

ASSESSING ATTITUDES OF ADMINISTRATORS, CORE CONTENT
TEACHERS, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AT THE MIDDLE
SCHOOL LEVEL TOWARD THE INCLUSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
STUDENTS INTO GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSES

by

Michael Steven Wilcox

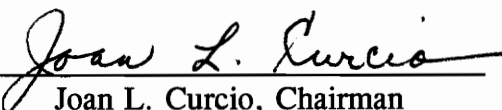
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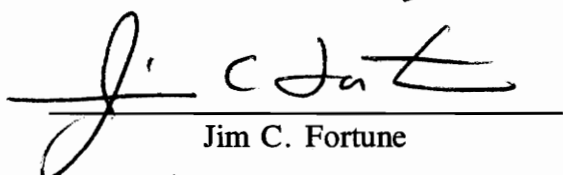
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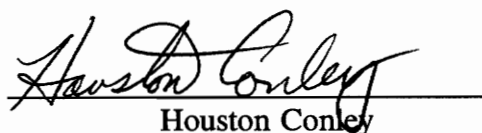
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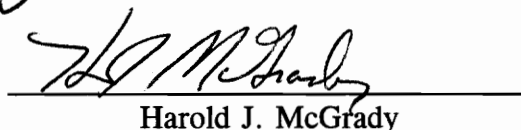
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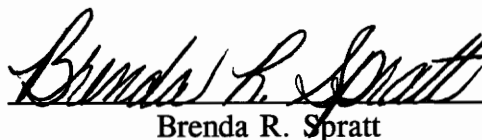
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Steve Wilcox

Dr. Joan L. Curcio, Committee Chair

Educational Administration

(Abstract)

The purpose of this study was to assess attitudes of acceptance by administrators, core content teachers, and special education teachers at the middle school level toward the inclusion of special education students into general education classes in a large suburban school district. Research questions for this study were: (1) What are middle school core content teachers' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?; (2) What are special education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?; (3) What are school based administrators' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?; (4) Do school based administrators' attitudes differ from those of middle school teachers?; and (5) What are the elements that influence administrator and teacher attitudes for the purpose of providing better preparation and training?

The primary methodology for collecting data was the use of focus groups, applying qualitative methodology for analysis. Specifically, content analyses were conducted on Demographic Information Sheets and in-depth group interview data (focus groups). Additionally, data were compared to elements from the Council for Exceptional Children model for an effective inclusion school.

The findings show receptiveness on the part of each of the groups toward inclusion, through descriptions based upon participant responses. Also, the primary findings show that attitudes of acceptance toward more inclusive environments are not isolated factors related to that receptiveness, but are connected to collaborative practices. These are enabled through committed leadership, allocation of resources, support systems, and school autonomy. These findings support the relationship of attitudes influencing teacher receptiveness toward more inclusive environments for special education students as previously indicated by Winzer (1987), Kauffman (1998), Barnartt and Kabzems (1992), Wisnieski and Alper (1994) and recently Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995).

Dedication

This work is dedicated to those people who have influenced my spirit in addition to helping me recognize the potential in all of us:

Denise, Seth, Cristina, the Worley family, Teresa Wilcox, Andy Wilcox, Jim Wise, George Rhudy, Tom Harris, Mac Wilcox, Pete Robinson, Dave Lindhjem, Mary Lindhjem, Dick Stevens, John Hollowell, Linda Cowgill, Ed Ryan, Chuck Rembold, Ed Thacker, George Keim, and all my FCHS wrestlers and their parents. Lastly, in memory of Phil Jones, Bev Kobayashi, Key Kobayashi, Jon Dubois, Donnie Smith, Michael McQuillen, and Duke Wilcox.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACTS	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
The Role of Recent Court Decisions	5
Significance of the Study	6
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of the Study	10
Justification of the Study	11
Limitations	13
Definition of Terms	13
Overview of Dissertation	15
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	16
Chapter Overview	16
Historical Perspective	16

The Legal Concept of LRE	19
Pressure and Interest Group Influence	26
Impact of the Regular Education Initiative	31
Previous Studies on Attitudes and Belief	33
Attitudes and Beliefs	33
Teacher Attitudes	35
Administrative Attitudes	41
Elements of Effective Inclusion	43
Reviewing Existing Program Models	47
Chapter Summary	51
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY	53
Introduction	53
Overview of Study's Research Design	53
Qualitative Research Methodology	54
Content Analysis Processes	55
Focus Group Questions	56
Effective Inclusion School Model Elements	57
Attitudes and Beliefs	58
Collaboration	58
Setting for the Study	59
Participants	60

Rationale for Selection	60
Subject Selection	60
Group Size	62
Population and Sample	62
Data Collection	63
Rationale for Focus Groups	63
The Focus Group Method Procedures	65
The Moderator	66
Timetable	67
Data Analysis	69
Outcomes	69
Analyst Role	70
Reliability	71
Validity	73
Internal Validity	73
External Validity	73
Confidentiality and Ethical Issues	74
Chapter Summary	75
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS	76
Introduction	76
Setting for Data Collection	78

Data Analysis	80
Focus Group Participant Demographics	80
Results for Demographic Information Factors	80
Qualitative Data from Demographic Information	88
Working Relationship	88
Collaborative Practices and Effective Teaming	90
Teacher Support through Training and Preparation	92
Results of the Focus Groups	94
Composite of Focus Groups' Salient Points	95
Themes from the Focus Group Analysis	99
Degree of Acceptance toward Inclusive Environments	100
Teacher Relationship and Skills	101
Collaboration and Middle School Teaming	102
Support through Training and Preparation	102
CEC Rating from Content Analysis	103
Chapter Summary	110
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	111
Introduction	111
Overview of the Study	111
Applications of the Findings to Research	112
Research Questions	112

Research Question 1	112
Research Question 2	115
Research Question 3	117
Research Question 4	118
Research Question 5	119
Relationship of Findings to Research Literature	121
Teacher Attitudes	122
Administrative Attitudes Influencing Attitudes	124
Additional Variables Influencing Attitudes	125
Implications of Findings for Practitioners	127
Research Conclusions	130
Commitment of Leadership	130
Allocation of Resources	131
Support Systems	131
School Autonomy	131
Recommendations Emerging from the Study	132
Recommendations for Future Study	133
Researcher’s Commentary	134
Chapter Summary	137
APPENDICES	138
Appendix A - CEC MODEL FOR AN EFFECTIVE INCLUSION SCHOOL	138

Appendix B - FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL 142

Appendix C - PARTICIPANT INVITATION 145

Appendix D - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FACTORS SHEET . . 147

Appendix E - CODES 150

REFERENCES 152

VITA 168

LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE
Demographic Information	84
CEC Model Items	107

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 (PL 101-476), and its legislative predecessor, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975 (PL 94-142), have defined federal mandates for providing education to students with disabilities. The Regular Education Initiative (REI) in 1986 expanded the movement for greater inclusion of special education students into general education classes (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991).

Madeline Will (1986), a former federal education official, developed the term Regular Education Initiative to emphasize that aspect of the EAHCA which requires students with disabilities to be educated in a least restrictive environment (LRE).

LRE is the key principle of IDEA which has impacted inclusive education (Willis, 1994). IDEA mandates that a continuum of placement options be available to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). The law requires that:

to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplemental aids and services

cannot be attained satisfactorily (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, § 5, 612, 1991).

In many school systems, a continuum of services are offered (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994) moving from the least restrictive environment to the most restrictive. Specific examples on the continuum are from regular classrooms to resource rooms for pull-out programs, self contained classrooms, separate schools, and finally to residential placements followed by institutions and hospitals. Willis (1994) indicates that in order to comply with the law, educators should presume a student with disabilities will be placed in the regular classroom along with the supplementary aids and services if needed.

Current models do exist which support inclusive education that deliver services to students with disabilities. One of these which provides appropriate educational opportunities for special education students in a least restrictive environment is mainstreaming (Dyer, 1992). The EAHCA (1975) and later IDEA (1990) mainstreaming requirements for schools are to provide a free and appropriate education to the maximum extent appropriate in regular education classrooms for students with disabilities. Mainstreaming has been further defined through court decisions such as Board of Education v. Rowley (1982), Roncker v. Walter (1983), and Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education (1989). Dyer (1992) defines mainstreaming as providing the most appropriate education, looking at the educational needs of the child rather than clinical or diagnostic labels, and determining

alternatives that help general educators serve children in the regular setting by using strategies such as consultant teachers, itinerant teachers, methods and materials, specialists, and resource room teachers. Lastly, Caster (1975) indicated that the purpose of mainstreaming is to unify the skills of general education and special education so that all children may benefit.

The Regular Education Initiative will be examined as a factor influencing the relationship between general education and special education toward inclusion. The term REI was developed by Madeline Will and "has generally been used to discuss either the merger of the governance of special and regular education or the merger of funding streams of each" (Rogers, 1993, p. 2). Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) indicate that shortly after the REI was presented an expansion of mainstreaming practices for students with primarily mild disabilities occurred. Prior to REI, these students may have received needed services in a resource room setting, with only limited mainstreaming opportunities in the general education classroom. Dyer (1992) indicates that following REI and with the creation of IDEA, mainstreaming expanded to include the service delivery models of "integration" and "inclusion." He notes that mainstreaming has been viewed as having a strong academic focus, while integration and inclusive education models contain stronger social implications.

Dyer (1992) further notes that these models may reduce or eliminate consideration of the range of the disability for students with moderate to severe and profound disabilities. This means including students into age-appropriate general

education environments to receive needed services without regard for academic, behavioral, or social readiness in a placement which may affect teacher attitudes and successful placement for the student (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Stainback, Stainback, 1992; Wang & Birch, 1984).

The term "inclusion" has been defined in numerous ways. One explanation describes it as changes occurring within schools and school districts to better coordinate and unify educational programs and services as well as to transform schools into places where all children learn (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Another definition of inclusion is a shared value that promotes a single coordinated system of education dedicated to ensuring that all students are empowered to become caring, competent, and contributing citizens in an integrated, changing, and diverse society (Rogers, 1994). Further, as services increase toward a full inclusive educational model, students with disabilities attend their home school in age-appropriate general education classrooms (Stainback & Stainback, 1990).

This background information provides a summary of service delivery concepts for LRE. These applications of the LRE principle are necessary information about inclusion needed to accurately assess attitudes of middle school administrators, regular education, and special education teachers which are the focus of this study. This study will examine attitudes of these groups toward their willingness to accept students with disabilities into general education classes. Center and Ward (1987) established that teacher attitudes about special education students placed in regular

education classes impact the effectiveness of the setting for the students involved. A review of recent court decisions pertaining to LRE provides additional background information needed for this study of inclusion.

The Role of Recent Court Decisions

A number of recent court decisions concerning LRE have also coincided with the development of the inclusion movement and need to be discussed briefly here. Elizabeth A. Truly, senior counsel for the New York United Teachers, identified several important cases related to inclusion. One of these cases is Roncker v. Walter (1983) which has been cited in numerous court decisions that address issues relating to the best placement of special education students. Another significant ruling is Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education (1989) which resulted in additional guidelines for school districts regarding placement. In that case the court indicated that a school system should ask two questions about placement. The first question is whether or not education in the regular classroom, with the use of supplemental aids and services, can be satisfactorily achieved for a given child. The second is whether the school has mainstreamed the child to the maximum extent appropriate.

Two other more recent cases are even more significant in that the word inclusion is contained within the language of the rulings. These cases are Board of Education, v. Holland (1992) and Oberti v. Board of Education (1993). The Holland

case addresses the decision of the extent to which a particular child should be educated in a regular setting, all of the time, part of the time, or none of the time. In Oberti, a principle task of the case was to provide standards for determining a school's decision when to remove a child with a disability from the regular classroom and to place the child with disabilities in a segregated environment. The court broadened the concept of mainstreaming with the term inclusion to emphasize providing support services within the regular classroom rather than on a pull-out basis.

Further, examination will be given later to specific cases which have local implications pertaining to a least restrictive environment. The two major cases are DeVries v. Fairfax County School Board (1989) and Barnett v. Fairfax County School Board (1991) which examined placement and the benefit for the student from the specific placement. A more detailed explanation of these legal rulings will be presented in Chapter 2.

Significance of Study

Barnartt and Kabzems (1992) note that teacher attitudes may be one of the most important factors in determining success for a more inclusive environment. Previous attitudinal research in this area indicates that regular education teachers frequently are not receptive to the social integration of children with disabilities

(Hersh & Walker, 1983; Keogh & Levitt, 1976). Several studies report that regular education teachers have proven quite reactive to the demands and added burdens imposed by mainstreamed children (Hersh & Walker, 1983; Jones, 1978; Lynn, 1983). Whinnery, Fuchs, and Fuchs (1991) conclude that special and remedial educators have a greater confidence in their capability to assist students with disabilities in the classroom than do general educators. Although Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) report that special educators perceive themselves as effective with assigned students, those same educators remain pessimistic about forging a productive and successful experience with general education teachers.

Statement of the Problem

York and Vandercook (1990) report that middle schools are good places to include students with mild to severe disabilities in general education classes. Many approaches at this level employ interdisciplinary teams that involve general educators working with special educators and ancillary personnel. Erb and Doda (1989) report that these teams create small communities which are effective for teaching and learning. Moreover, the organizational structure of the middle school enables teams to work together through flexible time blocks, daily team planning, grade level organization, and physical proximity of classes.

Successful integration of students into general education classes requires a

clear belief system along with a definitive rationale, objectives to accomplish it, and well defined consultant roles of special education personnel (Duquette & O'Reilly, 1988). Walther-Thomas and Carter (1993) identify three factors that support inclusion through collaborative efforts at the middle school level. First, middle school philosophy encourages collaboration, communication, inclusion, and teaming. Secondly, professionals at the middle school level tend to work to accomplish a common goal using these principles. Lastly, teachers also understand that students need to develop both academic and social skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving. The organizational arrangement, philosophical position, and professional skills at this level assist middle school personnel to meet the aims of IDEA (Walther-Thomas and Carter, 1993).

Winzer (1987) establishes that attitudes are as important as teacher competencies. However, a concern of teachers at this level pertains to student preparation for expanding expectations of content mastery at the high school level. Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) report that the more inclusive a classroom, the more time is required by the general education teacher to produce expected mean outcomes for all students. This may result in sacrificing more capable student performance for the least capable learner. A critical factor reported by Semmel is that teachers cannot be expected to deal with special needs children without proper preparation and training. His findings indicate teachers need to know more about effective interventions and their implementation in the general education

classroom.

In 1987, Center and Ward reported that teachers who received training in instructional practices for accommodating special education had a 77 percent approval of inclusion in their school. In that study, positive teacher attitudes declined with a reduction of support systems. Further, when teachers demonstrated a reduced personal feeling about their expertise to teach special education students, approval also declined. Landrum and Kauffman (1992) stress that sensitivity to what teachers think and feel is essential if improvements in teachers' abilities to work with students with disabilities in the classroom are to be achieved. Also, they say that research is needed to develop techniques to identify teachers who are first able and willing to serve more challenged students.

Another aspect considered in the Landrum and Kauffman study pertains to the role of the administrator and its impact upon attitudes about inclusion. Previous research in this area indicated that school principals frequently have better attitudes than teachers toward more inclusive education (Center & Ward, 1987). Duquette and O'Reilly (1988) indicate, however, that teacher attitudes correlate positively with their perceptions of the school principal's support of inclusion. Dyer (1992) cites Snell, Janney, Raynes, and Beers who indicate that additional variables such as class size, school resources, characteristics of the student body, and administrative support are as likely to predict success as attitudes. These are factors that school administrators influence.

Teacher willingness to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms effect the delivery of services to those students and impacts upon the conditions of the educational setting. Therefore, additional research which identifies key factors that influence the attitudes of middle school administrators and teachers toward inclusion is warranted. This study is designed to obtain specific data through the use of focus groups about the key factors that influence attitudes about inclusion throughout a school district. Significant attitudinal research in this area previously relied primarily upon questionnaire techniques.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess attitudes of acceptance by administrators, core content teachers, and special education teachers at the middle school level toward the inclusion of special education students into general education classes in a large suburban school district. The data collection was conducted on a district level with the results providing implications for each middle school and individual teachers. In addition, significant factors influencing the attitudes of each group and across the groups were examined.

Listed below are the research questions used in this study:

1. What are middle school core teachers' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?

2. What are special education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?
3. What are school based administrators' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?
4. Do school based administrators' attitudes differ from those of middle school teachers?
5. What are the elements that influence administrator and teacher attitudes for the purpose of providing better preparation and training?

Justification of the Study

Willis (1994) cites Fuchs who indicates that critics have questioned the quality of programs related to the implementation of inclusion. Kauffman (1988) in his book, The Illusion of Full Inclusion, also expresses concerns. He stresses that sensitivity to what teachers think and believe is essential if any serious change in teachers' ability to assist students with disabilities in the classroom is to be achieved. Wisniewski (1994) reports that general education teachers' attitudes express concern that including students with severe disabilities will limit instruction.

Meanwhile, House Joint Resolution No. 102 which passed on February 1, 1994 in the Virginia General Assembly, asked the Virginia Department of Education to study incentives for integrating students with disabilities into general education

classrooms. The study is to ensure compliance with Federal legislation that provides a "free and appropriate education" and "an appropriate individual educational" plan for all students with a disability. The House Joint Resolution indicates that "federal law directs that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment and that these students are to be separated only when the appropriate education cannot be provided satisfactorily in general education classes with supplemental services" (H. Res. 102, 1994). The LRE for students with disabilities may include "a variety of practices that may or may not require certain support services." Further, "inclusion may not only enhance educational and developmental opportunities for students with disabilities but also promote increased awareness and learning opportunities for their peers without disabilities" (H. Res. 102, 1994). Finally in the subject district of this study during the 1993-1994 school year the district's department of student services and special education examined approaches, models, and strategies for expanding inclusion.

While some teachers are reticent to commit to the concept of inclusion of children with disabilities into general education classrooms, state and local policy makers are indicating a direction toward that possibility. Therefore, the subject school district and other districts would benefit from the availability of data measuring the attitudes of teachers concerning the impact of integrating students with disabilities to the maximum extent possible into regular education programs.

Limitations

These data were reflective of middle school personnel and were restricted to findings that pertain to demographic factors identified in this study. Generalizations can only be made to local education agencies with similar characteristics.

Definition of Terms

Core Content Teachers: This is a group of general education teachers which includes the academic disciplines of English, math, social studies, and science who comprise the standard middle school team of teachers.

Full Inclusion: A non-legal term used to describe the belief that instructional practice and technological support is available to accommodate all students in the school and classroom that the student would otherwise attend if not disabled. Proponents of full inclusion encourage that special education services be delivered in the form of training and technical assistance to "regular" classroom teachers (Rogers, 1994).

Inclusion: The concept of inclusion is the commitment to educate each child with a disability to the maximum extent appropriate. With inclusion, a student with a disability is placed in a school and in general education classes with chronologically

age appropriate classmates along with individual and relevant objectives to support learning (Taylor, 1988). Inclusion brings the support services to the child rather than moving the child to the services requiring only that the child benefit from being in the class (Rogers, 1994).

Integration: Dyer (1992) cites Sailor who describes integration as "locating students with disabilities on regular school campuses" (p.12). Integration for students with a disability is age-appropriate and within proximity of general education classes.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Each child with a disability must be educated in the LRE. The directive in P.L. 94-142 and the principle which is included in IDEA for LRE is:

to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, § 5, 612, 1991).

Mainstreaming: The placement of a student with a disability in a regular education setting (Tucker, Goldstein, & Sorenson, 1993) does not actually appear as a formal term in IDEA. Lipsky and Gartner (1989) indicate that mainstreaming

practices vary in intensity, duration, and appropriateness. Students may be mainstreamed in general education classes for one or all core academic courses, elective courses, or resource assistance.

Mixed Focus Groups: The in-depth group interview technique used in this study to determine attitudes with representation from administrators, core content teachers, and special education teachers.

Overview of Dissertation

This chapter presents the problem statement, purpose, and justification for the present study based on the need to determine attitudes of administrators, core academic middle school teachers, and special education teachers toward inclusion. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature which further describes inclusion through various interest and pressure groups, the influence of the Regular Education Initiative, related court cases, previous research about administrator and teacher attitudes, and effective middle school models. Chapter 3 will detail the research design, method of data collection, description of the population, and specific data collection procedures. Chapter 4 will present the data analysis and findings. Chapter 5 will include a summary with a discussion of the results obtained in this investigation along with the conclusions from the study, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature related to the inclusion of special education students at the middle school level. Background information on the relationship between general and special education specific to the development of effective inclusion models for middle schools is included. The concept of inclusion is defined and clarified by examining the legal meaning of the LRE through several significant court cases. In addition, the position taken by various interest and pressure groups on the significance of inclusion is articulated, using contemporary literature on the issue. Next, the influence of the REI upon the inclusion movement is also reviewed, as it can be projected through available sources. Current research on teacher and administrator attitudes toward inclusion are given consideration. The last section in this chapter pertains to models of inclusion in schools, with specific emphasis at the middle school level.

Historical Perspective

Since the introduction of special education programs for students with

disabilities, the development and implementation of various school learning environments for special education students have been investigated and discussed (Wang & Baker, 1985-86). Kucic (1993) wrote that special education, historically, tended to be a parallel system rather than one that converged with general education with service delivery models options such as self-contained classes, center based programs, and residential facilities. Wang and Walberg (1983) noted that more attention upon maximizing instructional service delivery models for all disabled students was needed (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Dunn (1968) described the relationship between general education and special education with the analogy that special education students and teachers would be better served on the mainland rather than on an island. Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) used the island analogy in more recent times regarding cooperation needed between special education and general education pertaining to inclusion.

Kauffman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988) made several assumptions toward the inclusion of special education students into general education. One assumption is that most of the students identified as mildly disabled are neither disabled nor appropriately served by special education. A second assumption is that blame for school failure should be removed from students and placed on teachers (Biklen & Zollers, 1986). This assumption implies that teachers are responsible for learning outcomes of all students who are placed in their classrooms, regardless of those students' characteristics. Next, teachers are expected to teach all students effectively

(Westby, Watson, & Murphy, 1994). Kauffman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988) expressed concern that advocates of more inclusive environments may be creating an equally inappropriate teacher-deficit model that does not adequately account for the joint responsibilities of teacher and student in the learning process. A third assumption is that students with mild disabilities feel misunderstood and stigmatized because they have been labeled learning disabled and receive special services. Biklen and Zoller (1986) report that students with mild disabilities often express being misunderstood by school personnel and friends (Westby, Watson, & Murphy, 1994).

York (1993) says that this is contrary to one of the purposes of inclusion which is to make people feel less different. Advocates of full inclusion assume that students will no longer experience these feelings once they are part of a regular class. However, many teachers view special education students as performing poorly, functioning below standards, and demonstrating inappropriate or unusual behavior (Schumaker & Deshler, 1988). Students with disabilities may feel misunderstood and stigmatized because they fail to meet expected performance standards of their teachers and peers. Further, Schumaker and Deshler (1988) indicate placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms without preparation or a support system may increase their stigmatized feelings.

Defining inclusion has been as difficult and complex as reaching agreement on various special education programs (Ysseldyke, Graden, & Thurlow, 1983). Proponents of inclusion assert that good teachers can teach all children and all

children can be provided a high quality of education in the same classroom environment. Davis (1989) wrote that the concept of inclusion is based on a philosophy, rather than an empirical data base which is needed in order to prove that inclusion best meets students social, emotional, and academic learning needs. To the contrary, Dr. Marsha Forest, Director of Education at Frontier College in Toronto, Ontario views inclusion as a placement issue to address the LRE for a student (Westby, Watson, Murphy, & York, 1988). In addition, Reed Martin (1993) writes that "inclusion is a term with the legal significance of the least restrictive environment."(p.8). Therefore, a review of significant legal cases pertaining to the LRE for students with disabilities into general education classes is examined.

The Legal Concept of LRE

Numerous legal decisions interpreting the concept of LRE have been heard since 1982, contributing clarity with regard to guidelines for inclusion. The first significant case is the Supreme Court case of Board of Education v. Rowley, (1982). The court held that the "Education for All Handicapped Children's Act (EAHCA) requirement of a 'free appropriate public education' (FAPE) is satisfied when the state provides personalized instruction with sufficient support services to permit the handicapped child to benefit educationally" from the instruction and that the state "does not need to maximize potential of each child commensurate with opportunity

provided nonhandicapped children." In addition, the school district has to match the individual educational program (IEP) of a student with a disability with the goal of "providing full educational opportunities". Further, the decision indicated that the "courts must be careful to impose their view of preferable educational methods upon the states." Rowley is frequently cited in other LRE cases.

In another one of the early cases, Roncker v. Walter (1983), the Sixth Circuit Court found that a disagreement with the concept of mainstreaming is not a basis for a school district to avoid the mandate of EAHCA. The Act does not require mainstreaming in every case but "its requirement that mainstreaming be provided to the maximum extent appropriate indicates a very strong preference" by Congress. The court developed a test to guide the placement of students with disabilities which became known as the Roncker test. The court indicated that where a segregated facility is considered superior for placement, the school system should determine whether the services which make the placement superior could be feasibly provided in a non-segregated setting. The court also found that mainstreaming is to be based on a proper standard of review which accepts that "the statute contemplates that there will be some separate schools and schooling." This will occur either because the student with disability could not benefit from mainstreaming or because the presence of a student with a disability in the non-segregated setting may be too disruptive.

In 1986 the Eighth Circuit Court, in Mark and Ruth A. v. Grant Wood Area Education Agency rejected the view that the mainstreaming provisions of the EAHCA

are satisfied only when a child with a disability is educated in the same room with nondisabled children. The Court cited the Supreme Court decision of Board of Education v. Rowley (1982) that mainstreaming must be effectuated only to the "maximum extent appropriate." The Seventh Circuit Court in Lachman v. Illinois (1988) addressed mainstreaming through the relationship between the EAHCA requirement for FAPE and LRE. The court concluded that the EAHCA is intended to be implemented "only when it is clear that the education of the particular handicapped child can be achieved satisfactorily in the type mainstream environment that the IEP proposed for that child." In addition LRE is to be "weighed in tandem with the Act's principle goal of ensuring that the public schools provide handicapped children with a free and appropriate education."

Subsequently, in Briggs v. Board of Education (1989) the Second Circuit Court ruled that mainstreaming placement of a student must be weighed against the importance of providing an appropriate education. The Second Circuit Court was not convinced that the benefits of mainstreaming outweighed a more segregated program that could effectively meet a student's needs. Further, the Fifth Circuit Court opined in Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education (1989) that school districts are not entitled to the same deference on LRE issues as they are on free and appropriate education issues. In this case the Court rejected the Roncker test as an inappropriate tool for determining whether school districts have met their mainstreaming obligation. Instead, the question to be asked was whether education in the regular classroom with

the use of supplementary aids and services can satisfactorily be achieved for a given child. The issue for a school district is whether the child has been mainstreamed to the "maximum extent appropriate." Guidelines for determining this are: (1) steps taken to accommodate the special education child in regular education; (2) educational benefits for the child in the regular education setting; (3) the other benefits received by the child (such as language models) in the regular education program; and (4) the effect of the special education student upon the regular classroom environment and upon the education of other children. The court also indicated that if education in the regular classroom cannot be satisfactorily achieved, then the court will examine whether the district has taken appropriate intermediate steps to provide interaction between children with disabilities and nondisabled peers.

In Greer v. Rome City School District (1991), an Eleventh Circuit Court ruling that followed the passage of the IDEA, the Court adopted the Daniel R. R. test from the Fifth Circuit as guidelines for mainstreaming. The court also added cost as a factor for a school district to consider during the development of the IEP. The court indicated that if educating a special education student in a regular class was too great, that it would significantly impact upon the education of other children in the district, then it was not appropriate.

The 1992 California District Court case, Board of Education v. Holland, addressed the issue of the amount of time any particular child should be educated in a regular classroom setting as "one of inquiry into the needs and abilities of one child

and does not extend into a group or category of handicapped children." Four relevant factors cited in the Daniel R. R. decision by the Holland court were: "(1) the educational benefits available to the child in a regular classroom, supplemented with appropriate aids and services, as compared to the educational benefits of a special education classroom; (2) the nonacademic benefits to the handicapped child of interaction with nonhandicapped children; (3) the effect of the presence of the handicapped child on the teacher and other children in the regular classroom; and (4) the cost of supplemental aids and services necessary to mainstream the handicapped child in regular classroom setting." The California District Court ruled in favor of placement in a regular classroom with supplemental aids and services to be provided by the school district for the student. The decision supported the fundamental purpose of the IDEA's mainstreaming requirement noting that "the nonacademic benefits of mainstreaming are closely related to academic benefits." The court also interpreted that cost becomes an issue when considering placing a student with a disability into regular education. The key question to ask is will the placement of the student with a disability significantly affect other children in the district.

In 1993, the Third Circuit Court in Oberti v. Board of Education, drew from the Daniel R. R. ruling that a school district must make a reasonable effort to accommodate a special education student in a regular classroom. The court ruled, as in the Holland decision, that the School District's placement was rejected and placement in a regular class with supplementary aids and services was ordered.

Unlike the district court in Holland which gave separate consideration to the academic and nonacademic benefits, this court assumed that a student may receive "unique benefits from integration into a regular classroom" including "the development of social and communication skills as educational benefits." Moreover, when a student is placed in a regular education class the district must provide a curriculum plan, behavior management plan, and special education support to the teacher.

There are several significant rulings pertaining to LRE within the United States Fourth Circuit which holds jurisdiction over the school district involved in this study. In DeVries v. Fairfax County School Board (1989) the court concluded that a student could not receive an appropriate education at the local school because academically, socially, or vocationally a peer group did not exist for the student. Even with an aide in the class, the student would be simply monitoring classes with nondisabled students at the local school. The court concluded that the county vocational center represented an appropriate public education and LRE for him. The court ruling therefore supported the actions of the school district.

The 1991 Barnett v. Fairfax County School Board ruling entitled state and local school officials to determine administratively whether a particular service or method can be provided in a specific educational setting. In so ruling, the Court gave the local educational agency (LEA), the capability of considering the feasibility of such a program. More specifically in this case the district provided the student with services that were necessary to permit him to benefit from instruction. The court

determined that the program offered by the school district allowed the student full integration into a regular high school. Lastly, the court ruling held that the district is not obligated to place the students in their base or home school.

There are several other lower court cases that have been decided that are pertinent to this review. The first case, heard in Connecticut District Court, Connecticut Association for Retarded Citizens v. State Board of Education (1993), ruled that the IDEA requires every special education placement be based on an individualized educational program (IEP). The court found that some children with disabilities may not benefit from full inclusion in a regular classroom. Also in 1993, the District Court of Alabama ruled in Statum v. Birmingham Public Board of Education that the burden of proof was upon the school system not to include a special education student in the regular classroom. The court applied the Daniel R. R. test and ordered the district to educate a seven year old with moderate to severe physical and mental disabilities in a general classroom with appropriate supplementary aids and services for the duration of the school year. The last case, Poolaw v. Parker Unified School District (1994) upheld the school district in putting a student into residential placement. Again this Court applied the Daniel R.R. test to the facts before them which resulted in upholding the school district position that the educational needs of the student could best be met in a more restrictive environment than the parents had wanted.

In summary, there are several legal considerations pertaining to inclusion of

children with disabilities in regular education classrooms, emanating from decisions of the past decade. There is a presumption through law that children with a disability will be placed in a regular education setting to the maximum extent possible. The school district of a student with a disability has the responsibility to provide programs that offer full integration into a regular setting based on the IEP for that student.

Holland, Greer, and Oberti are more recent cases which adopted a standard that placed a heavy burden on the school district when proposing a placement of a special student outside the regular education setting (Willis, 1994). When excluding a special education student from the general education setting, a school district must justify it. Although the courts have found that some children with disabilities may not benefit from full inclusion in a regular classroom, every appropriate effort should be made toward the inclusion of special education students into general education.

Pressure and Interest Group Influence

One of the first groups to publicly advocate for inclusion of special education students was The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH). In 1979 TASH adopted a resolution calling for the education of all students with severe disabilities. The National Society for Children with Autism adopted a similar resolution calling for termination of segregated placements and encouraging integrated placement. Following Madeline Will's position with the Regular Education Initiative

in 1986, TASH called for the provision of specialized staff resources and services to meet individual needs of special education students without removal from regular classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). The Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) prepared a Report Card to the Nation on Inclusion (Davis, 1992) to stimulate action toward the goal of full inclusion for all children with mental retardation and other disabilities in the nation's public schools by the year 2000. Davis (1992) also indicated that as an interim goal, ARC called on the nation's schools to educate at least 50% of children with mental retardation in regular classrooms by 1995.

The 1992 National Education Association (NEA) belief statement for inclusion indicates that every regular and special education student is entitled to a comprehensive, integrated program with active involvement of all stakeholders--the student, parents, educators, and other professionals. NEA called for the creation of policies by these stakeholders which will establish goals with specific outcomes that incorporate an understanding of all existing rules, regulations, funding arrangements, and interagency agreements. To guarantee a free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities, classroom teachers must receive adequate preparation and sufficient professional support (NEA, 1995). Further, programs should give attention to student successes encouraged through collaboration and support services. An important requisite for quality integrated education is a comprehensive system of personnel development for all education employees that provides the skills, knowledge, and resources needed for teaching students with various types of learning

problems (NEA, 1992).

Also in 1992, The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) published Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools. The NASBE report indicated that nearly one-tenth of all United States students aged six to 21 receive special education services. About one-half of those students have learning disabilities; one-quarter of them have speech or language impairment. The rest are mentally challenged, emotionally disabled, or have hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments. These include cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, autism, and Down's syndrome (Willis, 1994). The report examined new ways to organize special and general education which strive to produce better outcomes for all students. It presents three recommendations for state boards of education. The first area creates a belief system and vision for education in each state that includes all students. The second aspect encourages collaborative partnerships and joint training programs between general educators and special educators to increase the capacity of both types of teachers to work with diverse populations found in inclusive schools. Lastly in the report is a recommendation that the link between funding, placement, and handicapping label be eliminated.

The Virginia Education Association (VEA) Ad Hoc Committee on Special Education (1993) policy statement called for an educational environment and programs that are available for every child with full learning opportunities. This is to be accomplished through a free and appropriate public education for all students with

a disability in the LRE in accordance with P. L. 94-142 and P. L. 101-476. VEA further advocated for the State Department of Education to provide more definitive standards by clarifying such terms as: integration, immersion, inclusion, mainstreaming, co-teaching, and collaboration. The organization supports inclusion through shared responsibility in planning, scheduling, and implementation of programs, in-service training, and staff development. VEA recognizes that the implementation of these recommendations will be challenging and expensive (VEA, 1993). Further support of full inclusion is contained in the Council for Exceptional Children Vision (1994). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) advocates adapting instruction with processes that focus upon facilitating students' abilities to handle curriculum. Another CEC goal is to have teachers actively involved in the development of inclusive education programs. In addition, CEC "believes all children, youth, and young adults with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education as well as services that lead to an adult life characterized by satisfying relations with others, independent living, productive engagement in the community, and participation in society at large" (p. 1).

To achieve these goals, a variety of early intervention, educational and vocational program options must exist. CEC believes that a continuum of services must be available, and whenever possible students should be in general education classrooms of inclusive neighborhood schools. Such settings should be strengthened and supported with specially trained personnel and other appropriate supportive

practices according to the individual needs of the child. Administrators along with other school personnel must be available for appropriate support and technical assistance (CEC, 1994).

At the same time, several concerns about inclusion have been presented by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Albert Shanker, President of AFT, states in the February 20, 1994, New York Times that full inclusion is an ideology which has the potential to become most destructive to a school. He also writes that many children with disabilities can and are now included in regular classes with adequate supports. Decisions should be made on an individual basis depending on the severity of the disability and reexamined if a placement turns out to have been wrong. AFT views full inclusion as reducing individual judgments and as an ideological position that places students with and without disabilities in a fully integrated environment regardless of circumstances (Shanker, 1994). Consequently, AFT calls for a moratorium on full inclusion policies. Beth Bader, a policy analyst for AFT, indicates that these concerns are based upon calls from teachers and parents who want to ensure that adequate planning and continued support for both general and special education teachers exists. AFT supports each child's right to a free and appropriate education in the LRE, but wants to preserve a continuum of placement to ensure the best education for all children (Willis, 1994).

Impact of the Regular Education Initiative

Will (1986) indicates that a dual system had developed between general and special education with minimal communication. She expressed concern that pull-out services to assist students with disabilities could in fact be acting as barriers to the success of existing special education services (Sammel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). Will questioned whether the separation for many special education students from general education was most effective (Gersten & Woodward, 1990). Kauffman (1989) analyzes the REI indicating that it deserves careful consideration, especially the importance of integration, the redesign of services, and the significance of special education's participation in the mainstream (McLeskey, Skiba, & Wilcox, 1990). Initially REI produced a moderate response which expanded inclusion. Kauffman (1989) writes that, "one of the primary hypotheses of the REI is that students with disabilities would be best served by improvement of education for all students" (p. 256). He suggests that if excellence occurs among our best students and schools, the benefits will trickle down to those with disabilities (McLeskey, Skiba, & Wilcox, 1990).

The rationale for merger and for greater inclusion has evolved from the REI which addresses the need for students to learn in an environment with age-appropriate models of behavior and functional levels of performance (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Gartner, Lipsky, and Lilly (York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey,

1992) say that the REI created a merged system in which individualized adaptations and supports are made available in the general education settings to better meet the needs of all children. The opponents of REI on the other hand have had concerns about the merger of special education and general education. They believe that it is harmful, particularly to those children who lack adequate support services, and that there is an inadequate research base for support (Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988). Gersten and Woodward (1990) indicate that the interpretation of the REI as a directive to return all students with disabilities-- regardless of handicapping condition--to the general classroom is an overstatement of its intent.

Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar (1991) used the Regular Education Initiative Teacher Survey (REITS) developed by Anderegg at Georgia State University to measure teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding practices used with students with mild disabilities toward the REI reform. Factors incorporated into the survey include the role of the special education teacher, teacher preparation, shared responsibility, collaborative teaching, instruction, collaborative skills, and a least restrictive environment. The data indicate that both general and special education teachers are not dissatisfied with existing special education delivery systems. The results suggest that those surveyed were not supportive of REI, although the results reported cooperation exists between general education and special education teachers (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar, 1991).

Additional concerns about the impact of REI with regard to more inclusive

models have appeared in the literature. Silver (1991) expresses concern about the placement of special education students into general education when necessary services may not always be available. He reported that many of the special education professionals assigned to regular education classes find such large caseloads that a reduction in individualized instruction occurs. Gerten and Woodward (1990) report that special education teachers often have a reduction in teaching space with teaming and consultation models.

The REI movement has also stimulated further need for special education services. One need is for children with severe disabilities and their peers to learn about each other and develop a positive interdependence which is necessary to be part of a community. Elias (1986) reports that benefits can be realized by children with severe disabilities and by their peers without disabilities. However, very little empirical data about the outcomes and about strategies for making it work have been systematically collected and analyzed (York, and Vandercook, 1991). REI's primary thrust is improving the academic performance of students with disabilities and those at risk for school failure.

Previous Studies on Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and Beliefs

Allport (1979) termed attitude as "the most distinctive and indispensable

concept in contemporary social psychology." He further defined attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which to relate" (Allport, 1979). Triandis (1971) defined attitude as "an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations." Triandis' (1971) definition includes three situational components which were developed from the Rosenberg and Hovland Model which are: (a) cognitive--the idea of thinking about a situation; (b) affective--the emotional feelings around a situation; and (c) behavioral situation--a predisposed action.

Further, a person's most recent experience may also greatly influence their attitudes. The purpose for a person to develop an attitude is to reflect upon that person's understanding of a situation in order to adjust to an environment. This creates an environment that allows an individual to: (a) get along with people who have similar attitudes; (b) protect their own self-esteem; (c) help adjust in a complex world through some predictability; and (d) allow them to express their fundamental values. Thus, Eiser (1987) suggest that attitudes should be regarded as the meaning of a person's expressive behavior. He argues that the relationship of attitudes to behavior are a logical one. Kiesler, Collins, and Miller (1969) indicate that a difference exist between calling an act intentional and regarding it as motivated by specific intention. Even though attitudinal responses are usually directed toward some object, person, or group, these responses can be interpreted as enduring

predispositions (bias or prejudice attitude), learned rather than being innately susceptible to change. The more intense the attitude, the more likely it is to result in a vigorous action (Allport, 1979).

Research by Fortini (1987) suggest that the relationship between a prejudice attitude and specific behavior may be much more consistent than has been thought. The Ajzen and Fishbein Model of Reasoned Action supports the relationship between an individual's behavior and the intention (or belief by that person) to perform that behavior. Fortini (1987) supports intention (one's belief) as a strong indicator for predicting attitudes toward a specific behavior. Thus, the focus group in-depth interview technique was used as the data collection method to obtain attitudes of administrators, core academic teachers, and special education teachers at the middle school level with the school district in this study.

Teacher Attitudes

Nolet and Tindal (1993) indicate that the debate over inclusion of middle and high school special education students has focused on policy (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Will, 1986) and curriculum materials (Armbruster, Anderson, and Ostertag, 1987). However, more attention must be directed at specific instructional strategies that teachers can use to accommodate students with special needs in general education classrooms (Carnine, Silbert, and Kameenui, 1991; Idol, 1989). Kauffman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988) emphasize that classroom instructional variables have a

greater impact on students than does policy. Kauffman (1988) also stresses that sensitivity to what teachers think and believe is essential if any serious change in teachers' ability to assist students with disabilities in the classroom is to be achieved. Kauffman also reports that the willingness of both regular and special education teachers to merge students increases when the preparation time and administrative support exist.

Myles and Simpson (1989) conducted a study which indicates that regular educators are opposed to having exceptional children in class. However, this is contrary to previous studies by Jamison, Gottlieb, Guskin, and Yosihida (1978); Hudson, Graham, and Warner (1979); and Knoff (1985) which show that regular educators are accepting of students with disabilities in general education classes. Barnartt and Kabzems (1992) write that teacher attitudes may be one of the most important factors in determining the success of an integrated program between general education and special education. Snell, Janney, Raynes, and Beers (1991) previously presented variables likely to predict success. These include administrative support, characteristics of the student body, class size, and school resources. McKenzie (1991) conducted a study which compared the skill level of general education teachers and self-contained content learning disabled teachers. The results indicate that the most significant difference between group attitudes is the concern over the number of students per class. Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, and Nania (1990) also identify class size and student teacher ratio as important variables. Even though these are

significant, Barnartt and Kabzems (1992) argue that to develop a successful inclusion school model, positive attitudes about inclusion among the teachers and staff are needed. Winzer's (1987) findings indicate that attitudes are as important as competencies or other variables. Winzer further notes that teacher attitudes are influenced by an interaction with factors such as knowledge of special education techniques and information about specific student needs.

Podell and Sodak (1993) report that teachers' beliefs in their ability to bring about change in students is significant. Previously, Crohn (1983) indicated that teacher expectations for both individual students and their class influence teacher behaviors. Teachers hold opinions regarding ability and personality of students, although some are accurate and some are distorted. Expectations can be self-defeating if the teacher perceives a student to be a low achiever for whatever reason. A teacher who has low expectations for a student will most likely be unsuccessful in teaching that student.

Consequently, teacher expectations influence student achievement (Algozzine & Curran, 1978; Hersh & Walker, 1983). Prior to the REI movement several researchers (Hersh & Walker, 1983; Jones, 1978; Lynn, 1983; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1988; Schnaiberg, 1995) indicated that the perceptions of regular education teachers had proven quite reactive to the demands of special education and the added burden imposed by special education students included into general education classes. Attitudinal research prior to 1986 indicates that regular education teachers frequently

had low receptiveness to the social integration of disabled children (Hersh & Walker, 1983; Keogh & Levitt, 1976). During that time period the greatest concerns were over control of those mainstreamed, the ability to meet needs of students, availability of special education personnel, and specific technical support.

More recently, Dyer (1992) has identified that the study by Whinnery, Fuchs, and Fuchs (1991) "showed that special and remedial educators are perceived as having greater competence and willingness to assist students with disabilities in the classroom than general educators do to teach them" (p.23). Their findings indicate that teachers need more knowledge of effective interventions and more skill in implementing these interventions in the general education settings. Whinnery, Fuchs, and Fuchs also indicate that considerable attention has been devoted to teacher acceptance of behavioral interventions. Acceptance has been used to refer to teachers' overall evaluation of a classroom intervention, including its fairness, intrusiveness, and its appropriateness for the particular situation (Kazdin, 1980). In general, teachers prefer less time-consuming interventions but are accepting of moderate time expenditures if student behavior is severe. These findings suggest that general educators may not be as accepting of inclusion as are support staff personnel. Results by Whinnery, Fuchs, and Fuchs (1991) indicate no significant differences in general, special, and remedial educators perceptions of the amount or quality of assistance currently available for special education students in general education classes.

Dileo and Meloy (1990) indicate "that fewer general education teachers felt

more training was needed with specific techniques to be successful in teaching learners with special needs" (p.24). In addition to this, Wilczenski's (1992) measurement of attitudes compares groups of regular classroom teachers in New Hampshire to undergraduate elementary education majors in that state. The results indicate that both groups were most agreeable to including special education students into general education classes as long as those students do not inhibit the learning of others. Further in this study, general education teachers had concerns that including students with severe disabilities would limit the amount of instructional time for all students (Wisnieski & Alper, 1994). Williams and Algozzine (1979) reported general education teachers reject specific disabilities such as emotional, behavioral, and low functioning students with a learning disability. Even though the regular education teachers are most likely to be effective with students with behavioral problems, they often oppose mainstream placement of special education students (Gable, 1989). These findings are consistent with the Wisnieski and Alper (1994) study.

York (1992) reports that it is often easier to accommodate and integrate students with severe disabilities than students with less severe disabilities because their differences and needs are more obvious. Successful strategies employed to address a special education student can have positive effects on the regular education student and benefit all students (Gans, 1987). Dyer (1992) cites Ammer whose investigation of classroom teachers' participation with mainstreaming indicates that "mainstreaming helps to improve the academic and social and behavioral performance of students with

disabilities" (p.27). The findings also suggest that time constraints and lack of assistance too often accompany individualization and diminish the success of the process.

Hamilton and Brady (1991) collected data in a teacher effectiveness project that investigated attitudinal differences between general and special education teachers at the middle school level. The study focused upon science and social studies classes. As more special education students were included in these classes, teachers felt that the rate at which district curriculum objectives would be met might decrease as a function of full time placement of special education students into regular education classes. Even though both regular education teachers and special education teachers reflected concerns, general education teachers were significantly more pessimistic than special education teachers. Further, Jordon and McLaughlin (1986) found that experience may intensify teacher attitudes rather than modify negative attitudes. Teacher attitudes are also directed at the educational situation rather than the personal characteristics of specific students. From the Jordon and McLaughlin study specific variables which influence teacher attitudes include: (1) the degree of administrative support, (2) the degree of previous teacher success with special education students, (3) the available support services, and (4) the teacher being informed about how the included students best learn.

The relationship between the classroom teacher and the special education teacher as discussed by Glatthorn (1990) is "a complex one fraught with several types

of serious conflict" (p.29). He lists the potential conflicts as (1) the conception of the role of the special educator, (2) the ways in which each group characteristically views teaching and learning, and (3) methods and materials. He also reports that special education teachers and regular classroom teachers differ in their perceptions of each other's competence in working with students with mild disabilities. In 1991, Glomb and Morgan conducted a study that compared special and general education teachers. In this study, subgroups that reflected previous training, feelings of competency, and perceived necessity for the inclusion of students were created in the population. There is evidence from the study that specific strategies can be effective for integration. In order to accomplish this, results suggest that teachers need time for preparation and planning, in addition to appropriate student placement, and continued administrative support.

Administrative Attitudes

Duquette and O'Reilly (1988) report that teacher attitudes toward special education student placement in general education classes correlate positively with perceptions of their principals' support for it. Generally, administrators have positive attitudes toward inclusion. Stainback and Stainback (1988) surveyed Virginia superintendents who were extremely supportive of inclusion and had a strong approval of students being placed in a home school. However, as students are identified as having a more severe disability, support for inclusion in the home school declines.

Center and Ward (1987) found that principals have better attitudes toward inclusion than do teachers. Stainback and Stainback (1988) indicate that inclusion tends to be more positive when a commitment from the administration exists. Specific administrative support aspects include: (1) advanced preparation for inclusive education, (2) in-service opportunities, (3) shared responsibility between general educators and special educators, and (4) consultant services for both general and special education.

Davis (1986) compared principals' current attitudes toward issues in special education with the attitudes revealed by earlier studies of principals and special education directors. Principals perceived students with "mild learning disabilities" as having the best potential for success (83% responding in the "good" or "excellent" categories). A moderate percent (16.8) believed that "full-time regular class placement with consultation from special education personnel" was the most effective program. More specifically, principals were asked to express their views of the issue of the "merger" of regular and special education. In response to the question, "All students were identified as being better served in our public schools if the current dual system of regular and special education were eliminated in favor of the establishment of one unified system structured to meet the unique needs of all students-- administrators responded with great favor" (Davis, 1986).

Elements of Effective Inclusion

One definition of inclusion is attendance of a special education student at the local home school, in general education classes with chronologically age appropriate classmates (York & Vandercook, 1991). In an inclusive school, students receive individual and relevant objectives which support their learning (Taylor, 1988). Students, in this model, do not need to spend every minute of each school day in a general education class or be restricted from small group or individualized instruction to learn core curriculum. The curriculum becomes the course of study in a school with specific skills to be applied to natural, environmental, and social cultures in subtle ways. Hawkins and Graham (1994) define middle school curriculum as "virtual reality" that should orchestrate actual life experiences for a student.

York and Vandercook (1990) report that middle schools are a good environment for working with students with both moderate and severe disabilities. Walther-Thomas and Carter (1993) describe an eastern Virginia middle school which serves as an example of a successful interdisciplinary instructional program used extensively in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In this model each team consists of approximately 100 heterogeneously-grouped students and four content teachers (English, math, social studies, science). Each team also has a special educator as a full-time member. The special education students who work with this teacher also become members of that team. Laycock, Korinek, and Gable (1991) indicate that

schools which employ collaborative instruction through cooperative teaching, consultation, and teacher assistance programs are conducive to inclusive education.

Middle school education supports inclusive education in a variety of ways. Beane (1990) indicates that middle school teachers embrace principles and values through such skill areas as problem solving, critical thinking, communication, self-awareness, and collaboration. Teaming is an important aspect which can be assisted by the organizational structure (ASCD, 1995). Daily team planning time, flexible scheduling options, and proximity of classroom assignments are some features that provide professionals with regularly scheduled time to work together. These elements meet the aims of IDEA through a continuous process of defining appropriate mainstream learning environments for students with disabilities and other at risk learners (White & White, 1992).

Walther-Thomas and Carter (1993) report that the U.S. Department of Education indicates that more than 70% of students with disabilities spend a significant amount of their school time in a general education class. Despite this, many of the students with disabilities do not perform well in these environments. Many with mild disabilities drop out or fail to develop critical functional and life skills. Follow-up investigations have shown that as many as 50% of the students with mild disabilities leave school without earning high school diplomas (Edgar, 1987). These students often lack basic skills such as academic, vocational, social, independent living, and self-advocacy needed for successful independent living

(Haring, Lovett, & Smith, 1990).

In addition to concerns about students with disabilities, many school systems are faced with the learning problems of a rapidly growing at-risk student population. Many at-risk and special education students experience school-related difficulties as a result of social, economic, environmental, and cultural challenges in their lives (Helge, 1988). Special education students mainstreamed into general education classrooms tend to be a heterogeneous group who require instructional materials, activities, and presentations modified in accordance with their skills, abilities, and deficits (Cohen & Lynch, 1991). General education students may benefit from teacher strategies used to accommodate special education students. Dyer (1992) indicates that with proper training, resource and classroom teachers can modify or adapt instructional practices to meet student needs (Cohen & Lynch, 1991; Madden & Slavin, 1983; Slavin, Madden, 1989; Wang & Walberg, 1983). Positive outcomes have been shown for mainstreamed students through the use of "effective schools" teaching practices that employ the use of cooperative learning, peer instructional methods, variables effecting time-on-task, and student grouping arrangements (Bickel & Bickel, 1986; Raynes, Snell & Sailor, 1991). However, teachers cannot be expected to deal with special needs children without preparation. Muscott and Bond (1986) suggest that receiving teachers should be provided with more routine consultation. Salend (1984) also suggested that the success of mainstreaming is often dependent on the quality of communication and support between general and special

educators.

Although there are increasing numbers of children with mild learning problems being declared eligible for special education services, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, and Nania (1990) indicate that most of these students continue to spend the majority of their school day in mainstream classrooms. Essentially, their education is the responsibility of mainstream teachers who are faced with the added challenge of having to devise options for students who leave the classroom for anywhere from 30 minutes to 3 hours to receive special education services. It is generally agreed that participation in regular education settings is important for students with disabilities, and that classroom teachers use a variety of procedures and arrangements to adjust for these students' needs (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, & Nania, 1990). At the same time special educators are being asked to work with classroom teachers to help them identify optimal ways of helping students through instructional arrangements such as collaboration and co-teaching (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987). The average teacher may not be able to expect more than 30 to 40 minutes a week of consultation or direct assistance (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991).

Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, and Nania (1992) indicate that the most frequently named method of instruction for students with disabilities is directed teaching (60% of sample). Cooperative groups (20%), discovery (18%), independent work (17%), and multiple approaches (12%) are the other frequently used methods. Over 40% of the teachers in this study indicated that their classrooms were highly

structured. Over 50% indicate that the degree of structure did not differ from what it would be if no students with disabilities were present. Overall, teachers' ratings of their ability to make the adaptations are low. The regular education teachers do not perceive themselves as having the skills for adapting the curriculum. About one-fourth of secondary teachers reported a difference in instructional arrangements as a result of having students with disabilities in their classrooms. However, 58% of secondary teachers reported no differences in their classroom instructional arrangements due to the presence of students with disabilities (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, & Nania, 1992).

Reviewing Existing Program Models

Florian (1993) defines an effective inclusion school as one that emphasizes learning for all students. Such a school employs and supports teachers and others who are committed to inclusion. Florian's model which has influenced Principles for Good Practice for an effective inclusion school has these salient elements: (1) a commitment of administrators to support inclusion, (2) teacher support of the school's programs, and (3) a shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

In an effective inclusive school the role of the special education teacher varies (Rodgers, 1993). Rodgers indicates that frequently the special education teacher does not have a room, but is assigned to other roles such as team teaching. In this

arrangement both the general and special education teachers' job becomes one of delivering instruction that benefits all students. Cooperative teaching or co-teaching is one instructional alternative that has been successful for including special education students into general education academic classrooms. Co-teaching is an effective means for extending collaboration into practice (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Bauwens and her colleagues (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991) describe co-teaching as a process in which general educators and special educators share responsibilities for heterogeneous groups of students assigned to mainstream classrooms. Together co-teachers develop plans to meet identified classroom goals and learning objectives. Most co-teaching situations use three basic arrangements as they divide up the classroom responsibilities (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). In a co-teaching situation, teachers assume equal responsibility for all aspects of classroom activity: instruction, monitoring, and performance evaluation. This approach enables teachers to focus on key concepts in greater depth and lends itself to the presentation of various perspectives on the same topic. It does however require teachers to coordinate their presentations to ensure that all critical information is covered in sufficient depth.

In a study involving co-teaching, Davis (1989) obtained information from general and special educators concerning the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in middle school general education classes. Each general education teacher in the study was asked to commit to a trial period (ranging for 4 to 8 weeks),

at which time a decision would be made about continuing an integration of services. Some of the general educators requested that students with severe disabilities be integrated into selected periods of the day. Whenever possible, the general educators chose to have students integrated into classes (1) that had a relatively small number of students, (2) in which they projected that classmates would be most accepting, and (3) in which there was a tendency for more cooperative or individualized activities as opposed to mostly lecture. Further, the teachers who participated in the study, described the classes as being high in student numbers and largely using a lecture format. After participating in the project, most teachers experienced success with the special education students and favored retaining the students in the class.

Salend (1984) presented guidelines and procedures for developing and implementing successful mainstreaming programs. These were based on a comprehensive review of mainstreaming studies up to that date. Factors found in the review included: developing criteria for mainstreaming, preparing students with disabilities for the mainstream (such as teaching them social interaction skills), preparing nondisabled students, promoting communication between classroom teachers and special educators, providing in-service training, and evaluating student progress. His findings showed that mainstreaming can have positive effects on the academic and social development of students with disabilities. If these positive effects are to be realized, however, educators must devise and implement programs that incorporate these factors that contribute to successful mainstreaming.

Slavin and Madden (1989) performed an analysis of classroom programs integrating students with disabilities into the general educational program. They identified features that include instruction directed to individual students' needs and provided in small homogeneous groups; direct instruction from the teacher; constant assessment of students' progress and the existence of a structured hierarchy of skills that students are expected to master.

The Maps strategy developed through the McGill Action Planning System is another successful program. This system supports inclusion through participatory learning of students with disabilities in regular classes. Developing social, emotional, and academic skills through enhanced peer relationships to assist problem solving, individualization, teamwork, and flexibility are significant (Gable, 1991). Other aspects of this program include: (1) letting individual education program (IEP) teams make decisions for individual children, (2) using an in-house person to help get things started, (3) establishing a building-based integration committee, (4) providing an in-service to all general education staff and students, and (4) beginning with volunteers (Gable, 1991).

Another program, The Homecoming model, used in Vermont emphasizes shared responsibility between special and general educators. Team planning, an important aspect of the model, centers on individual learner needs (Fox, 1986). The program uses such quality indicators as age appropriate placement in local school, social integration, transition planning, systemic data based instruction, high curricular

expectations, community based training, home school partnership, integrated delivery of related services, and systematic program evaluation.

Lastly, The Council for Exceptional Children (1992) developed a comprehensive model for an effective inclusion school which encapsulates many of the aspects described in other programs included within research on this topic. The main components of this model are: (1) attitudes and beliefs, (2) services and physical accommodations, (3) school support, (4) collaboration, and (5) instructional methods. Within each aspect are three to five supporting elements (see Appendix A). After reviewing existing models of effective inclusion schools the CEC model was selected to develop the guiding research questions for this study. Specific items of the model relate to administrator and teacher attitudes and beliefs in addition to elements of collaboration which were targeted to assist in the data collection method for this study.

Chapter Summary

First, this chapter presented a review of the literature which pertains to attitudes of the courts, administrators, general education, and special education teachers about including special education students into general education classes. Secondly, inclusion was defined and clarified by examining the legal concept of LRE as developed through highlighting several significant court cases. Next, literature

related to the position of various interest and pressure groups toward inclusion was examined. Further, the influence of the REI upon the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms was included in the Chapter as well as research pertaining to administrative and teacher attitudes. Lastly, effective inclusion school models with specific emphasis at the middle school level was presented.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of administrators, general education core content teachers, and special education teachers toward the inclusion of special education students into general education classes at the middle school level in a large suburban school district. This chapter contains a rationale for the design used for this study, including an explanation of qualitative methods and content analysis processes specific to the setting in this research. The use of focus group procedures as a technique to collect data is discussed and a description of the role of the researcher, the moderator, and the participants are included.

Overview of the Study's Research Design

Qualitative research methodologies have been used for data collection and analysis processes. Qualitative methodologies are most appropriate to answer the questions posed in this study by providing an understanding of the complex factors that influence the attitudes of the participants toward inclusion through personal interaction with the researcher (Patton, 1987). Data has been collected through focus

groups, providing a dynamic, in-depth interview process (Merton, Fiske, and Kendall, 1990). Content analysis was conducted on the data that was gathered during the focus group interviews. Selective and systematic coding was used to establish categories from hypotheses that emerged from the data analysis (Strauss, 1987). Significant factors that influence the attitudes of the administrator and teacher groups toward inclusion of special education students into regular education classes was integrated into the summary findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Two content analysis processes were followed in reporting the resulting data. First, themes that emerged from the summary of focus group protocol question responses were coded and rated in order to provide summary statements about attitudinal behavior of administrator and teacher groups toward inclusion (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). Secondly, the recorded participant responses to the focus group questions were analyzed and rated in a systematic manner and compared to specific elements within the Council for Exceptional Children's Effective Inclusion School Model (CEC, 1993).

Qualitative Research Methodology

Weller and Romney (1988) indicate that the findings from the use of qualitative processes produce a descriptive account that reflects flexible and inductive analysis. Through the use of qualitative methods and the use of focus groups,

research is perceived more personally by the respondents, enhancing the findings (Morgan, 1988). This qualitative strategy allows the researcher to communicate respect to the participants having them understand that the ideas obtained from them are an important data source (Strauss, 1987). This interactive reporting of ideas and opinions avoids imposing a predetermined model or hypothesis by the researcher. Instead, a picture unfolds that accounts for complex dynamics, idiosyncrasies, and uniqueness specific to the topic (Patton, 1987). All of the above were benefits for using qualitative methods for this study.

Content Analysis Processes

Weber (1988) indicates that content analysis is a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to enhance valid inferences from the collected data. These procedures involve the coding of open ended responses to semi-structured questions and the description of attitudinal and behavioral responses by selected individuals who participate in the study (Weber, 1988). The responses were obtained for this study through using focus group interviews which were conducted in an objective and systematic manner producing in-depth responses.

Focus groups were more desirable than other methods such as a questionnaire for this study because of the quality of information that was elicited (Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1988; Morgan, 1993). This method reduces tension between the researcher and participants which increases the purpose of involvement by the participants

(Krueger, 1988). Use of focus group interviews also allows the participants to clarify their own thinking on the topic by being placed in a group situation (Morgan, 1993). Where the data is collected from the participants in a comfortable and real life situation, insights of the participants are more accurately linked with previous research (Galtung, 1967).

Focus Group Questions:

The first phase of the content analysis process was to develop general themes and summaries from the focus group protocol questions. The protocol questions were developed from the research questions of this study, key aspects of previous attitudinal research, and inclusion models from the review of the literature. Listed below are the primary questions that were used as part of the protocol during the focus groups (see Appendix B). The questions are as follows:

1. What do you know about inclusion?
2. What forms of inclusion do you currently see occurring?
3. Which children benefit from inclusion and which children do you see as being limited from being involved in an inclusive classroom?
4. What skills are needed by teachers (both general education and special education) to support inclusion?
5. What roles do support personnel play in successful inclusion?
6. To what extent is inclusion important to you as an educator?

These are the questions which were asked directly of the focus group participants during the interviews. As the administrators and teachers responded to these questions, the group facilitator probed with semi-structured questions for in-depth responses in order to assess attitudes more definitively.

Effective Inclusion School Model Elements

Listed below are elements for an Effective Inclusion School from the CEC model that was used to create the semi-structured questions to probe the participants. By using these items a more in-depth understanding beyond the primary interview questions asked of participants in the focus group sessions was gained. The CEC model provided the most detailed aspects of inclusion school models reviewed, allowing the researcher to better analyze participant responses. A matrix was constructed by coding and rating responses from the text, compiled from the focus group protocol questions. Using the CEC model provided a means to validate the emerging themes from the focus group protocol questions.

The items from the CEC model pertaining to attitudes and beliefs and collaboration were rated by reviewing participant summary responses sheets within each group. Each item was assigned a rating value which was indicated by a 1, 2, or 3. A rating of 1 signified a strong response for the item. A value of 2 was assigned to an item that represented a moderate response by the participants. The last value which could be assigned to an item was a 3 which indicated that either the content

analysis revealed a weak response or that the item was not mentioned within the content of that group by the participants. The CEC items are as follows:

Attitudes and Belief

1. The belief that special education students can succeed in an inclusion environment.
2. Your acceptance of responsibility for learning outcomes of students with disabilities.
3. Your preparation to receive students with disabilities in the class.
4. Parent information about support program goals for special education students.
5. Commitment of special education staff to collaborative practices in general education classrooms.

Collaboration

6. Involvement of special educators with instructional or team planning.
7. The level of collaboration between general education and special education teachers through co-teaching.
8. Collaboration between general education and special education teachers through team teaching.

9. Collaboration between general education and special education teachers with teacher assistance teams.

Setting for the Study

The subject school district is located in Northern Virginia and is part of the greater Washington metropolitan area. The subject district was the tenth largest school district in the nation and had over 135,000 students during the 1994-1995 school year. The special education student enrollment was 13.6 percent of membership which compares to a 9.5 percent of the nation's 50 largest districts and an 11.7 percent for Virginia school districts (Hodgkinson, 1994). The subject school district has approximately 200 regular, special, and alternative schools within four administrative areas (Hodgkinson, 1994).

There are 23 regular education middle schools in the district. Total student enrollment in each middle school ranges from approximately 400 to 1500 students. Seventeen of these schools serve grades seven and eight only. There are three middle schools which include grades 6, 7, and 8. Three of the middle schools are incorporated into secondary schools (grades seven through twelve), each having total combined enrollments of over 3,800 students. Twelve of the schools have special education center programs in the regular education buildings (FCPS, 1994).

Participants

Rationale for Selection

The process for selecting group participants is most important. Krueger (1988) indicates that the focus group is best employed when the composition involves homogeneity, commonality, and a similarity of experiences among participants in order to capture a true picture of how people regard the issue. Krueger cites Jourand (1964) who writes that "subjects tend to disclose more about themselves to people who resemble themselves" (p.25). However, too great a degree of familiarity among the participants may inhibit the responses and interactions within the group. A goal is to have the members express differences on the topic. Krueger (1988) recommends that focus groups be comprised of people who do not know each other--ideally it is best to have people who are complete strangers. Similarity of participants is the best basis for recruitment. Homogeneity can be narrowly or broadly defined. The group assembled may vary by age, gender, occupation, or interest, but members retain commonality of purpose (Krueger, 1988).

Subject Selection

Morgan (1988) emphasizes that generalizability is not going to occur when using focus groups. Morgan recommends at least 40 or more participants for a study

using focus groups, although membership will never be representative of a larger population. The goal of research with focus groups is to learn about others' experiences and perspectives--not to test hypotheses. Morgan (1993) postulates there is no reason to believe that individuals from a statistical random sampling of groups share the same perspective on the topic. A typical solution, given a small size of focus groups samples, is to work with theoretically chosen subgroups from the total population.

In this study, the decision of whether to use mixed focus groups consisting of administrators and teachers or to conduct the focus group interviews consisting of only administrators and only teachers was determined from the preliminary results conducted with each situation. The first group consisted of only core academic teachers. The range of ideas and depth of content in that group was more limited than the mixed group consisting of administrators, core academic teachers, and special education teachers. The content and quality of responses by participants from these two preliminary focus groups interviewed influenced the decision pertaining to the composition and frequency of groups for the remainder of the study. Subject selection for the participants in this study was developed from a systematic sampling. Axlerod (1975) indicates that subject selection should be conducted with consideration of characteristics of the participants and through a systematic sampling.

Group Size

Morgan (1988) advocates that the researcher using focus groups combine both practical and substantive considerations when determining group size. It appears that four is the smallest size for a focus group to be effective, while the upper boundaries approximate twelve. Whatever size is selected, however, it is important to over recruit in order to cover for no shows. Morgan (1988) notes that a minimum of 20% over the desired number should be invited to participate in order to obtain the actual number. The actual amount of over recruitment depends on where the groups are conducted, who participates, whether they are being paid for their participation, and how vital the size range is for the overall design of the research. In each of the groups twenty people were selected for recruitment. The target number that was sought for participation was six to eight of those invited.

The number of interviews generally varies considerably depending on the research context. Krueger (1988) indicates that the rule of thumb for conducting in-depth interviews is 8 to 10. Morgan (1992) however cites four to six as typical, although he describes a study in which 30 were used. The number of focus groups conducted in this study was ten, with eight consisting of the mixed composition of administrators and teachers which followed the two initial groups.

Population and Sample

Participants for this study were obtained from a system wide seniority list of

administrators, general education teachers, and special education teachers.

Approximately 20 percent of the total numbers were selected from each list. The range of workers in each category was 160 to 185. Individual names of possible participants that the researcher could identify were eliminated as were all individuals from the researcher's current work site. The total number of individuals in each group was multiplied by 20 percent to arrive at the number to be used to select individuals in a systematic sampling manner from the seniority list. For instance every fifth name was selected starting at the top of the list and proceeding to the bottom. This ensured that the potential of a range of experience was represented. Each of the selected candidates was sent a letter inviting participation in discussion sessions designed to collect data on the issue of inclusion (see Appendix C).

Data Collection

Rationale for Focus Groups

Focus groups were used as the qualitative technique for data collection in order to provide accurate perceptions of those involved with programs and delivery services related to inclusion in the school district. The groups revealed detailed explanations of ideas, feelings, and opinions of administrators and teachers. Using focus groups enhanced the quality of thinking on the topic by allowing those interviewed to determine their perceptions and feelings about the topic (Morgan,

1988). The technique is an efficient one that allows for a greater number of participants to be interviewed in much less time by using a group format rather than a single, in-depth interview. When used correctly, data collection with this method is low cost, speedy, and more thorough than formal survey research (Morgan, 1988). It also allows an additional savings in analysis time because fewer transcripts are required. Stuart Rice in 1931 recommended that efforts be made to avoid subjects in passive roles when conducting interviews (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990). Further, when Fern (Morgan, 1988) compared the number of ideas generated in focus groups with an equivalent number from individual interviews, groups produced 70% more ideas than individuals.

Richard Krueger (1988) suggests four reasons for using focus groups. The first is that a focus group allows for gathering information where the researcher can listen and learn from the participants. Secondly, beginning with selection, people who participate in this method are actively involved in the process. Next, the use of open-ended questions narrows the topics of discussion in the process. Lastly, one creates an environment which is conducive to sharing, listening, and responding without judgment regarding the quality or worth of responses. Thus, use of a focus group technique for this research is well supported.

There are clear parameters to be considered when using this method. Focus groups are not intended to develop consensus, to arrive at an agreeable plan, nor to make decisions about which course of action is to be taken. Less control exists with

the researcher than with the actual participants who have more influence over the process used to report their thoughts and feelings (Morgan, 1990).

The Focus Group Method Procedures

Each focus group session was conducted in a time frame of one and one half hour sessions which kept the respondents focused on the topic and subtopics. The subjects selected were invited to contribute their thoughts and ideas through discussion with other group members (Morgan, 1988). Krueger (1988) indicates that it is important to clarify the purpose of the group with participants which was done in the letter of invitation and at the beginning of the session. Introductions were also conducted in as much as people were unfamiliar with one another. It was made clear to the participants that the concepts, thoughts, and ideas of the participants were wanted from the session and that anonymity was ensured beyond the group.

Participants were called by first name only. Participant responses were frequent, although the moderator did have to call on some participants to contribute. Morgan (1993) cites Kelleher who indicates that participant response is usually in one of three forms. He describes it as a 40, 40, and 20 percentage division which equates to those who are eager, introspective, and apprehensive respectively to participate in the group. Few of the participants in this study were apprehensive to contribute ideas, feelings, and thoughts to the group.

The Moderator

The moderator role is an important one to the effectiveness of this technique. A welcoming, overview of the topic, and ground rules first occurred before the first questions. Open-ended questions permitted people to speak from their actual experience and promoted self disclosure. With this technique respect for participants by the moderator is essential and is best implemented by listening to participants' points of view in a non-condescending manner and by paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal clues of the participants. Intervention with members of the group by the moderator was designed to prevent hesitation of those who may be reluctant to share and to keep participants on task (Morgan, 1993).

There is a risk in focus group interviews that some participants may defer to those who appear to have more knowledge, wealth, or influence (Morgan, 1988). The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights which would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. Frey and Fontanna (Morgan, 1993) indicate that the moderator can influence group context through having the participants amplify and qualify statements. The moderator was active and overt with directed and structured questions. At the same time, quality responses were encouraged through a non-judgmental environment which further promoted participant involvement.

Focus group technique emphasizes participants discussing a subject until their points of agreement and disagreement become apparent. Concentration was on

insights into participants' thinking on the issues. When an individual in the group became reticent to speak, it was imperative that the moderator ask that person specifically what they were thinking. Closure on a position or issue is not intended to be reached with this technique. One of the main reasons for using this format is that it provides an advantageous mechanism to probe participants to provide greater detailed responses (Krueger, 1988).

Timetable

Kirk and Miller (1986) outline four phases of data collection for qualitative research. These include planning, observing, analyzing, and reporting. During the initial planning stage, internal memoranda were sent from the Office of Special Education and Student Services to the district superintendent's office and then forwarded to the Office of Personnel to obtain a list of possible participants. Letters were sent to those administrators and teachers who were invited to participate in the focus groups. Subsequently, focus groups were conducted during a three month period of time during the late afternoon. These structured focus group interviews produced the study's data.

Prior to the focus group session, participants were given an information sheet which provided demographic data about the participants to further describe the group composition and experiences pertaining to inclusion. This included: the assignment (general education teacher, special education teacher, or administrator), content area,

grade level(s), number of years of experience, the amount of formal training with special populations, the amount of time working with special populations, and responses to questions about collaboration and inclusion (see Appendix D).

The researcher served as an observer while the groups were being conducted. A person trained in education with a background in sociology and group facilitation was used as the moderator to lead the group sessions. A participant in each focus group was asked to serve as a scribe to record responses on chart paper for the group to review. This ensured that the group responses were not biased by the research team. As an observer the researcher scripted turn taking, eye contact, pauses in interactions, patterns of speech, and nonverbal behavior(s). Summary notes were compiled from the sessions and analyzed. Knodel cited by Morgan (1988) indicates that the content should be examined by noting the frequencies of different attitudes. A four-person team was formed to assist in the review of the main ideas for each session. Each of the team members who conducted a review and critique of the content analysis and coding of the script had background in formal research techniques and special education training.

At the conclusion of the data collection process, summary sheets from the focus groups were compiled and sent to all the participants for review. The purpose of this was to review and critique the analysis and summary of the data collected from the focus group sessions and to further enhance reliability.

Data Analysis

Outcomes

Procedures for developing grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) , are based on an inductive analysis of data. Data was collected, coded, analyzed, and arranged into core theoretical categories and properties (Parker & Gehrke, 1986; Strauss, 1987). The categories and properties were analyzed to develop themes. Coding categories supported the main topics and identification of the emerging themes and quotable statements.

Summary sheets and transcripts were produced to review salient ideas and themes from each session. The four-person team of experts in the field of special education assisted the researcher in the coding of the main ideas and themes which emerged. Additionally, this four-person team reviewed the content analysis. A numerical description of comparative data specific to protocol questions which addressed effective inclusion school characteristics was produced. A written summary with significant quotes and tables to illustrate the responses of the Demographic Information Data Sheet, content analysis of the focus groups, and CEC model were also produced.

Analyst Role

Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicate that with this design the analyst has the responsibility to discover how shifts may have occurred and the nature of influencing factors. The goals are to foreshadow problems and use inductive processes to collect data without preconceived theories or hypotheses. These analytical processes were enhanced through an appropriate review of literature and the professional experience of the researcher and the review team. Strauss and Corbin (1990) advocate that this "approach enables the analyst to see the research situation and its associated data in new ways, and to explore the data for developing theory" (p.232).

Further suggestions are offered by Strauss and Corbin to balance creativity and scientific research for the analyst. First, they suggest that the researcher periodically step back and ask such questions as: " What is going on here?" and "Does what I think I see fit the data?" Secondly, they encourage an attitude of skepticism about the explanations, categories, and themes that emerge. Data must be deemed provisional until substantiated by the content analysis. Lastly, research procedures must be followed to ensure that correct assumptions are being made. The coding needs to be systematic.

A theoretical sensitivity during the research process is acquired through continual and repetitive interactions with the data in both collection and analysis. During the analysis, clues, trends, and patterns were identified which illustrated opinions, ideas, and feelings that repeated themselves. Descriptive statements

supported the summary of each group and total group composite (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which a research study can be repeated when applied under similar conditions (Strauss, 1987). In qualitative inquiry, the researcher does not know what the answers are or what they should be, although reliability is concerned with the goodness of fit between recorded data while trying to discover the correctness of responses in the setting (Merriam, 1988). Weber (1985) identified three types of reliability pertinent to content analysis that are considered in this study. These are stability, reproduction, and accuracy.

The first type of reliability reviewed is stability which refers to the extent to which the results of content classification are invariant over time. Stability is likely achieved when the content is coded more than once by the same coder. With only one person coding, errors can occur due to ambiguity in coding rules, ambiguous text, cognitive changes within the coder, or an unintended error. Stability is considered the weakest form of reliability (Weber, 1985).

Reproduction or inter-coder reliability pertains to the degree that the content classification produces the same results when the same text is coded by more than one coder. Reproduction is important for content analysis because this measures the

consistency of shared understanding or meaning. A conflict in codings can result from cognitive differences among the coders, ambiguous coding instructions, or from random recording errors (Weller & Romney, 1988).

Accuracy is the third type of reliability which is the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm. By having additional coders to review content narratives, the reliability usually will increase. When disagreement among coders occurs, resolution may result in judgments based upon the most verbal or the senior person in the group. Consequently, reliability should be calculated before disagreements are resolved (Weber, 1988).

In this study reliability was achieved through reviewing the interview content in several forms. First, stability occurred from the researcher reviewing and coding the data collected. To increase reliability in the study, reproduction (inter-coder reliability) was employed through a four-person team of experts that had knowledge of qualitative inquiry methods and knowledge about inclusion. One purpose of the team was to assist in the review of the main ideas compiled by the researcher. They also conducted a review and critique of the coded index matrices that were constructed from the content analysis. The expert team results increased inter-coder reliability contributing to the accuracy of the reporting for each focus group. To further ensure reliability through accuracy, summary sheets from each session were sent to participants at the conclusion of the study. Each person was encouraged to review the findings and respond with corrections which were incorporated into the

summary findings and results. These three types of reliability support the content analysis in this study.

Validity

Internal Validity

Internal validity is the extent that conclusions correspond with the data collected (Merriam, 1988). Weber (1985) views this correspondence of the classification scheme or variables derived from the content analysis as an interpretation relating content variables to the causes of the consequences. To assert that a category or variable is valid is to assert that there is a correspondence between the category and the abstract concept it represents (Weber, 1988). The content analysis from the focus group format provides an advantageous mechanism to probe participants with greater detailed responses which then improves this correspondence and increases the level of internal validity (Krueger, 1988). Internal validity was based upon the correspondence between the concepts, variables, methods, and data specific to this study.

External Validity

External validity is the degree of strength from the study to generalize the

results, methods, and theory (Weller & Romney, 1987). The results from this study relate best to measures and methods of the same construct (Weber, 1988). To improve external validity, words and coding units that the researcher and the expert team identified were seeking semantic similarities. Semantic validity exists when persons familiar with the language and texts examine lists of words placed in an agreed upon category with similar meaning or connotation (Weber, 1988). In this study, the generalizability of the results are specific to a large suburban school district requiring careful review by the reader or practitioner as to the use (Merriam, 1988).

Confidentiality and Ethical Issues

The methodology of this study requires that the researchers substantiate the interpretations and findings with a reflective account of themselves and the process of the research with complete responsibility for the ethical management and reporting of the study (Merriam, 1988). The interaction between the researcher, topic, and interpretation of the data collected through focus groups were conducted with specific guidelines for the participants (Morgan, 1988). Guidelines for focus groups are similar to traditional group counseling sessions which treat participants with respect, protecting the identity of the informants. Further guidelines for this research study included fulfilling agreements made during the negotiation of the study and reporting the findings in an accurate and truthful manner. Each participant was assured of

anonymity as an individual and with regard to specific work locations in the reporting of the findings and results of the study.

Chapter Summary

Procedures for developing grounded theory for this study were based on research of teacher attitudes, models of effective inclusion schools, and specific work by the subject school district on the topic of inclusion. The data was collected and coded through a systematic comparison with analysis and arrangement of categories. The reporting was seeking to draw conclusions about the level of receptiveness of each of the groups toward inclusion at a county level as well as creating matrices to report the content analysis of the effective inclusion school model.

These data contribute to the collaboration between general education and special education teachers by providing a better understanding of the needs manifested by each group in facilitating successful student placement. The findings from this study can be used to develop a more specific questionnaire for all personnel at the middle school level to make decisions about in-service training and to allocate system resources. In addition, the focus group technique and questions used for an effective inclusion school can be adapted to identify teachers with a strong receptivity for working with students in a more inclusive setting.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess attitudes of acceptance by administrators, core content teachers, and special education teachers at the middle school level toward the inclusion of special education students into general education classes in a large suburban school district. Ten focus groups were conducted between March and May of 1995 that included a total of 64 administrators, core teachers, and special education teachers. In addition, significant factors influencing the attitudes of each group and across the groups were examined.

Demographic factors, emerging themes, and measured responses were gathered from a data information sheet and a content analysis of the focus groups. Participants for the 10 focus groups were selected at random from 22 middle school sites in a large metropolitan school district. Literature on the attitudes of administrators and teachers toward inclusion of special education students into general education classes at the middle school level, examination of the legal parameters of inclusion as defined through recent court cases, and effective inclusion models for middle school students were used as a framework for this study.

The following research questions guided data collection in the study:

1. What are middle school core teachers' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?
2. What are special education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?
3. What are school based administrators' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?
4. Do school based administrators' attitudes differ from those of middle school teachers?
5. What are the elements that influence administrator and teacher attitudes for the purpose of providing better preparation and training?

This chapter contains five sections. The first section is a review of the research methods and an overview of the focus group setting used in this study. Discussions of participant composition consist of current assignment, school size, experience teaching, and collaboration as they may relate to data collected from the Demographic Information Factors sheet. In addition, salient concepts are highlighted from participant responses to questions 11 and 12 on the Demographic Information Factors sheet. The major themes from each focus group and significant differences are presented. The fifth section contains ratings of the CEC model for an Effective Inclusion School. Finally, general comments are incorporated within the chapter summary.

Setting for the Data Collection

This section includes a review of the research methods employed in this study and demographic information of the focus group participants. Each participant completed a Demographic Information Factors sheet prior to the beginning of the session in which participating. Each focus group was conducted in a one and a half hour time frame following the completion of the Demographic Information Factors sheet. In order to address the primary research questions, six specific questions were asked in each of the focus groups. The following questions were asked at each session:

1. What do you know about inclusion?
2. What forms of inclusion do you currently see occurring?
3. Which children benefit from inclusion and which children do you see as being limited from being involved in an inclusive classroom?
4. What skills are needed by teachers (both general education and special education) to support inclusion?
5. What roles do support personnel play in successful inclusion?
6. To what extent is inclusion important to you as an educator?

Sessions were conducted in a small conference room around a large table. Each of the sessions was facilitated by the same person who had extensive training in psychology, sociology, and group processes. The facilitator also prepared for two

months through specific reading and discussion pertaining to focus group process and special education inclusion issues. A participant or special education staff person recorded group member responses on chart paper to the questions presented during the focus group sessions. The researcher was also present at each session recording information and observations related to participant behavior.

The decision to mix administrators, core academic teachers, and special education teachers generated diverse views on the topic. The administrators, core teachers, and special education teachers contributed numerous responses. The facilitator indicated that those in attendance spoke "easily and freely." Those persons who were being reluctant to speak or who were being dominated by others were called upon to share their ideas and thinking on issues to ensure full participation. Most participants commented that they thought that "it was great to be asked ideas and opinions" on the topic in addition "to hearing from the other participants as to the attitudes, practices, and programs in their schools."

Observations and interviews were conducted during a three month period in 1995. Data were recorded from Demographic Data Information Sheets for each participant and summary notes from the six questions asked during each focus group session and researcher observations of the groups. All data were word processed. Hand sorting was used which involved four professionals to thematically order information and facilitate retrieval and ongoing analysis to arrive at the final coding (see Appendix E).

Data Analysis

Focus Group Participant Demographics

The population being studied consisted of 1,293 middle school administrators, general education core teachers, and special education teachers. From this population 200 administrators and teachers were invited to participate in one of the ten focus groups. In order to achieve a proportionate representation from each subgroup from the total population the distribution was as follows: 20 administrators, 120 core teachers, and 60 special education teachers.

To ensure a mixture from the population for each focus group session, 2 administrators, 12 core teachers, and 6 special education teachers were sent invitations to a specific session. In addition, the number of 20 was determined to arrive at the desired six to eight participants a session identified in the research. The range of participants during the focus group sessions was between 5 and 9. A total of 64 participants were present for all sessions. Each participant completed a Demographic Information Factors sheet. This information was gathered to explain the composition of the participants.

Results for Demographic Information Factors

Item 1. My current assignment is.

The largest subgroup participating was the core teacher group, numbering 33

or 51.56% of those in attendance (see Table 1). Twenty-three or 35.94% special education teachers attended the focus groups. The number of administrators who participated was eight or 12.5% of those who participated.

Item 2. My grade level is.

This item asked participants to identify their primary grade level of responsibility (see Table 1). Tabulations indicate that 32 or 50% of the total number of participants responded to grade level responsibility as grade eight. Thirty-one or 48.43% were associated primarily with grade seven, and 1 or 1.17% with grade six.

Item 3. My total years working in education are.

Only 4 or 2% of the participants were first year teachers (see Table 1). Twelve or 18.75% of the participants have been teaching between 1 to 4 years and another 9 or 14% of the participants indicated 4 to 10 years total experience. Thirty-nine participants or 60.94% indicated having over 10 years experience in teaching.

Item 4. The length of time in my current assignment is.

Eighteen or 28.1% of the participants were in their first year of their current assignment while 23 or 35.93% indicated between 1 and 4 years experience in their current position (see Table 1). Eleven or 17.19% of the participants had 4 to 10 years in their current position while another 12 participants or 18.75% indicated 10 or more years in their current position.

Item 5. How would you consider the consistency of support for inclusion throughout the system?

Only 3 or 4.69% of the participants viewed consistency of support for inclusion being equal throughout all four administrative areas in the school district (see Table 1). Thirty-eight and a half (one person split their response which accounts for the half for two items) or 60.16% of the respondents indicated that there are certain schools that offer more support and programs than other schools. Also 22.5 or 35.16% of the participants indicated that more support for inclusion is needed throughout the system.

Item 6. The enrollment of my school is.

Two or 3.13% of the participants indicated that enrollment was less than 500 students (see Table 1). Thirty-eight or 59.38% of the respondents indicated working in schools between 500 and 1000 students enrolled and 24 or 37.5% with more than a 1000 students in the school.

Item 7. I have worked in a collaborative team teaching situation that included both general education and special education students.

Fifty-two or 81.25% of the respondents indicated having worked in a collaborative team teaching situation that included both general education and special education students. Twelve or 18.75% of the participants have not worked in a collaborative team teaching situation.

Item 8. If yes to item 7 indicate the number of years working in a collaborative teaching situation that has involved special education teachers and general education teachers.

Of the 52 participants who responded yes to being involved in a collaborative team teaching situation, 10 or 19.23% participants had done so for less than a year, with 21 or 40.38% having done so between one and three years (see Table 1). Fifteen or 28.85% had been involved more than three years but less than five years. In addition 3 or 5.77% of these respondents indicated having five to ten years with a teaming arrangement and another 3 or 5.77% of the participants indicated more than 10 years experience associated with collaborative teaming.

Item 9. There is a special education center at my school.

Forty-one or 64.06% of the participants had center based special education programs such as ED, MR, and OT in their current school. Twenty-three or 35.9% of the respondents indicated that a center based program was not at their school.

Item 10. If you answered yes to question 9, do you view this as encouraging collaboration between special education and general education teachers at this location?

Thirty-two or 78.05% of the 41 participants who answered yes to item 9 also responded yes to greater collaboration occurring due to a center program being placed at the regular middle school site. Nine respondents or 21.95% answered no.

TABLE 1
Demographic Information

Responses by Assignment

Assignment	Number of Participants	Ratio
Administrator	8	12.50
Core teacher	33	51.56
Special education teacher	23	35.94
Total	64	100.00

Responses by Grade Level Responsibility

Grade	Responses	Percent
6	1	1.17
7	31	48.83
8	32	50.00
Total	64	100.00

TABLE 1 CONTINUED
Demographic Information

Responses by Years Working in Education

Years of Experience	Responses	Percent
1 or less	4	6.25
More than 1 less than 4	12	18.75
More than 5 less than 10	9	14.00
10 or more	39	60.99
Total	64	99.99

Responses by Length of Time in Current Assignment

Years of Experience	Responses	Percent
1 or less	18	28.10
More than 1 less than 4	23	35.94
More than 4 less than 10	11	17.19
10 or more	12	18.76
Total	64	99.99

TABLE 1 CONTINUED
Demographic Information

Responses by Consistency of Support

Support from System	Responses	Percent
Equally in all areas	3.0	4.69
More in some schools/program	38.5	60.20
More needed in system	22.5	35.20
Totals	64.0	100.00

Responses by School Enrollment

Size of School	Responses	Percent
Less than 500	2	3.13
500 to less than 1000	38	59.38
More than 1000	24	37.50
Total	64	99.91

TABLE 1 CONTINUED
Demographic Information

Responses by Years Collaborating

Years	Responses	Percent
1 or less	10	19.23
More than 1 less than 3	21	40.38
More than 3 less than 5	15	28.85
More than 5 less than 10	3	5.77
More than 10	3	5.77
Total	52	100.00

Qualitative Data from Demographic Information

On the Demographic Information Factors sheet, space was provided for participants to respond in writing to questions. The description of the content analysis for those two items is provided. The first item asked participants to comment on the collaboration between general education and special education teachers currently in the system. The other item asked for comments on general education and special education teachers' efforts and support toward inclusion of special education students into general education classes. These two items allowed for specific responses and served as a check for consistency with verbal responses of participants during the focus groups and ensured input from those who might be reluctant to comment frequently during those sessions. Three themes emerged from the written responses which included the relationship between general education and special education teachers, the connection between successful collaboration and the effectiveness of middle school teaming, and teacher support through preparation and training.

Working Relationships

The first theme addresses the current working relationship between general education and special education teachers. Agreeing with other respondents, a participant wrote that "the working of collaborative efforts depends on the match of teacher personalities in addition to pairing teachers with similar philosophy and purpose as very important factors for success." Respondents further indicated that

most teachers are working well together, and through collaboration toward more inclusive environments schools have created "interesting and necessary processes that provide a growth experience for teachers."

A respondent wrote that "the school's level of awareness of special education student needs has increased as delivery service models have been extended through expanded collaboration." In addition to this, several respondents indicated that current collaborative efforts were viewed as "a positive public relations opportunity for special education teachers," although several respondents commented that "some special education teachers do not feel valued" in current co-teaching situations. The expectation that the special education teacher share equally with the general education teacher in co-taught situations was expressed by both sets of teachers. In addition, several special education teachers wrote about the reluctance to include special education teachers into the regular classroom setting. Further, "a lack of understanding about the special education teacher's role in collaborative teaching" situations was reported. The written responses established a need for clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities between general education and special education. Hesitation exists with some general education teachers toward more inclusive environments because "of a lack of information about special education students, grading assessment, handling of disruptive behaviors, placement, the IEP, and understanding legal aspects about special education."

However, understanding effective collaborative co-teaching does exist as

indicated by one person writing that "in a good team taught classroom environment one can not tell the difference between special education and general education students and teachers." In addition, "when either the general education or special education teachers are reluctant to collaborate, the effort and product are perceived as minimal." Respondents expressed that "input from both teacher groups is important to successfully make effective decisions" about students. It was also reported that general education teachers need to be more flexible and less controlling. Further comments indicate that "both teacher groups need to be flexible and work together using open communication."

Collaborative Practices and Effective Teaming

The next theme emphasized the importance between collaboration and effective middle school teaming. The respondents wrote that "teaming with varied approaches was the primary form of collaboration even though programs and approaches vary by school." Collaboration and co-teaching between general education and special education teachers was reported as having a positive effect on students at the middle school level in the school district. One respondent wrote that "collaboration is directly proportionate to teacher attitudes regarding the issue of inclusion." Special education teachers on middle school core teams were viewed as beneficial, although it was also reported that "co-teaching with a special education teacher means an adjustment of time for all team members." Further, teachers articulated that teaming

and expanded collaborative efforts improve when the same teachers work together over a several year period of time.

The most frequent comment made by respondents pertaining to factors that influence middle school teaming and collaborative efforts was the importance of the use of a daily team planning period to ensure communication between the general education and special education teacher. A respondent wrote that "planning time is needed so that teachers can best meet the needs of special education students." Common planning time was cited as "a major factor contributing to team effectiveness along with class size when dealing with special needs student populations. The biggest problem is having time to share work--planning, teaching, assessing, reporting."

Collaborative efforts work when there is time to plan and discuss issues such as special education student adaptations which might require extra time to complete tests and assignments. Presently, those teachers who are committed to co-teaching between general education and special education have to "meet during individual planning time, afterschool, or whenever time permits such as lunch. In general, planning time is lacking for teachers to address student needs." Also the respondents expressed that co-teaching situations work best "when people want to team and receive training." Several comments indicated that the regular education students as well as teachers need to be prepared to understand learning differences to handle varied student disabilities.

Teacher Support through Training and Preparation

The third theme addressed teacher support through training and preparation to meet special education student needs in the core academic classes. First, the written responses indicate a receptiveness of general education teachers for greater inclusion of students into their classroom when provided teaching strategies and techniques. However, support was requested to expand teachers' knowledge about how to individualize accommodations and adaptations for instruction according to student need. In addition, the issue becomes more complex as expressed by the concern about "the impact upon the general education teacher with the inclusion of special education students along with other demanding student populations such as ESL students." Further, respondents indicated that support varies greatly at the teacher level from school to school.

The next area of support expressed by the respondents was the role of the administrators. Numerous respondents indicated that school based administrators are necessary support personnel "for collaboration to be successful." The greatest expectation for administrators was their role of leadership toward including special education students into general education classes. One respondent indicated that "administrators set the tone for the school and they have been hiring and adding teachers to the school who are willing to offer the services to all kids." The other key support person identified in the written responses was the "special education chair who has been extremely important to ensuring effective instructional delivery service

models." The chair provides more specific services to the classroom teachers related to placement, suggestions about strategies and through monitoring special education students once they are placed in core courses.

The support services identified as being provided by the special education chair are factors that relate to teacher receptiveness and are linked to training needs. One respondent encapsulated greater receptiveness by teachers as occurring if "special education students can function in a regular classroom with modifications and the included special education students are not disruptive to other students." This comment could also be representative of the many demands that teachers feel are placed upon them that can create additional frustrations and pressures. It was written that "most teachers want to help all children succeed." However, it was expressed that "not all children can succeed with the same level of services. I have found some students who are in general education classes that should not be. Special education students should be carefully placed." At the same time, a respondent indicated that "more needs to be done to help special education students perform at a higher level in the general education class" which again indicates a receptiveness and a need for specific strategies for teachers. In connection with this it was written that "the majority of the burden is on the special education teacher to make the teaming between teachers and students successful. A key factor for the special education teacher to succeed with general education teachers is to gain familiarity with content area subjects." Concern was also expressed that "general education teachers need to

better understand special education student needs and specific adaptations for them to succeed in a general education class." Training in these areas would provide assistance with student identification and teacher adaptations.

Additional comments reflect that "more training was needed for both groups of teachers to ensure successful collaboration and increased interest for more inclusion." Efforts are perceived "as usually positive when staff are made aware that a clear goal exists." The school district would benefit from role clarification of the relationship between the teacher groups in addition to in-service programs to assist general education teachers who seek to know more about special education students and specific intervention strategies. The written comments substantiate that general education teachers need assistance in modifying curriculum for special education students and general education teachers need to be provided with more information about students with disabilities.

Results of the Focus Groups

In this section, focus group results are provided with the salient points extracted from a review of the summary sheets of each group. First, a composite summary provides the salient points made throughout each of the ten focus groups. Next, in this section the main themes from the focus groups are identified and described.

Composite of Focus Groups' Salient Points

1. What do you know about inclusion?

Participants indicated that inclusion education provides accommodations for special education students being placed in general education classes. A variety of collaborative efforts are being implemented in the school district with "confusion existing between inclusion and mainstreaming." Several participants expressed concern that inclusion is not appropriate for some moderately and severely disabled students. Another concern was "the potential of general education classes becoming a dumping ground without concern for the success or preparation of the special education students" existing. It was also expressed that "the delivery models for instruction change from the elementary to middle school level and again at the high school level."

2. What forms of inclusion do you currently see occurring?

Participants indicated that "co-teaching, teaming, and resource situations exist with a variety of students with disabilities being incorporated into collaborative teaching situations."

3. Which children benefit from inclusion and which children do you see as being limited from being involved in an inclusive classroom?

Most of the participants indicated that "individual characteristics of the special education student who is being placed in a general education class were more important than a particular disability. The comfort level of the student and the acceptable social

behavior of the student impacts on the success in a core academic class more than a specific disability." The group did indicate that most learning disabled resource students are not a problem. An additional statement of support by participants for inclusion was that "special education students have productive role models when placed in general education classes."

Several areas of concern did surface in response to limitations of certain students with disabilities being placed in general education. The first was the "demands placed on teachers when serious discrepancies in student needs are present in the same classroom." Secondly, a more inclusive environment "requires teachers to have the information and skills to intervene" successfully with special education students. Further, those special education students who have an academic limitation or who lack background in a content area may continue to lag in academic achievement. The participants indicated that students with low reading levels have more difficulties. Also more complex content such as algebra places more demands on both general education and special education teachers. Further, the groups expressed that incorporating students with a Down Syndrome or ED special education identification into general education classes increases additional time for teacher preparation and heightens the pressure placed upon the teachers to create a successful situation."

4. What skills are needed by teachers (both general education and special education) to support inclusion?

Most of the groups identified "successful teacher qualities as being accommodation, compromise, communication, flexibility, initiative, honesty, open mindedness, and trust with their colleagues." Every one of the groups stated that the personalities of the teachers collaborating greatly influence the processes between general education and special education teachers. A consistent response from the participants to this question indicated that "teachers need a common planning time to get together to talk through issues such as discipline, grading, and lesson implementation. Another critical aspect included in the participant responses was the need for both general education and special education teachers to share expertise in a collaborative setting. The core teacher has the depth of knowledge about content curriculum while the special education teacher has specific strategies and techniques about instructional adaptations.

In addition, several teachers indicated that "formal training has not occurred in the school district and would be beneficial to teachers. Further, participants requested that training needs to incorporate the characteristics that provide an understanding of special education students and shared strategies." Repeated statements addressed a need for the school district to provide clear direction, expectations, role definition, and production of materials for collaboration as more important than the specific skills of teachers. The participants also expressed that training should include an emphasis on instructional accommodations, learning styles, and teaching styles. In addition, "understanding the IEP, individual needs of the special education student, content

curriculum, and effective communication with parents" were also important aspects identified as needed for general education teachers in particular.

5. What roles do support personnel play in successful inclusion?

Administration was identified as "important to the process by influencing expectations and sensitivity toward a more inclusive environment." The participants spoke of the administrative staff as extremely important to support efforts through effective scheduling of staff and students, limiting class size, discipline to assist teachers, and creating instructional service delivery models that are realistic. Further, a participant wrote that "support for teacher planning time and providing materials to use with diverse levels" are key factors for success with more inclusive environments which are influenced by administrators.

The special education department chair (LD coordinator in most cases) was identified as a significant person for "providing assistance directly to teachers, students, administrators, and parents." Further, the matching of the student IEP to student schedules and instructional services is accomplished with significant involvement of the special education department chair. The special education department chair also has influence with the teaching of other teachers about the characteristics of special education students and strategies for accommodations. The Director of Guidance and school counselors were identified as "a linking pin to services for the special education student." Lastly, support has been demonstrated from teacher to teacher.

6. To what extent is inclusion important to you as an educator?

The groups indicated that inclusion is "essential and very important." The groups were clear that "it must occur on the continuum of services in reference to student LRE. The successful implementation of a more inclusive environment will require total commitment from the school district. Administrative leadership along with parent support and specific training are critical to the implementation of more inclusive environments. Transition to a more inclusive environment needs to be planned carefully."

Preparation should be done "by using experts on staff from administrators and teachers through school based in-service workshops. Each school needs to be allowed to adapt programs to address the needs at that location." Also the participants wanted support training to be provided for those teachers who are most willing to learn. Further, participants want the in-service training programs that are created to be "realistic with consideration of transition to high school from middle school."

Themes from the Focus Group Analysis

Four themes emerged from the content analysis of the focus groups. The first three coincide with the themes that emerged in the qualitative data from the demographic information. These include the relationship between general education and special education teachers, the connection between successful collaboration and the effectiveness of middle school teaming, and teacher support through preparation

and training. The additional theme that was identified from review of participants' comments was the degree of acceptance of more inclusive environments.

Degree of Acceptance toward Inclusive Environments

The first aspect to be addressed is the degree of acceptance by the participants toward more inclusive classrooms. Inclusion was defined by several of the participants as "a cooperative and equitable effort between special education and general education teachers with services provided on a continuum." Inclusion should be based upon the student's IEP providing collaborative teaching situations as an alternative to self-contained placement. The participants in the groups were emphatic that inclusion is "essential and very important." The groups were clear that inclusive practices must occur on the "continuum of services in reference to student LRE." Several participants expressed concern that inclusion "is not appropriate for some moderately and severely disabled students." Behavioral issues were identified as "the most difficult condition for teachers to address." Concern was also expressed for "low functioning students and students with moderate to severe disabilities such as autism and MR."

In addition, participants indicated that inclusion "parallels administrative expectations." Participants also indicated that "there are a variety of existing programs" in the school district with "confusion existing between inclusion and mainstreaming." Further, the successful implementation of a more inclusive

environment for special education students "will require clarification and total commitment from the school district."

Teacher Relationships and Skills

The second critical aspect addresses the relationship and skills needed by general education and special education teachers to successfully collaborate and include more special education students in core classes. Participants expressed that "both general education and special education teachers involved in a co-teaching situation need to be co-teachers with equal status." In some situations "the special education teacher has been viewed as an instructional aide." The groups indicated that "teachers in co-teaching and collaborative situations need to work together and believe it will work." Further, "teachers involved with collaboration need to have an understanding of the characteristics of special education students and the processes of teaming."

The groups further identified skills which contribute to successful collaboration as being a demonstration of compromise, flexibility, initiative, inquiry, and being highly communicative, honest, and trusting of co-workers. A personality match of teachers working together is necessary. In addition, the special education teacher needs to be able to explain processes and insights about special education student goals expressed in the IEP. Also the special education teacher can offer specific strategies and methods while the regular education teacher provides more specific

content. A frequent response was the identification of common planning time for co-teaching to work in a more inclusive environment. Further, a more inclusive environment requires teachers to have the information and skills to intervene successfully with special education students.

Collaboration and Middle School Teaming

The third theme identified was the connection between successful collaboration and the effectiveness of middle school teaming. Participants indicated that "the administrative staff was necessary to ensure collaborative practices and the various service delivery models needed for co-teaching and teaming." Specific items mentioned about administrative support for co-teaching and teaming included discipline intervention to assist teachers, limiting class size, student scheduling, and teacher staffing. Support for "teacher planning time and the development of materials to be used with diverse populations" are additional factors influenced by administrators.

Support through Training and Preparation

Training and teacher preparation also emerged as an important theme. Participants indicated that the system needs to provide training and preparation with "transition to more inclusive environments planned carefully." The school system needs to further increase direction related to expectations, role definition, and the

production of materials to assist teachers. It was also stated that "training related to curriculum accommodations, learning styles, and teaching styles" would be valuable. In addition, "understanding the IEP, individual needs of the special education student, content curriculum, and effective communication with parents" were important aspects identified for general education teachers in particular. Lastly, even though the school district needs to provide support and direction at a system level the participants asked that each school be allowed to adapt programs to address the specific needs at that location.

CEC Rating from Content Analysis

When the content of the focus groups was reviewed by several individuals, the nine CEC elements relating to attitude and collaboration of an Effective Inclusion School were rated. Each item was given a rating of 1, 2, or 3. A rating of 1 indicated strong responses based upon the content of each focus group, with a 2 indicating that the aspect represented a moderate reaction by the participants, and a 3 was indicative of weaker responses or that the aspect was not included in the discussion.

The first grouping of items pertains to elements about the attitudes and beliefs of an Effective Inclusion School (see Table 2). The first aspect which is the belief that special education students can succeed in an inclusive environment had a moderately strong rating (1.7) based upon the fact that responses were supportive of

inclusion, but "the majority of participants indicated that placement should be based upon a continuum of services."

The acceptance of responsibility for learning outcomes of students with disabilities received an overall strong rating (1.1) as the second aspect of the CEC model (see Table 2). The participants were consistent in their responses that "it was important for all students to succeed and that it is equally important for special education students to have the best possible learning environment." At the same time the participants were concerned that "in order to have special education students succeed in core courses greater supports were needed proportionate to the disability of the special education student." Again most participants viewed placement "being based on a continuum of services and believed that the special education teacher had the greater responsibility for the learning outcomes of the special education student."

Item three rated the teacher responsibility for receiving students with disabilities into a general education class which was at a moderate level (2.2). Within the focus groups, participants indicated that "the school district had not provided needed training." Yet teachers stated that "good teaching is good teaching and that most of the participants were having success based upon the fact that the teacher and other support personnel were committed to making a more inclusive environment such as co-teaching successful" (see Table 2).

Item four addresses parent information about support programs for special education students and had a weak rating (2.6). Few of the groups discussed parent

issues. The discussion generally focused upon the parent role as supportive and necessary to ensure a more inclusive environment (see Table 2).

The last item listed within the Attitudes and Belief section of the CEC model considers the commitment of special education staff to collaborative practices in general education classrooms (see Table 2). This item received a strong rating (1.2). All groups had individuals who spoke to the numerous special education teachers who were key to making collaboration work. Several general education teachers did express "their disappointment with the special education person with whom they had worked." Every special education teacher present indicated "a responsibility to work with general education to provide information, strategies, and technical assistance for special education students."

The second set of groupings from the CEC model address collaboration with the first item pertaining to the involvement of special education with instructional or team planning (see Table 2). A strong rating (1.4) was determined from responses by the groups. Each group agreed that "planning time is important in order to have a successful collaborative experience." Currently in the school district most core teams at the middle school level have a special education person assigned, with variation in the level of involvement and commitment. In some cases "instructional and team planning have been limited because of staffing demands and logistical difficulties related to master scheduling."

Item seven addresses the level of collaboration between general education and

special education teachers through co-teaching. The rating was moderately high (2.0) with participants indicating that most schools had models in which co-teaching is occurring (see Table 2). Probing during the focus groups indicated that "the degree of co-teaching varied by teams within schools and across schools." Teacher personalities along "with qualities such as the ability to compromise, communicate, demonstrate flexibility, honesty, and open mindedness influence the ability of teachers to co-teach effectively."

Item eight addresses collaboration between general education and special education through team teaching and received a strong rating (1.7). Participants indicated that "positive efforts were occurring between general education and special education, although the efforts could be more effective with increased planning time, additional training, and consideration to lower student teacher ratios" (see Table 2).

Item nine which addresses collaboration between general education and special education through teacher assistance teams received a weak rating (2.9). The participants had limited discussion pertaining to this aspect within the school district. However, the local screening committee would be an example of a teacher assistance team (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
CEC Model Items

The Belief that Special Education Students Can Succeed in an Inclusion Environment.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	1.7

Your Acceptance of Responsibility for Learning Outcomes of Students with Disabilities.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1.1

Your Preparation to Receive Students with Disabilities in the Class.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2.2

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

CEC Model Items

Parent Information about Support Program Goals for Special Education Students.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2.6

Commitment of Special Education Staff toward Collaborative Practices in General Education Classrooms.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1.2

Involvement of Special Educators with Instructional or Team Planning.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1.4

TABLE 2 CONTINUED
CEC Model Items

The Level of Collaboration between General Education and Special Education Teachers through Co-teaching.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0

Collaboration between General Education and Special Education Teachers through Team Teaching.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	1.7

Collaboration between General Education and Special Education Teachers with Teacher Assistance Teams.

Group	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total
Rating	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2.9

Chapter Summary

This chapter described results of the data analyses of this study assessing attitudes of acceptance by administrators, core content teachers, and special education teachers at the middle school level toward the inclusion of special education students into general education classes.

The degree of acceptance for more inclusive environments was detailed along with the relationship between general education and special education teachers, the connection between successful collaboration and the effectiveness of middle school teaming, and teacher support through preparation and training. A description of the setting of the focus groups for the study that were conducted with administrators, core teachers, and special education teachers was included. Further, a review of participant demographic factors was presented. A composite of the focus group responses was also provided. Lastly, the rating of the CEC model aspects for Attitudes and Beliefs and Collaboration of the CEC Effective Inclusion School Model was presented.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

The chapter contains an overview of the study, the applications to the findings related to the research questions, and the implications of the findings to the practitioner. A discussion of the variables that are connected with administrators' and teachers' attitudes toward special education students in more inclusive environments are the focus of the research conclusions. In addition, the researcher's commentary, recommendations about the study specific to the school district, and recommendations for future research study are presented.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess attitudes of acceptance by administrators, core content teachers, and special education teachers at the middle school level toward the inclusion of special education students into general education classes. The data provided results with implications for each middle school as well as individual teachers within the school district. In addition, this study identified significant factors that influence the attitudes of administrators, core academic teachers, and special education teachers. This study was based upon the position that

teacher attitudes are one of the most important factors in determining success for a more inclusive environment (Barnartt & Kabzems, 1992). Previous attitudinal research in this area indicated that regular education teachers frequently were not receptive to the inclusion of children with disabilities for the purpose of social integration (Hersh & Walker, 1983; Keogh & Levitt, 1976). In addition, Winzer (1987) established that attitudes are as important as teacher competencies. Teacher willingness to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms affects the delivery of services to those students and impacts the effectiveness of the educational setting for all students.

Therefore, additional research was warranted to identify key factors that influence the attitudes of middle school administrators and teachers toward inclusion. In this study variables that influence the attitudes of middle school administrators and teachers toward inclusion were examined. The overarching units of analysis were the Demographic Information Data Sheets and the in-depth focus groups conducted with 64 middle school administrators, core academic teachers, and special education teachers.

Applications of the Findings to the Research Questions

Research Question 1.

What are middle school core teachers' attitudes about the inclusion of special

education students in general education classes?

In general, the groups stated that inclusion is "essential and very important." Inclusion was defined as "a cooperative and equitable effort between special education and general education which provides services on a continuum." The groups were clear that inclusion "must occur on the continuum of services in reference to student LRE." The participants further explained placement "as being based upon the student's IEP which may include collaborative team teaching situations as an alternative to a self-contained placement."

Most of the teachers were comfortable with LD students being included into core classes. However, the "more severe the disability the greater reluctance" by core teachers to include students with disabilities into the general education class. Those students identified as ED were viewed by the groups as "the most difficult to manage and to service instructionally." Classroom disturbances by special education students were the greatest concern reported by the general education teachers who participated. Core academic teachers indicated that they opposed incorporating any student into their class who "detracted from other students." Also teachers spoke of the added complexity of teaching larger classes of special education students when other students with special needs such as ESL students were incorporated into classes.

The core academic teacher participants indicated that "they want both special education and general education students to do well academically. However,

additional students with disabilities placed in the core classes require the core teacher to further differentiate instruction which places more demands on the teacher." Along with this concern several teachers indicated the potential of "general education classes becoming a dumping ground without concern for the success or preparation" of the special education students. Another concern was expressed by general education teachers about "having increased numbers of special education students placed into general education classes with reduced support from special education." Participants expressed further concern about the "general education students being restricted or limited" when special education students are included into general education classes.

Specific supportive remarks by core content teachers for more inclusion were clearly indicated. First, the statement that "individual characteristics of the special education student who is placed in a general education class are more important than a particular disability and the extent of that disability" indicated receptivity. Another positive comment was in reference to the comfort level of the student and the acceptable social behavior of the student which impacts greatly on the success of a special education student in a general education class. In addition, many of the core general education teachers stated that when they "have information and an understanding about a special education student" who is placed in their class the anxiety level is decreased for both teacher and student. Also, participants stated that "special education students as much as general education students reach the level of expectation set for them by the teacher" which can be beneficial to all students in a

classroom.

In order to ensure the implementation of high academic expectations for special education students, general education teachers expressed several concerns. First, the demands on general education teachers to address "serious discrepancies with student needs present a challenge." Secondly, a more inclusive environment requires teachers to have "specific information, skills, and intervention strategies" to be successful with special education students. Further, students who have limitations or who may be deficient in a skill area when entering a class may sometimes continue to fall behind in academic achievement thus effecting academic self-concept. The groups reported that students with low reading levels also have more difficulties performing academically and require additional teacher time. Lastly, more difficult content classes such as algebra place greater demands on the student and teacher.

Research Question 2.

What are special education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?

The special education teachers were much clearer and more positive about defining and explaining service delivery models related to inclusion than were administrators or core teachers. Based upon the Demographic Information Data sheets and focus group participant responses, the special education teachers presented greater receptivity to more inclusive environments. The special education teachers

also viewed "more inclusive environments as implemented on the continuum of services." The special education teachers articulated that "a student's placement is guided by LRE, but may result in some students needing a more restricted environment based on their IEP." Few of the special education teachers favored total inclusion for all special education students, even though most of the special education teachers were involved in co-teaching and collaborative situations.

The special education teachers did view greater inclusion and increased collaboration between general education and special education "as an opportunity for positive public relations about special education students' potential as well as the means to provide assistance with specific strategies and techniques to assist special education students." At the same time, the changing roles of special education teachers which is essential to collaborative practices has placed "additional pressure on special education teachers to perform and be scrutinized by their peers." Further, the participants indicated that the special education teacher "has more responsibility to ensure the success of the included students and to ensure that collaborative arrangements succeed." Special education teachers also indicated that collaborative arrangements allow for greater assistance to both general education and special education students. This creates "possibilities for improved academic self-esteem" of special education students included into general education classes through successful experiences. Also, the potential for success of included special education students in collaborative situations increases with exposure to productive role models in general

education classes.

Special education teachers similarly to general education teachers identified "successful teacher qualities such as accommodation, compromise, communication, flexibility, initiative, honesty, open mindedness, and trust with their colleagues" as key factors for increasing success. They stated that the "personalities of the collaborating teachers greatly influence the processes" between general education and special education teachers. The special education teachers also were adamant that common planning time with general education teachers is essential. Further, "time is needed to share expertise between core teachers (content curriculum) and special education teachers (skills and strategies)." It was indicated that experienced special education teachers also provide assistance to newer special education teachers. Special education teachers who were positive and receptive to more inclusive teaching situations expressed concern about large class sizes with high numbers of special population students. They view this situation as intensifying demands on general education and special education teachers and students in collaborative classes.

Research Question 3.

What are school based administrators' attitudes about the inclusion of special education students in general education classes?

Administrators' attitudes were positive toward greater inclusion and were identified as important to the processes of influencing the expectations and sensitivity

toward a more inclusive environment. Administrative leadership was presented as critical for the implementation of more inclusive environments. The administrative staff was needed to develop effective student and teacher schedules which influenced internal school staffing allocations and the number of students placed in teacher classes. Intervention with disciplinary situations by administration is viewed as a critical teacher expectation and an important factor of support for teachers in order to expand inclusive practices.

Research Question 4.

Do school based administrators' attitudes differ from those of middle school teachers?

Administrators attitudes are explained differently than teachers based upon focus group responses. First, the role of the administrator varies greatly from that of a teacher. In fact the groups indicated that administrators play an important role in effecting teacher attitudes by creating the structure and framework to allow teachers to service students instructionally. Further, the groups indicated that administrative support for teacher planning time, materials to use with diverse levels, and staffing are key factors that impact teacher attitudes and the ability to provide effective instructional delivery service models.

Further, the administration was viewed as responsible for "influencing and committing needed resources and support staff" for more inclusive services. Also the

administration in a school impacts on the use of other persons who perform related administrative and support services. A significant person mentioned from each group was the special education department chair (LD coordinator in most cases) who provides assistance directly to teachers, students, administrators, and parents. In addition matching student schedules to services required for special education students' was accomplished with significant involvement of the special education department chair. The special education department chair also influenced "the teaching of other teachers about the characteristics of special education students and strategies for accommodations." Additional support service providers were identified as the Director of Guidance and school counselors who were described as linking pins to services for the special education student.

Research Question 5.

What are the elements that influence administrator and teacher attitudes for the purpose of providing better preparation and training?

A significant commitment to common planning time is a critical aspect for teachers in order to prepare and maintain instructional service delivery. In particular, teachers who team together need to reach an "understanding and commonality" about procedures such as discipline, grading, and lesson preparation in addition to instructional content strategies and techniques to address student success.

The participants in the focus groups recognized the differences between

general education and special education teacher knowledge, skills, and training programs. Those present in the focus groups were clear that "personalities of the teachers" who would be in co-teaching situations needs to be carefully arranged and the matching of work partners may be the greatest factor in collaboration success. The number of students assigned to the teacher in the class along with the composition of all students in the class represent two other important factors. Monitoring class size requires organizational planning in each school with a commitment from the school district to be creative and flexible with general education and special education staffing for collaborative arrangements such as co-teaching and teaming.

Another aspect related to the preparation and training of administrators and teachers was the need of the central office to provide leadership for inclusion, clarify expectations, and delineate role definition for collaborative practices between general education and special education. Further requests by participants were for the school district to: (1) produce materials and specific training in classroom strategies, (2) present curriculum accommodations, and (3) provide learning styles and teaching styles training for teachers. Legal considerations such as understanding the IEP, LRE, as well as characteristics of individual needs of the special education student, content curriculum, and effective communication with parents are also important factors needing to be incorporated into content information and skill training programs for teachers by the school district. Further understanding of specific special education

populations such as students with autism or down syndrome are imperative for building confidence in the general education teacher in order to incorporate special education students into core academic classes.

Preparation through "school based in-service workshops" for administrators and teachers using experts on staff would help clarify roles and responsibilities. Each school needs to be allowed "to adapt programs to address the needs at that location." The successful implementation of a more inclusive environment will require total commitment from the school district with transition to more inclusive environments needing to be planned carefully. The planning and instructional delivery models that are developed need to consider the change for students from the elementary school level to the middle school level and again at the high school level. Participants were hopeful that "realistic programs" would continue to be developed and implemented with consideration of those transitions.

Relationship of Findings to Research Literature

The analysis of data from this study indicates that attitudes influence both administrator and teacher willingness to receive special education students into general education classes. Much of the previous research on this topic was substantiated through the data analysis. The data analysis identified salient factors that contribute to teacher skills and preparation which are interwoven with attitudes rather than being

isolated factors. Included in this section are a review of factors emphasized by participants that include teacher attitudes, administrator attitudes, and additional variables that influence attitudes of teachers and administrators toward inclusion of special education students into core academic classes.

Teacher Attitudes

Attitudes were expressed in detail by the participants through the use of focus groups. These focus groups substantiated one of the intents of this study which was to capture the meaning of expressed behavior of administrators and teachers. Eisner (1987) indicates that one's most recent experience greatly influences attitudes which were reflected in the focus group discussions. The idea that general education teachers need to develop a sensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of students with disabilities in order to work with students with disabilities in the classroom was supported by participant responses (Landrum & Kauffman, 1992). Based upon responses from the focus groups the establishment of attitudes by teachers are as important as teacher competencies (Barnartt & Kabzems, 1992; Winzer, 1987). In addition participants indicated an interconnection between attitudes, teacher skills, preparation, and resources which include support systems. Further items such as knowledge of special education techniques and information about specific student needs were discussed by participants. Winzer (1987) identified these items mentioned above as factors influencing attitudes.

Discussion supported previous research by Dyer (1992) who reported that special educators are perceived as having greater competence and willingness to assist students with disabilities in the classroom. These findings further substantiate that core academic teachers need more knowledge of effective interventions and more skill in implementing these interventions in the general education settings.

Previous research by Wilczenski (1992) was reflected in the group discussions indicating that most general education teachers are agreeable to including special education students into general education classes as long as those students do not inhibit the learning of others. Further, the position that general education teachers had concerns that including students with severe disabilities would limit the amount of instructional time for all students (Wisnieski & Alper, 1994) was expressed. In addition, participants reported that general education teachers were more reluctant to have students with specific disabilities such as emotional, behavioral, and low functioning students with a learning disability in their classes. Ironically numerous teachers discussed strategies that work to successfully modify instruction for students with behavioral problems, even though they opposed placement of special education students into their classes (Gable, 1989; Williams & Algozzine, 1979; Wisnieski & Alper, 1994). Related to this was the discussion of the strategies employed to address special education student needs in core classes which also has positive effects on the regular education student and is beneficial to all students when in a co-teaching situation (Gans, 1987; Walther-Thomas & Carter, 1993).

Another important aspect derived from the focus group discussions was that the more experience core teachers have with the inclusion of special education students into their classes, the greater the level of success and improvement of attitudes of these teachers (Hamilton and Brady, 1991). Focus group discussion also identified variables that influence teacher attitudes which were incorporated into previous research by Jordon and McLaughlin (1986) and include: (1) the teacher being informed about how the included student best learns, (2) the degree of previous teacher success with special education students, (3) the available support services, and (4) the degree of administrative support.

Administrative Attitudes Influencing Attitudes

Teachers also viewed administrators as having an impact upon attitudes for teachers about inclusion (Landrum & Kauffman, 1992). The focus group participants spoke about the importance of administrators and the commitment that must be made to successfully implement more inclusive environments. Administrators in the groups responded with great favor toward greater inclusion (Davis, 1986; Stainback & Stainback, 1988). The participants supported previous research in this area indicating that school principals frequently have better attitudes than teachers toward more inclusive education (Center & Ward, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1990). Further, the participants who work in more inclusive school programs spoke of teacher attitudes correlating positively with their perceptions of the school principal's support

of inclusion (Duquette & O'Reilly, 1988). In general, the groups indicated that principals were more supportive toward inclusion than teachers, but also less involved with the implementation of day to day instruction.

The variables that Dyer (1992) identified such as administrative support, characteristics of the student body, class size, and school resources were items mentioned by the groups that would likely predict success and influence attitudes. These variables are controlled by school administrators. In addition, substantiation of variables identified by Stainback and Stainback (1988) indicate that inclusion tends to be more positive when a commitment from the administration exists. Specific administrative support aspects which were discussed include: (1) advanced preparation for inclusive education, (2) in-service opportunities, (3) shared responsibility between general educators and special educators, and (4) consultant services for both general and special education.

Additional Variables Influencing Attitudes

The most reported factor stated was the concern for the amount of time required to make inclusion work. This is congruent with the 1991 findings by Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, and Lesar who reported that the more inclusive a classroom, the more time is required by the general education teacher to produce outcomes for both special education and general education students. The groups reported that teachers cannot be expected to deal with special needs children without

proper preparation and training. These findings indicate teachers need to know more about effective interventions and implementation strategies in the general education classroom. Glomb and Morgan (1991) indicated that strategies can be developed which are effective for inclusion through teachers being provided time for preparation and planning.

Another consideration that emerged from the groups was the anxiety and pressure that exist concerning more inclusive environments for both general education and special education teachers. First, most participants expected all students to receive effective teaching (Westby, Watson, & Murphy, 1994), although participants stated that the special education teacher in collaborative situations assumes greater responsibility for the performance of the special education student than does the general education teacher (Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988). A key factor presented by participants was Salend's (1984) position which suggested that the success of included special education students into general education classes is often dependent on the quality of communication and support between general and special educators. Another variable identified by participants was the number of students assigned to a class and student teacher ratio (Snell, Janney, Raynes, & Beers, 1991; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, & Nania, 1990).

Several concerns were expressed by participants that relate to variables which influence attitudes. The first concern was expressed by special education teachers pertaining to the placement of special education students into general education when

necessary services may not always be available (Silver, 1991). Also reported by Silver and discussed by participants was the concern that many of the special education professionals assigned to regular education classes find such large caseloads that a reduction of individualized instruction occurs. As was expressed by Glatthorn (1990) and group participants the relationship between the classroom teacher and the special education teacher is complex with potential for conflict. He listed potential conflicts which were also discussed in the groups that include: (1) the role of the special educator, (2) the ways in which each group characteristically views teaching and learning, and (3) the development and implementation of specific methods and materials.

Implications of Findings for Practitioners

First, administrator and teacher attitudes are important in addition to being interconnected to other variables related to the receptiveness of general education teachers toward inclusion. In developing more inclusive environments for special education students, attention needs to be given to teacher attitudes and related factors. The importance of this is that teacher attitudes further influence teacher expectations for student success and ultimately student achievement outcomes (Algozzine & Curran, 1978; Hersh & Walker, 1983). The findings from this study suggest that the improvement of administrators' and teachers' attitudes are related to creating training

and support opportunities. In those schools where in-service training has been provided, the instructional practices for accommodating special education students has greater approval by general education teachers (Center & Ward, 1991; Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Further, Muscott and Bond (1986) suggested that the receiving teachers for special education students are in need of additional support with routine consultation.

A major consideration of an effective in-service training program would be to provide clear definitions and expectations for the instructional delivery. Articulating clear guidelines and direction are the basis for describing instructional service delivery options within schools and throughout the school district. These educational programs are best coordinated and unified with the services that transform schools into places where all children learn (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). In addition, administrators and teachers need to understand special education's legal concepts and principles. General education teachers in this study indicated a greater need to understand the legal aspects of children with a disability being placed in a regular education setting and a greater need for knowledge of concepts such as LRE and the IEP. There is further need for specific strategies and techniques of service delivery models as part of an effective in-service training model which meets individual needs of special education students without removal from regular classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

Another consideration pertains to the connection between the collaboration of general education and special education teachers at the middle school level as it

relates to effective teams. The Demographic Information Data sheets and content analysis of the focus groups from this study supported the principles and values of middle school concepts through such skill areas as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, and self-awareness. Teaming is an important aspect of this process which requires time to be allocated to allow teachers to work together. Attention needs to be given to the organizational structure of schools and teacher assignments to further enable teams to be able to work together effectively. The factors that Walther-Thomas and Carter (1993) identified to support inclusion such as collaboration, communication, and teaming are essential for a school district to implement more inclusive programs at the middle school level. Specific to co-teaching situations, general educators and special educators must share responsibilities for heterogeneous groups of students assigned to them through developing mutual plans to meet identified classroom goals and learning objectives (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991). In order to accomplish co-teaching, classroom responsibilities are shared equally as outlined by Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989). Also teachers must coordinate their presentations to ensure that all critical information is covered in sufficient depth using strategies that address student needs (Davis, 1989). These approaches enable teachers to focus on key concepts in greater depth.

The next factor relates to those practices that teachers obtain from training. Previous research (Cohen & Lynch, 1991; Dyer, 1992; Madden & Slavin, 1983; Slavin & Madden, 1989; Wang & Walberg, 1983) and the findings from this study

indicate that teachers who experience in-service training and are provided with resources and continuous support systems can successfully modify or adapt instructional practices to meet special education student needs in core classes.

Further, positive academic outcomes have been shown for included special education students through the use of "effective schools" teaching practices that employ the use of cooperative learning, peer instructional methods, variables effecting time-on-task, and student grouping arrangements (Bickel & Bickel, 1986; Raynes, Snell & Sailor, 1991).

Research Conclusions

The research findings from this study are based upon the results from the data collection and data analyses conducted through the use of focus groups and qualitative methodology. The major findings of this study show that the attitudes of acceptance by middle school administrators and teachers toward more inclusive environments are not isolated factors related to teacher receptiveness, but are connected to collaborative practices that are enable by commitment of leadership to the allocation of resources, support systems, and school autonomy.

Commitment of Leadership

First, the school district must provide leadership that clarifies expectations,

guidelines, and policies about inclusion in order to encourage organizational change throughout the system and enhance collaboration between general education and special education.

Allocation of Resources

Second, the school district must provide the resources to support more inclusive programs through in-service training, by adequate staffing reflected in manageable student teacher ratios, and with opportunities to develop shared responsibility between general education and special education.

Support Systems

Third, the school-based administrators need to ensure that team planning time is provided as well as teacher support systems that are linked to school counseling services, appropriate discipline as needed, and parent involvement.

School Autonomy

School-based administrators must be empowered with autonomy by the central office in the school district to lead and manage individual schools through varying programs and resources in order to address the needs of specific student populations. Further, the administration at individual schools must be willing to establish a strong

leadership role by allowing processes that encourage inclusion and providing increased time for both general education and special education teachers to address shared responsibility. Time is a necessary aspect for collaboration, for discussing related issues about co-teaming, and for planning in order to create and develop appropriate materials and strategies that address both general education and special education student needs.

Recommendations Emerging from the Study

Based on research literature and the results of this study, the following recommendations are suggested to improve collaborative efforts between general education and special education personnel:

1. The school district involved in this study would benefit from establishing a clear strategic plan with both immediate and long term goals related to the inclusion of special education students into general education.
2. Clear guidelines for inclusive practices need to be created and implemented on a school district wide basis that allow for flexibility at individual schools to address local school student populations.
3. In order to become a system with greater inclusive school environments, a commitment of resources is needed with the primary one being the allocation of time for training, preparation, and collaborative planning.

4. Training models need to be multifaceted as outlined in the preceding section of this chapter rather than considering one or two factors.

5. Placement of students with disabilities should be occurring according to the student IEP with inclusion in the LRE.

6. School systems need to consider the key transition points of the inclusive environments from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school for special education students. This is necessary to ensure proper continuity of academic, social, emotional, and career goals for students with disabilities at the different levels of schooling.

Recommendations for Future Study

Based upon information provided in this chapter and the findings in Chapter 4, the following recommendations are being made:

1. Examine the attitudes of administrators, core teachers, and special education teachers at one or several middle schools using the elements or selected elements from the CEC model.

2. Conduct a case study of several middle school teams to determine the relationship between attitudes, collaborative practices, and support through preparation and training.

3. Study attitudes of administrators, core teachers, and special education

teachers in conjunction with specific training in-service models and consideration of the effectiveness of the models.

4. Examine the use of planning time as it relates to collaborative teaching situations between special education teachers and general education teachers.

5. Study the processes used by the school district in the establishment of the strategic plan that addresses the question of LRE with the subsequent program development and implementation for more inclusive environments.

6. Additional research of both general education and special education student achievement, classroom performance, and academic self-concept specific to the practices and programs related to teacher attitudes would be useful.

Researcher's Commentary

The researcher had to employ mechanisms to obtain the most honest set of results with particular awareness to trends and various interest and pressure groups. Although the researcher worked in the school district of study, procedures and steps were established in the research design to maintain objectivity. Procedures employed for creating the focus groups, selecting a moderator to lead all the groups, and utilization of a team to review the data through content analyses contributed to the objectivity. These procedures that contributed to the objectivity of the study also assisted the reliability and validity of the results and enhanced the potential for this

study to be replicated in a variety of school district settings.

A recent study by Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) examined attitudes toward integration comparing five school districts of varying size using individual interview techniques and derived conclusions similar to this study. In the 1995 study the findings indicated that positive teacher attitudes toward inclusion are influenced by (1) organizational change throughout a school district, (2) time for developing teacher skills along with a supportive atmosphere, and (3) increased professional autonomy to make decisions to benefit students.

When considering replicating this research design several issues need to be addressed. For instance, caution should be taken by any researcher considering replicating this research design in a large metropolitan school district. Although this study was endorsed by the school district, significant time delays were experienced from the various departments within the school district. In addition some school principals were reluctant to release names or provide information even though it was conducted with anonymity and confidentiality for the schools and participants. Consequently, resistance and delays should be anticipated due to demanding schedules, preoccupied principals, and concern regarding possible negative perceptions of the school.

The use of focus groups was an effective and intense data collection tool for this study with participants producing honest responses about the topic. Participants also indicated an excitement about being able to provide information which would be

used to make decisions in the school district and about hearing different programs that were being implemented in other schools. This exchange of ideas and the networking that occurred was extremely valuable and as one participant stated "this does not always happens in our large system."

The collected data and results from the study were presented to the school district's Department of Student Services and Special Education Committee on the Continuum of Services. This occurred at an ideal time to coincide with the planning and reporting of a district-wide Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities which incorporated the data and results from this study for a report to be produced in the fall of 1995. The school district would benefit from creating similar opportunities for administrators and teachers in the future.

Further, the research methods, results, and findings from this study support Kauffman (1988) who stressed that sensitivity to what teachers think and believe is essential if any serious change in teachers' ability to assist students with disabilities in the classroom is to be achieved. Landrum and Kauffman (1992) also reported that the willingness of both regular and special education teachers to include special education students into general education classes is greater when administrative support and preparation time exist. In addition, the discussions in the focus groups frequently incorporated statements from the participants about the successful situations with special education students in general education classes. The specific quote that was made relating to this was that "good teaching is good teaching," and effective teachers

are able to differentiate instruction levels to accommodate for student differences.

Thus, the final consideration from this study should be improving the instructional delivery models for special education students in general education classes. The essence of developing additional models is that the instruction for all students will improve with consideration for included special education students. Kauffman (1989) captured this with his inverse statement that described the hypothesis of the REI. He suggested that if excellence occurs among our best students and schools, the benefits will trickle down to those with disabilities.

Chapter Summary

This final chapter presented an overview of the study with the specific research findings related to the attitudes of middle school administrators, core teachers, and special education teachers toward inclusion of special education students into general education classes. Next, description of the findings related to previous research literature was highlighted and shows that attitudes are not isolated factors related to teacher receptiveness, but interconnected to collaborative practices which are supported through leadership, resources, and support at the school district and school level. In addition, the researcher's commentary and recommendations related to the school district in study are included. Specific recommendations for future research study are also presented.

APPENDIX A

CEC MODEL FOR AN EFFECTIVE INCLUSION SCHOOL

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Attitudes and Beliefs

1. The regular teacher believes that the student can succeed.
2. School personnel are committed to accepting responsibility for learning outcomes of students with disabilities.
3. School personnel and the students in the class have been prepared to receive a student with disabilities.
4. Parents are informed and support program goals.
5. Special education staff are committed to collaborative practice in general education classrooms.

Services and Physical Accommodations

1. Services needed by the student are available such as health, physical, occupational, or speech therapy.
2. Accommodations to the physical plant and equipment are adequate to meet the student's needs with building and facilities, learning materials, and assistive devices.

School Support

1. The principal understands the needs of students with disabilities.
2. Adequate numbers of personnel, including aides and support personnel are available.
3. Adequate staff development and technical assistance, based on the needs of the school personnel, are being provided which includes instructional methods, awareness and acceptance of activities for students, and team-building skills.
4. Appropriate policies and procedures for monitoring individual student progress, including grading and testing are in place.

Collaboration

1. Special educators are part of the instructional or planning team.
2. Teaming approaches are used for problem-solving and program implementation.
3. Regular teacher, special education teachers, and other specialist collaborate through co-teaching, team teaching, and teacher assistance teams.

Instructional Methods

1. Teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to select and adapt curricula and instructional methods according to individual student needs.

2. A variety of instructional arrangements are available such as team teaching, cross-grade grouping, peer tutoring, and teacher assistance teams.
3. Teachers foster a cooperative learning environment and promote student socialization.

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. Time frame: one and a half hours.
2. Introduction: Welcome participants by stating clearly to them that the purpose of the group is to identify their ideas about inclusion, not specific individual's opinions. Participant responses will remain anonymous. A group member will be ask to record the responses from group members to prevent bias from the researcher. Five basic questions will be ask to the participants with additional probing questions included to provide greater depth and clarification for the response.
3. Questions: (a) "What do you know about inclusion?"
Examples of probing questions if needed were "You have been discussing this for a while, how would you define it?", or if a participant asked "How are you defining inclusion." The moderator responded by saying "I think we need to have the group define it. How does the group define it? Let's list the responses." (b) "What forms of inclusion do you currently see occurring?" An example of a probing question if needed was "let's list how teachers are working with each other to support this." (c) "Which children benefit from inclusion and which children do you see as being limited from being involved in an inclusive classroom?" An example of a probing question is "Let's begin by listing the benefits." (d) "What skills are needed by teachers (both general education and

special education teachers) to support inclusion? An example of a probing question for this question was "Let's begin by listing the skills for general education." (e) "What roles do support personnel play in having successful inclusion occur in a school?" An example of probing question for this item was "what roles do administrators play in successfully inclusion?" and (f) "To what extent is inclusion important to you as an educator?"

Several probing questions were ask through out the interviews to add depth to participant responses such as:

"What do you think about this?, Do you all agree with this?" in addition to directing a question to anyone who may not have responded to a basic question such as "I have not heard from you." Further, when a participant responded with an I statement about what they do to assist a student, the moderator responded with "how does this benefit students?"

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INVITATION

PARTICIPANT INVITATION

(Date)

To: (Name)

(School)

From: Lynn Boyer, Office of Education Programs and Planning
and
Steve Wilcox, Focus Group Leader

Subject: Focus Group Invitation

As a committed and concerned middle school educator, you have been selected to contribute your thoughts and ideas to the Department of Special Education and Student Services to discuss aspects of the inclusion of special education students into general education classes. The department is creating several focus groups to consist of middle school core academic teachers, special education teachers, and school based administrators. This information will be collected to determine planning needs in this area. Sessions will be approximately one and a half hours. They will be conducted in duration at Belle Willard Administrative Center.

We are asking no more than nine participants to attend a focus group. Therefore we are excited to hear from you regarding availability. Your meeting date and time is (Date) at 4:00 p.m. at (Location).

The information you share will be confidential and summarized to reflect ideas of the group in attendance. Your participation and candid opinions will help shape planning for the system. I urge you to accept this invitation. Please call Steve Wilcox at 425-0070 to respond. Thank you in advance for your time and contribution.

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FACTORS SHEET

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FACTORS SHEET

Directions: Circle the letter for your best response for each item.

1. My current assignment is

- a. Core academic teacher
- b. Special education teacher
- c. Administrator

2. My grade level is

- a. Grade 6
- b. Grade 7
- c. Grade 8

3. My total years working in education are

- a. 1 or less years
- b. More than 1 less than 4
- c. More than 4 less than 10
- d. 10 or More years

4. The length of time in my current assignment is

- a. 1 or less years
- b. More than 1, less than 4
- c. More than 4, less than 10
- d. 10 or More years

5. How would you consider the consistency of support for inclusion throughout the system

- a. provided equally in all areas
- b. more support is available in some schools/program
- c. more support is needed in all areas

6. The enrollment of my school is

- a. less than 500
- b. more than 500, less than 1000
- c. more than 1000

7. I have worked in a collaborative team teaching situation that included both general education and special education students.

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. If yes to item 7 indicate the number of years working in a collaborative teaching situation that has involved special education teachers and general education teachers.

- a. Less than 1
- b. More than 1, less than 3
- c. More than 3, less than 5
- d. More than 5, less than 10
- e. More than 10

9. There is a special education center at my school.

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. If you answered yes to the question 9, do you view this as encouraging collaboration between special education and general education teachers at this location?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. Do you have any comments about collaboration between general education and special education teachers currently in the system:

12. Also please comment on general education and special education teachers efforts and support toward inclusion of special education students into general education classes:

APPENDIX E

CODES

CODES

Inclusion

- continuum of services
- cooperation
- IEP
- LRE
- integration
- transition

Collaboration

- co-teaching
- teaming
- more inclusive environments

Benefits and limits

- LD
- moderate to severe populations
- ED
- MR
- behavioral difficulty
- reading ability
- math level

Skills

- match
- good attitudes
- personalities
- good relationships
- accommodating
- compromise
- mutual support
- communicate
- common goals
- flexibility
- planning
- role clarification
- classroom strategies
- content curriculum

Importance

- preparation
- training
- in-service
- transition

Support

- planning time
- scheduling
- class size
- special education department
- counseling services
- parents

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VITA

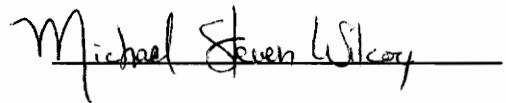
VITA

Steve Wilcox was born on July 2, 1950. He attended public schools in Norfolk, Virginia, and graduated from Norview High School in 1968. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education with a concentration in Social Sciences from Old Dominion University in 1972. The same year, Steve began teaching at Falls Church High School in Northern Virginia. During the next 11 years he taught a variety of social studies courses and interdisciplinary team taught classes. During this time period he served as Social Studies Department Chair for three years and Head Wrestling coach for nine years. In addition, he completed his Masters in Education in Counseling in 1983 from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

After completing his program at George Mason University, Steve moved to Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia, as a school counselor. He continued his work in student services as Director of Guidance at Chantilly High School in Chantilly, Virginia, from 1986 to 1990. In addition to supervising student services personnel he was responsible for the special education departments which included ED, LD, and MR programs. Later in 1990, Steve had another transition to a subschool principal position at Hayfield Secondary School in Alexandria, Virginia. One of the departments he also supervised at Hayfield was special education. In 1993 Steve obtained a middle school subschool principal position at Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Virginia. While in the middle school he has been active in

developing and expanding co-teaching and teaming situations.

Since 1985, Steve has also developed programs and conducted training in conjunction with the United States Department of Education and most Middle Atlantic and Southern states in the areas of gang and other at-risk youth behaviors, school climate, substance abuse prevention, and student leadership. From 1990-1994 he was involved with a grant for the state of Virginia that targeted at-risk and juvenile offender populations through training for educators, police personnel, and social service agencies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Steven Wilcox". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Michael Steven Wilcox