEP in their classroom. Eight of the 81 respondents (9.88%) reported three to four years of experience with the inclusion of a student with an IEP, and 3 (3.70%) respondents revealed that they had a minimum of one to two years' experience with these students.

Survey Results

Several of the survey questions explored general feelings toward teaching students with disabilities. Refer to Table 2. Sixty-four of the 81 participants (79%) strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed they are confident in their own ability to teach students with disabilities, while 17 of the 81 participants indicated that they are not confident in their teaching skills for this particular population of students. Based on the survey responses, 42 of the teachers stated that they feel some degree of anxiety when they learn there will be a student with a disability included in their classroom. When asked if teaching students with disabilities has an effect on how they feel about teaching, 45 out of the 81 respondents (56%) agreed in whole or in part that teaching this student population has an effect on their feeling about teaching in general. To further explore the attitudes about teaching a student with special education needs included in the classroom, the participants were asked if they became frustrated with these students due to their inability to keep up with the day-to-day curriculum. Thirty-seven out of the 81 participants (46%) somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they feel frustrated when members of this student population is unable to keep up with the day-to-day instruction in the basic curriculum. The remaining 44 participants disagreed in whole or part that they feel a level of frustration when students are unable to keep up with the curriculum.

Table 2

Feelings Toward Teaching Students with Disabilities Included in General Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Confident in their ability	4.94%	7.41%	8.64%	33.33%	35.80%	9.88%
Feel anxious about inclusion	16.05%	22.22%	9.88%	30.86%	17.28%	3.70%
Affects feelings about teaching	7.41%	28.40%	8.64%	24.69%	22.22	8.64%
Feel frustration when students unable to keep up	12.35%	20.99%	20.99%	28.40%	13.58%	3.70%

Two of the survey questions elicited the level of training the respondents have in the area of teaching students with disabilities. Refer to Table 3. The participants were split equally between disagreeing and agreeing that they have been trained to meet the needs of this specific student population; 41 of the 81 participants agreed they have been trained and 40 participants indicated they have not been trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities. However, the responses were less positive when the participants responded to whether the Warren Unified School District has provided any professional development to the general education teachers in how to meet the needs students with disabilities. Sixty-four of the 81 respondents somewhat

disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed they had received professional development in this area from the District.

Table 3

Training for Teaching Students with Disabilities

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Trained to meet needs	18.52%	17.28%	13.58%	30.86%	11.11%	8.64%
Professional development provided by District	20.99%	40.74%	17.28%	16.05%	3.70%	1.23%

Additionally, this survey elicited responses about whether the general education teachers feel students can learn the core curriculum, if accommodations are implemented to meet their needs. Core curriculum is the same grade-level academic curriculum provided to students who do not have an identified disability. When accommodations are implemented, 46 of the 81 respondents (57%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed with the statement that students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) included in general education are able to learn the core curriculum if accommodations are made to meet their needs. The remaining 35 respondents disagreed, that even with accommodations; students with disabilities are able to learn the basic curriculum. The respondents also answered several questions about their about their willingness and knowledge about making adaptations to curriculum and assessments. Of the participants in this survey, five out of the 81 participants disagreed they would be willing to make adaptations to the core curriculum to meet the needs of students with special education needs included in their classroom.

The survey questioned if the participant teachers had working knowledge to make adaptations to the core curriculum to meet the specific needs of students included in their classrooms. Refer to Table 4. Sixty-five of the participants in this survey indicated they know how to make adaptations to the basic curriculum to meet the specific needs of students included in their classrooms. When asked if they are willing to adapt in-class assessments to meet the needs of students with special education needs included in their classrooms, seven out of the 81 respondents (9%) indicated they are not willing to make these adaptations. With 74 out of the 81 participants indicating they are willing to make adaptations to in-class assessments to meet the needs of students included in their classrooms, 59 of the respondents indicated they know how to make these adaptations. All of the participants in this study somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they would be willing to make physical changes (i.e. rearrange the space) to meet the needs of any student with special needs included in their classroom.

Table 4

Accommodations to Core Curriculum to Meet Needs of Students Included in General Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Can learn when accommodations are made	6.17%	14.81%	22.22%	24.69%	23.46%	8.64%
Willing to make adaptations to curriculum	1.23%	3.70%	1.23%	19.75%	41.98%	32.10%
Know how to make adaptations to curriculum	0%	8.64%	11.11%	38.27%	25.93%	16.05%
Willing to adapt in-class assessments	0%	3.70%	4.94%	19.75%	43.21%	28.40%
Know how to adapt in-class assessments	1.23%	13.58%	12.35%	33.33%	20.99%	18.52%
Willing to make physical changes to classroom	0%	0%	0%	8.64%	43.21%	48.15%

This study also explored whether general education teachers felt there was a benefit to integrating students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Refer to Table 5. The survey sought to determine if teachers felt students with disabilities included in the general education classroom for the instruction in core curriculum had an increase in their academic achievement. Nine out of 81 participants disagreed or somewhat disagreed there was any benefit to integrating students with disabilities into a general education classroom. Forty out of the 81

respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, or somewhat disagreed there was any increase in the academic achievement of students with special education needs when they receive instruction in the basic curriculum in the general education classroom. The remaining 41 respondents agreed in whole or in part that this student population demonstrates an increase in academic achievement when they are included in the general education classroom for instruction in the core curriculum.

Table 5

Benefits to Inclusion in General Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Benefit to integrating students in general education	0%	3.70%	7.41%	34.57%	32.10%	22.22%
Increase in academic achievement when included	6.17%	13.58%	29.63%	34.57%	12.35%	3.70%

In addition to responding to questions about the benefits of having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom for instruction in the core curriculum, the participants responded to questions about possible negative impacts of having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom. Refer to Table 6. The survey respondents replied to whether they felt having students with disabilities included in the classroom actually hinders the progress of students without disabilities. Forty-four of the respondents (54%) indicated they agreed on some level that the inclusion of students with disabilities hinders the progress of students without disabilities. Fewer of the participants, 35 out

of 81, indicated that it is difficult for students with disabilities to make progress in the general education classroom.

Table 6

Negative Impacts of Inclusion in General Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Hinders progress of students without a disability	6.17%	24.69%	14.81%	39.51%	11.11%	3.70%
Difficult to make progress	6.17%	27.16%	23.46%	28.40%	13.58%	1.23%

This study further explored the opinions of general education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities by asking the participants if the degree of the disability had an impact on their feelings if the student should, or should not, be included. Refer to Table 7.

When asked if students with academic skills that are measured to be one year below grade level should be included in the academic instruction in a general education classroom, 61 of the 81 participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed these students should be included. In contrast, when the participants responded to the question asking if students with academic two or more years below grade level should be included in the academic instruction in general education, 31 of the 81 participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed these students should be included. The participants also responded to whether they felt all students who have an IEP should receive all of the instruction in the core academics in a special education classroom. The majority of the respondents (85%) strongly disagreed, disagreed, or somewhat

disagreed that students with an IEP should receive all of their academic instruction in a special education classroom.

Table 7

Students with Disabilities be Included in Academic Instruction in General Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Academic skills one year below grade level	1.23%	6.17%	17.28%	29.63%	32.10%	13.58%
Academic skills two or more years below grade level	16.05%	27.16%	18.52%	17.28%	12.35%	8.64%
All instruction should be in special education	27.16%	33.33%	24.69%	9.88%	4.94%	0%

The participants in this study were asked if they felt the cooperation between special education teachers and general education teachers is needed for inclusion to be successful. Sixty-three of the 81 respondents indicated they strongly agreed cooperation between special education and general education teachers is needed if inclusion is going to be successful. Fifteen out of the 81 agreed collaboration is needed and three out of the 81 respondents somewhat agreed cooperation between special education and general education teachers is needed for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities. None of the respondents disagreed that collaboration is needed.

Results from Free Response Question

The final question in the survey allowed the participant to write additional comments or elaborate on any of the previous questions. Twenty-nine of the participants chose to write additional comments. These responses were transcribed and then sorted into common themes. Several themes emerged from this process. The common themes included (a) the need or desire for additional special education training, (b) difficulties with making accommodations was expressed, (c) concerns about the inclusion of students significantly below grade level, (d) concerns about the inclusion of students with behavior challenges, (e) the importance of a partnership between the special education teacher and the general education, and (f) participants told about the positive impact of having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom.

Training. There were numerous comments made about the need for additional training for general education teachers. One of the participants stated, “If the district is planning on mainstreaming sped children into the gen ed. (sic) classroom, then the district should pay for ALL teachers to be trained in how to teach these students.” This lack of training in how to instruct students with disabilities was a common thread among those that expressed this feeling. One respondent wrote, “Don’t have enough resources or training to teach special education students.” A few of the comments stated they would like to have more integration, but the lack of training is keeping them from feeling they can accomplish this.

Frustration. Several participants expressed their frustration with various aspects of having students with disabilities integrated into their classrooms. One respondent specifically stated it was frustrating to teach students with disabilities. Another participant expressed their frustration by stating, “It is too much work to have to make accommodations and

modifications—time is an issue.” Some respondents added that the core curriculum is difficult to teach to general education students, and it can be overwhelming to try and teach the concepts to students with disabilities. This sentiment is best reflected by the statement, “Core curriculum is so rigorous now, it is a daunting task to get gen Ed (sic) students through it, let alone kids with disabilities.” The opinion that inclusion of students with disabilities hinders the progress of the other students in the classroom was regularly expressed in the qualitative remarks. In contrast to the majority of the comments, a single participant stated making academic accommodations is simply part of differentiation.

Academic Delays. The general consensus of the comments that encompassed feelings about academic delays were that students with academic skills measured to be two or more years below grade level should not be included in a general education for instruction in the basic curriculum. It was stated that at the elementary level one or two years below grade level is a huge delay. The respondents felt that if a student has academic delays of more than two years, the student would need more than basic accommodations. This statement from one respondent reflected this sentiment by stating, “Having students that are 2 or more years below grade level is just unacceptable.” Some comments said it is difficult for the student to be included when the concepts presented are “above” them, while others simply stated inclusion of students with more significant academic delays is “unacceptable.”

Behavioral Challenges. Many participants chose to make comments about students who exhibit behavioral challenges that are included in the general education classroom. There were comments made that students with learning disabilities often exhibit inappropriate behavior when included in the general education classroom, and this behavior is disruptive and distracting to the other students in the classroom. One participant wrote the converse statement expressing,

“If the student is able to function without disrupting the regular classroom, then their presence in my classroom is not a problem for me.” Several respondents expressed their concern that students with behavioral challenges integrated into the general education classroom is a safety hazard to the other children and takes away from the learning of others. It was also noted that it is difficult to teach when students that exhibit inappropriate behavior are included in the general education classroom. There were several comments stating that students that exhibit inappropriate behavior or have other behavioral challenges should not be included at all in a general education classroom. The statement, “Students with behavioral issues that consistently interrupt the learning of other students should not be integrated for core subjects” summarizes many of the participants’ attitudes toward the inclusion of students with behavioral challenges.

Collaboration. There was a general consensus that collaboration between the special education teacher and the general education teacher is essential. It was expressed it would be beneficial if there was a designated time for this collaboration to take place rather than meeting during lunch or recess times. It was stated that all children can learn and succeed in general education when the general education teacher and the special education teacher work together to meet the needs of the students with disabilities. One participant stated:

I believe I am better prepared to teach students who have disabilities and have an IEP when I have met and discussed a plan of action with the special education teacher on how to ensure that this student has a successful experience in my regular ed. classroom. Finally, one comment summed up the responses in this area by stating, “Communication is key.”

Positive Impact. Several participants chose to add comments about the positive impact the inclusion of students with disabilities has had on their teaching or other students in the classroom. Three of the 29 respondents who wrote additional comments stated they “love, and

feel comfortable,” working with the students with disabilities included in their classrooms. One respondent said having students with disabilities included in the classroom was important to the diversity of the classroom. This sentiment is reflected in the statement, “It is wonderful for my students to see kids with different abilities.” There was also the sentiment that having students with disabilities included allowed children to learn to help each other (with their school work). One participant responded by stating, “Teaching children with special needs has a POSITIVE effect on my teaching!”

The next chapter will include a discussion of the significance of these results. It will also discuss limitations of this study and make recommendations for further research on this topic.

Chapter 5-Discussion

Introduction

In 1970, the schools in the United States educated only one in five children with disabilities. In fact, some states had laws that excluded children who were blind, deaf, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded (United States Department of Education, 2010). In 1990, after the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed which focused on providing children with disabilities the same opportunities for an education as children who did not have disabilities (Individual with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). In 2004, when IDEA was modified and strengthened, students with disabilities were now entitled to be educated in a public school in the least restrictive environment and to the maximum extent possible with students who do not have identified disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

With the passage of this law, the inclusion of students with disabilities has become more prevalent in the general education classroom and general education teachers have had to take a more active role in the education of these students. In addition to attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, increasingly general education teachers may be expected to make accommodations or modifications to the curriculum, assignments, and assessments. There may also be a need for the general education teacher to alter the strategies used to deliver instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities included in their classroom.

In the 2006 article, “Are Individualized Education Plans a Good Thing? A Survey of Teachers’ Perceptions of the Utility of IEPs on Regular Education Settings”, the author Lee-Tarver states that attitudes of teachers and administrators are linked to the acceptance of children

with disabilities in general education classrooms. Also, teacher attitudes have been linked to teachers' willingness to accept the concept of inclusion and their willingness to provide the necessary classroom accommodations (Shady, Luther & Richman, 2013). To bridge the increased role of the general education teachers in the education of students with disabilities with research indicating teachers' attitudes have an effect on the success of including students in general education, this research explored the elementary school teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms. The study hoped to answer the question: What are the attitudes of elementary school general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans into the general education classroom during academic instruction?

This study was conducted in the Warren Unified School District (a pseudonym), which is located in a medium-sized suburban city located in Southern California. The District provides educational services to students from preschool through grade 12, with a current enrollment of approximately 19,400 students. In the District, approximately 21% of the students receive free or reduced-priced meals (Ed-Data, 2015). Approximately 9% of the student population is designated as English learners (Ed-Data, 2015). Based on information provided by the District Special Education Department, there are approximately 2,000 students in the District receiving special education services.

The participants for this study were 305 general education teachers from 17 elementary schools in the Warren Unified School District, with 81 of the general education teachers completing the survey. The participants selected for this study did not include the special education teachers, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, paraprofessionals, site principals or other school personnel at these sites. The participants were assigned to teach

students in Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 5. Only general education teachers were selected for this study to investigate their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with an IEP into their classrooms.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the attitudes of the general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with IEPs into their classrooms for academic instruction. All of the elementary general education teachers in the Warren Unified School District were surveyed with an instrument that included five demographic questions, twenty Likert quasi-interval scale questions and one free-response question. Discussion of the results, limitations of this study, and areas for further research will be included in this chapter.

Discussion

A number of connections can be made between the results of this study and the research related to the attitudes of general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities can be made. The teachers in this study provided their opinions about (a) their overall attitudes toward inclusion, (b) their opinions on the benefits of inclusion, (c) their feelings about which students are best included in the general education classroom, (d) their desire for additional training, and (e) they expressed the importance of collaboration between the special education and general education teachers.

When the general education teachers were asked to describe their confidence in their ability to teach students with disabilities, the results indicate the majority of the teachers feel confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities. These results are in contrast with the results of six studies reviewed by de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2010) which found general education teachers did not feel confident or competent to teach students with disabilities. This

discrepancy could be attributed to the fact the majority of the teachers who participated in this study had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Also, most of them reported five or more years' experience having a student with a disability included in their classrooms. Despite the teachers in this study indicating they felt confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities, more than half of them indicated they felt anxious about inclusion and the inclusion of students with an IEP had an effect on the way they felt about teaching. These results are unexpected considering almost two-thirds of the teachers in this study report eight or more years' experience with inclusion and the research indicates teachers with more experience have more positive attitudes (de Boer et al. 2010).

The teachers in this study indicated they felt frustrated when students with disabilities were not able to keep up with the day-to-day curriculum in their classrooms. Some of the respondents expressed that it is frustrating to teach students with disabilities and it takes up too much time to make the necessary accommodations or modifications to try and help these students be successful. The study conducted by Valeo (2008) found similar sentiments about the inclusion of students with disabilities. Research between 1958 and 1995 evaluated by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), found teachers in these studies also felt frustration with the inclusion of students with disabilities into their general education classrooms.

Prior research studies have found that general education teachers felt the inclusion of students with disabilities had a negative impact on the other students in the classroom. In the study, "Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education" by Jordan, Schwartz, and McGhie-Richmond (2009), teachers felt the inclusion of students with disabilities would detract from their ability to teach students who do not have a disability. However, in the study completed by Idol (2006) results indicated the inclusion of students with disabilities was not felt to be

detrimental to the learning of the other students. The participants in this study more closely reflect the sentiments of the Jordan et al. (2009) study, with over half of them feeling that the inclusion of a student with an IEP hinders the progress of students in general education. In addition, almost half of the participants in this study felt it has been difficult for students with disabilities to make progress in the general education classroom. Possible factors affecting the progress of these students in the general education classroom might include, (a) the accommodations outlined in the student's IEP have not been fully implemented, (b) the classroom teachers have not differentiated their instructional strategies, or (c) the students were not exposed to the rigor of the general education curriculum because they have had limited opportunities to be included for the instruction in the core curriculum.

Research has explored general education teachers' attitudes about which students they felt are included most successfully. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found teachers are more willing to include students with mild disabilities than those students with more severe disabilities. In their review of the literature, de Boer et al. (2011) also found teacher attitudes were more favorable toward the inclusion of students with mild disabilities or physical handicaps. In this study, this study's participants' responses reflect the findings of this past research. Almost three-fourths of the participants indicated a favorable response toward the inclusion of students that demonstrate academic skills one year below grade level. In contrast, approximately one-third of the participants indicated a favorable response toward the inclusion of students that demonstrate academic skills two or more years below grade level.

The research conducted by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000), found approximately two-thirds of the participants in that study stated physical changes to their classrooms would be required for the successful inclusion of some students with disabilities. In 2010, de Boer et al.

cited research evaluated in 2002 by Avramidis & Norwich in which teachers were found to be more willing to include students with physical disabilities compared to students with more moderate disabilities, indicating making the adaptations required for students with physical disabilities was not burdensome for the general education teacher. This favorable view of inclusion of students with physical disabilities was reflected in this study, as well. All of the participants in this study indicated they would make physical changes to their classrooms to meet the needs of this population of students.

The participants in this study expressed specific concern about the inclusion of students with behavioral challenges. Many indicated that they feel students with learning disabilities often display inappropriate behavior in the classroom and this is disruptive to students without IEPs. The general consensus of the respondents is students with behavioral challenges should not be integrated into the general education for the core curriculum instruction. Teachers' concerns about the inclusion of students with behavioral challenges exist in the research dating to the review of the literature done by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996). The studies conducted by Olson et al. (1997) and Avramidis et al. (2000) found similar negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with behavioral challenges. These studies reflect the same sentiments as the participants in this study who felt that students with behavioral challenges are too disruptive and take too much of the teacher's instructional time away from the other students in the classroom.

The participants in this study were asked about their willingness to make adaptations or modifications to the basic curriculum and classroom assessments. Over 90 percent of the respondents indicate they are willing to make adaptations to the curriculum and classroom assessments. When asked if they know the best ways to make the adaptations to the core

curriculum and classroom assessments, approximately three-fourths of them state they have the knowledge to make these adaptations. These results coincide with the majority of the respondents stating they are confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities included in their classrooms. The participants in this study report a higher degree of knowledge and willingness to make adaptations than data presented in previous research. In contrast, the studies conducted by Shady et al. (2013) and Idol (2006) about half of the participants in these studies expressed knowledge and willingness to make changes to the curriculum to meet the needs of students included in their classrooms.

In 1978, in the article “A Review of Educators’ Attitudes Toward Handicapped Children and the Concept of Mainstreaming” by Alexander & Strain advocated for the need for additional education for general education teachers to aid them in their ability to mainstream students. The need for training was also echoed in the review of the literature done by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996). Who noted that the majority of teachers concurred with the concept of inclusion, but felt they needed more training for inclusion to be successful. In the study conducted by Jordan et al. (2009), teachers expressed a fear of inclusion because they did not feel they were adequately trained. The study conducted by Shady et al. (2013) determined targeted professional development was essential for the successful implementation of inclusion. From the research, it is clear that training of general education teachers plays an important role in successful inclusion.

Although less than one-third of the participants of this study report they have had no special education training, surprisingly almost half of the respondents indicated they have been adequately trained to address the needs of students with disabilities included in their classrooms. Since the majority of the teachers in this study had been teaching for ten or more years, perhaps these years of experience positively influenced the perspective about being adequately trained to

meet the needs of these students. The participants in this study expressed a desire for additional training in how to meet the needs of student with disabilities that are included in their classrooms for academic subjects. The teachers felt they do not have enough training or resources to meet the needs of their students with IEPs. Over three-fourths of the participants state they had not received any professional development from the District to assist them with inclusion. The responses regarding training are somewhat ambiguous since earlier responses indicate teachers feel they are confident in their ability to teach students with disabilities and to make adaptations to the curriculum and classroom assessments.

All of the respondents in this study stated that a partnership between the special education teacher and themselves is needed to successfully manage the inclusion of students with disabilities. The research conducted by Lee-Tarver (2006) reflected this same sentiment by stating working collaboratively was essential for the success of the students being included. The respondents in this study stated there is a need to find a designated time for this collaboration to take place, since most of these conversations had been taking place during lunch or recess times.

Based on the research completed by Idol (2006), inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings resulted in some of these students passing the state test. In addition, the general education students' attitudes were improved toward the students with disabilities. Olson et al. (1997) found students with IEPs who were included in general education were able to make academic advances. However, the results of this study also indicate the general teachers see some benefits to inclusion. More than three-fourths of the teachers in this study stated there was a benefit to the students with disabilities that were included in a general education classroom for academic instruction. However, approximately two-thirds of the participants in the present study responded ambivalently about whether inclusion helped the students with disabilities show

an increase their academic achievement. This study found general education teachers feel inclusion is important to the diversity of their classroom. The teachers say inclusion also allows students to learn how to help each other. One study participant said having students with disabilities included in the classroom has a positive effect on their teaching.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is, although the survey tool was sent to all 17 elementary school principals in the Warren Unified School District, it is not possible to know if each of the principals actually forwarded the survey to all general education teachers at their respective sites. The current response rate of 27% may be an underestimate of the actual response rate if the survey was not actually sent to 305 general education teachers.

Another limitation is, despite directions stating the survey was to be sent to only general education teachers, there is no way to determine if indeed the survey was sent to only general education teachers. If a principal inadvertently forwarded the survey to *all* staff at their school, that might have included the special education teachers and the speech and language pathologists. If the survey was not sent to all the elementary general education teachers in the Warren Unified School District, the respondents may not be representative of classroom teachers having the experience of inclusion of students with a variety of identified disabilities.

Additionally, the results of this study do not allow for the differentiation between teachers and/or schools who serve students with moderate to severe disabilities compared to teachers and/or school who serve students with mild-to moderate disabilities.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the analysis of this study, it became apparent there are areas that could be further explored in future research. Since the participants in this study stated the need or desire for

additional education in the area of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, further exploration could be explored about what type of training or professional development the general education teachers feel would be most beneficial.

Additionally, the general education teachers in this study stated their frustration with the inclusion of students with more significant behavioral challenges. Further exploration into the specific types of behaviors causing the most frustration may be warranted. The effects of including students with behavioral challenges with general education students and finding what techniques or strategies a general education teacher could use to help these students be successful could also be researched.

Further research into the academic success of students with disabilities included in general education could be completed, using academic transcript information. This research could be broken down into researching the academic success of students in each of the special education eligibility categories that are included in the general education setting.

The teachers in this study stated that they knew how to create, and were willing to make, adaptations to the curriculum and classroom assessments. Additional research may be warranted to determine if general education teachers are implementing the accommodations and modifications outlined on a student's Individual Education Plan and what affect this has on the success of students being included in general education.

Finally, since this study explored the attitudes of *elementary* school general education teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the academic instruction in their classroom additional research at the middle school or high school levels could be undertaken to broad the scope.

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Appendix A

Gatekeeper Letter to School District

May 6, 2016

Dr. Jane Hare
Director, Special Education
Warren Unified School District
Suburban City, CA

Dear Dr. Hare,

My name is Donna Manley. I am a Learning Center teacher at an elementary school in the District. Also, I am a graduate student at California State University-Channel Islands working toward my master's degree in educational leadership.

I am writing to ask your permission to conduct research at the elementary schools in the district. The purpose of my research is to examine the attitudes of general education teachers toward the integration of students with Individual Education Plans into their classrooms. I am hoping the results of this study will identify the attitudes of general education teachers toward the integration of students with disabilities into their classrooms. I also hope this study will identify general education teachers' needs to assist them in the successful integration of students with disabilities into their classrooms.

Once I have consent from the school district to conduct this research, I would be happy to present my study to all the elementary principals at an upcoming meeting.

To conduct my study, I plan to send out surveys using Qualtrics to the general education teachers at all elementary schools in the district. The survey will contain a statement of consent for each participant. The participants and their responses will be anonymous. The planned start date for data collection is fall of 2016.

The results will be reported in my master's thesis. The results will also be made available to the district, the site principals, and the participants in the study. Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Donna Manley

Appendix B

District Approval Letter

Director, Special Education

May 9, 2016

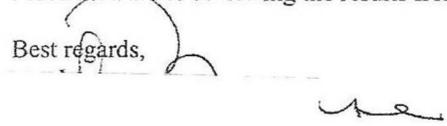
IRB
CSU Channel Islands
One University Drive
Camarillo, CA 93012

To Whom It May Concern,

I have reviewed the proposal to conduct research presented by Ms. Donna Manley. This letter provides formal approval for Ms. Manley to complete the research project in the _____ Unified School District _____, under the supervision of _____, Director of Special Education, _____ and staff from the California State University, Channel Islands.

I look forward to reviewing the results from this project.

Best regards,



Director, Special Education

Appendix C

Participant Consent

The purpose of this survey is to examine the factors that may influence teachers' attitudes toward the integration or inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans into the general education classroom. All data collected will be anonymous and used for the researcher's master's thesis project. Participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for choosing not to participate. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please submit your responses to the survey by January 6, 2017.

For this survey, the terms integration or inclusion refer to the instruction of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in age-appropriate general education classrooms. It requires that students with IEPs access the core curriculum using the required accommodations or modifications outlined in the student's Individual Education Plan.

It is expected that you may experience minimal risks from this study. People react differently to stimuli, and it is possible that you may react negatively to the survey question(s). If you experience discomfort, you may terminate the process at any time.

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of this study and agree that any potential risks to me are minimal. I understand my name and responses will remain anonymous. My IP address will not be collected and I will not be asked to provide personal identifying information on the survey instrument.

I understand there are potential benefits that may be realized from the completion of this study. For example, the information can be used to identify the needs of general education teachers to assist them in the successful integration of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) into their classroom. The results of the study will be confidentially provided to the school district and the elementary school principals. I realize that I have the right to discontinue participation at any time and that my decision to not participate in this study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

Appendix D

Survey

Informed Consent

The purpose of this survey is to examine the factors that may influence teachers' attitudes toward the integration or inclusion of students with Individual Education Plans into the general education classroom. All data collected will be anonymous and used for the researcher's master's thesis project. Participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for choosing not to participate. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please submit your responses to the survey by January 6, 2017.

For this survey, the terms integration or inclusion refer to the instruction of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in age-appropriate general education classrooms. It requires that students with IEPs access the core curriculum using the required accommodations or modifications outlined in the student's Individual Education Plan.

It is expected that you may experience minimal risks from this study. People react differently to stimuli, and it is possible that you may react negatively to the survey question(s). If you experience discomfort, you may terminate the process at any time.

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of this study and agree that any potential risks to me are minimal. I understand my name and responses will remain anonymous. My IP address will not be collected and I will not be asked to provide personal identifying information on the survey instrument.

I understand there are potential benefits that may be realized from the completion of this study. For example, the information can be used to identify the needs of general education teachers to assist them in the successful integration of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) into their classroom. The results of this study will be confidentially provided to the school district and the elementary school principals. I realize that I have the right to discontinue participation at any time and that my decision to not participate in this study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

After reading this information, I will participate in this research study.

- I agree
 I disagree

Demographic Information

The questions in the part of the survey relate to your experience and background in education. These questions help to provide context to your responses.

1. How many years have you taught?

< 1 year 1-2 years 3-4 years 5-6 years 7-9 years 10+ years

2. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

3. What best describes your special education training? Check all that apply.

- No special education training
- Informal training by the county/district (no college credit)
- Informal training-earned continuing education units from a university
- 1-2 college courses for credit in special education
- 3-4 college courses for credit in special education
- 5 or more college courses for credit in special education
- Bachelor's or higher degree in the area of special education

4. How many professional development workshops have you attended that focused in part or entirely on including (mainstreaming) students with disabilities into the general education classroom?

0 workshops

1-2 workshops

3-4 workshops

5 or more workshops

5. How many years of teaching have you had at least one student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) included in your classroom?

0 years

1-2 years

3-4 years

5-7 years

8+ years

Research Survey

6. I am confident in my ability to teach students with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

7. I have been trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

ATTITUDES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TOWARD INCLUSION

8. Specific professional development in teaching students with disabilities is provided by the school district to all general education teachers.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

9. Any student can learn the core curriculum if accommodations are made to meet their needs.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

10. There is a benefit to integrating students with disabilities into a general education classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

11. I become anxious when I learn a student with a disability will be included in my room.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

12. There is an increase in academic achievement when students with disabilities are included in the core instruction in the general education classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

13. Students with academic skills one year below grade level should be included in the academic instruction in the general education classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

14. Students with academic skills two or more years below grade level should be included in the academic instruction in the general education classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

ATTITUDES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TOWARD INCLUSION

15. Students with disabilities included in the general education classroom hinder the progress of the students without disabilities.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

16. Generally, it is difficult for students with disabilities to make progress in the general education classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

17. I am willing to make physical changes (i.e. rearrange the space) in my classroom to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly agree

18. I am willing to adapt the core curriculum to meet the needs of students with disabilities in my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

19. I know how to adapt the core curriculum to meet the needs of students with disabilities included in my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

20. I am willing to adapt in-class assessments for students with disabilities integrated into my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

21. I know how to adapt in-class assessments for students with disabilities integrated into my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

22. It is frustrating when a student with a disability is unable to keep up with the day-to-day curriculum in my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

23. All students who have an IEP need to receive all of their core academic instruction in a special education classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

24. Teaching students with disabilities has an effect on how I feel about teaching.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

25. Special education teachers and general education teachers need to collaborate for inclusion to be successful.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree

26. Please use the space below to add any additional comments or to elaborate on any of the previous questions. (maximum of 300 characters)

Appendix E

Gatekeeper Letter to Site Principals

October 9, 2016

Elementary School Principals
Warren Unified School District
Suburban City, CA

Dear Principals,

My name is Donna Manley. I am currently a Learning Center teacher at a school in the Warren Unified School District. Also, I am a graduate student at California State University-Channel Islands, working toward a master's degree in educational leadership.

Dr. Hare has given me permission to conduct research in the district. The purpose of my research is to examine the attitudes of general education teachers toward the integration of students with Individual Education Plans into their general education classroom. The results of this study will identify the attitudes of general education teachers and identify areas of need that would help them in the successful integration of students with Individual Education Plans.

Once I have received the University's approval to collect data, the survey for the participating teachers will be sent to you via email. Please forward this survey to only your general education teachers. The survey will require an informed consent from these teachers prior to beginning the survey. The participants and their responses will remain anonymous; thus reducing any concerns they may have in responding to the survey.

After the data from the completed surveys is analyzed, the findings of reduced data will be included in my master's thesis. The results will also be made available to district office personnel and to you, the elementary principals. As the site principal, you are welcome to share the results with your staff if you desire. Thank you for your efforts to support me in my research study. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Donna Manley

