INCLUSION IMPLEMENTATION AND ATTITUDES
IN WASHINGTON STATE HIGH SCHOOLS

by
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Honors Thesis
PASS WITH DISTINCTION

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This thesis was designed to examine the attitudes Washington state high school teachers have toward the development of inclusive practices in their schools. In particular, the research team wanted to unveil whether the attitudes of general and special education teachers differed and why it was the case. This study was inspired by studies done in the past on inclusion and sought to develop localized findings on attitudes related to it. It also provided a platform for the student researcher to expand outside of her academic major and explore a field that was of interest to her.

K-12 education has been moving closer toward full inclusion of students with disabilities in general classrooms since 1975, when Public Law 94-142 was enacted. Full inclusion is an issue that inspires much debate among teachers and policymakers over its efficacy as a strategy for education. Yet despite all the controversy and conversation surrounding inclusion, there is limited recent research available that specifically looks at teacher attitudes in the secondary education setting – and research specific to the Pacific Northwest geographic region is virtually nonexistent.

The research team employed a quantitative method in the form of systematic random sampling to select general education and special education teachers from 54 Washington high schools to contact for participation in this survey. Teachers were mailed a questionnaire and follow-up letters during the sampling period in September 2008. The mail survey garnered more than a 50 percent response rate from participants. The results were then analyzed using a standard social sciences software program.

Many education studies also use classroom observations or in-depth interviews to derive a qualitative aspect of their study. This study did not utilize qualitative methods.
aside from space for open-ended commentary on the survey instrument, but the student researcher is in support of supplementing the findings with a quantitative study and qualitative research component in the future.

As a result of this study, the research team uncovered three significant findings on the basis of student behavior: young teachers are less supportive of inclusion than older teachers, female teachers are more supportive of inclusion than male teachers, and special education teachers are more supportive of inclusion than general education teachers.

Gender is the only finding that did not corroborate with findings in previous studies. The findings with regard to age and teacher position may reflect that a lack of teacher preparation is a component in more negative attitudes toward inclusion. The gender finding may be more reflective of the fact that secondary environments have a stronger male teacher presence and more emphasis on content than primary settings, which feature primarily female teaching staffs and more engaged learning techniques.

The study revealed that teacher perceptions toward inclusion do vary on many levels, and that full inclusion may not be successful or completely attainable until these differences are recognized and rectified.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Paulette Mills, for her unwavering guidance and support as I wrote this thesis. Her patience, time investment, flexibility, and words of encouragement helped to keep me motivated throughout this process. I can’t thank her enough for taking me under her wing and helping me conduct this research.
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The movement toward full inclusion of students with disabilities sparks much discussion in the education field. Educators, policymakers, students and parents all have varying opinions on the implementation of such practices. Yet despite the prevalence of the issue and interest surrounding it, there is limited recent research available in the field on the impact inclusive practices have – and perhaps more importantly, how supported the movement is by the men and women educating children within public schools. Research on inclusion that primarily focuses on the Pacific Northwest or state of Washington is virtually nonexistent. This study on the implementation of inclusive practices in Washington state high schools and the resulting teacher attitudes sought to fill an information gap and localize interests on inclusive practices.

Steps to inclusion

For nearly 35 years, federal legislation that applies to the quality of education for students with disabilities has been passed and reformed in an attempt to improve the system currently in place. In 1975, the United States Congress took a step to prioritize the state’s role in access to education for students with disabilities through the enactment of Public Law 94-142 (Lipsky, 1997). As a result, individualized education programs were developed to cater to each student’s learning experiences, and ran the gamut of full inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms to limited inclusion. Emphasis was also placed on educating students with disabilities in general education environments with peers who did not have disabilities and allowing them to perform extracurricular activities in the least restrictive environment possible according to their educational needs (OSPI, 2007). Public Law 94-142 was a step toward the further
development of inclusive practices, and subsequent reforms made efforts to promote the progress of inclusion while ensuring that children with disabilities have access to the highest-quality educational environments with regard to their educational needs, rather than disability. The passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001 increased pressure on the results of these reforms across the board by stressing teacher competency and the enhancement of measuring accountability for the progress made in closing the achievement gap between students in schools that were failing and thriving (Wendorf & McGuinn, 2006). The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act sought to align special education services efforts further with NCLB on the basis of standards for highly qualified teachers, assessments, and accountability (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2010).

Despite general agreement by policymakers that inclusion is the path to take and federal efforts to improve the education system, it is interesting that such broad school-to-school variance exists in the implementation of curriculum to students with disabilities. Inclusive practices can range from the common resource room program, where faculty develop programs to supplement a student’s general education experience, to cooperative teaching, where a special education and general education teacher collaborate in the classroom to educate all children (Idol, 2006). Practices similar to these have been implemented across the state of Washington as well. School districts in Seattle, Tacoma, and Burbank have block-scheduled integrated student groups into the same core classes to establish learning “teams” within the greater school setting. In Sumner, a summer session was established to brainstorm methods developing the inclusion plan for the school district (OSPI, 2008). These are just a sampling of the many approaches to
inclusive education reform within our state. Disagreement over the "right" approach to implementing an inclusive classroom or whether all students should be integrated are some common hindrances to the standardization of policy on the local and national levels.

This survey sought to study how prevalent certain inclusive practices are in Washington state high school classrooms, and more importantly understand the sentiments of educators regarding inclusion. The survey was tailored to answer the following question:

How do secondary special education and general education teachers within the state of Washington perceive inclusive education and what factors influence perceptions?
METHODOLOGY

Respondents

Since teachers within the state of Washington are the education professionals who are affected most directly by inclusive classrooms, this was the target population of highest research interest. Fifty-four schools and 72 teachers throughout the state of Washington were contacted for participation in the survey (please see procedures for selection details). Thirty-eight (53 percent) of teachers contacted submitted completed surveys. For testing purposes, respondents were divided demographically based on several factors, including:

- Teaching position; special education or general education
- Whether they worked in a fully inclusive environment or an environment that is not fully inclusive
- Gender
- Age

The respondent breakdown included 19 special education teachers, 13 general education teachers, four teachers who indicated their role in both positions, and one respondent who did not specify a position. Twenty-three of the respondents identified as female and 15 as male. Respondents surveyed were also split demographically into three age categories: 29 years and under, 30 to 44 years, and more than 45 years. The youngest category of teachers also had the least respondents. Three of the 35 respondents who completed this section of the survey are under the age of 30, while 13 are between the ages of 30 and 44, and 19 are 45 years of age or older. All three teachers in the youngest age category are male and have less than five years of teaching experience. Two
identified as general education teachers while the third identified as a special education and general education teacher, though all three had experience teaching students who qualified for an individualized education program.

The schools were divided into three categories by size and five categories by student population. Teachers were asked to indicate whether they considered their current school setting to be in a rural, urban, or suburban location. Then they were asked to indicate the population of the school they currently teach in: less than 100 students, 100-399 students, 400-699 students, 700-999 students, or more than 1,000 students (then specify). Thirty of the 38 surveys indicated that their school was rural with 17 of these respondents identifying as special education teachers. Fourteen of the 15 male teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they taught in rural schools. Five of the remaining respondents indicated that their school is located in a suburban setting. Three respondents indicated urban settings.

**Instruments**

All subjects were contacted using a mail questionnaire, with items that sought to obtain quantifiable information from teachers about their perspectives on inclusion within their respective high schools. The survey consisted of five sections: demographics, behaviors, implementation, NCLB legislation, and comments. The behaviors, implementation, and NCLB legislation sections measured teacher perceptions on a 5-point Likert-style scale, reflective of the one displayed below (please refer to the appendix for the survey instrument).
The demographics section asked questions pertaining to the teacher's background, school, and experience teaching students with disabilities. The ten-item behavior section asked teachers to rank their opinions on inclusion of students based on behavioral disabilities, while a subsequent eight-item implementation section asked them how students with disabilities should be integrated with resources into the regular school setting. The four-item legislation section garnered attitudes of the NCLB's effects on their position, and the fifth and final section of the survey requested additional comments from the surveyed teachers.

Procedures

A mail survey was implemented to garner the attitudes of teachers on inclusion. The survey targeted high school special education teachers and general education teachers from across the state of Washington. The teachers contacted to respond to the survey represented high schools in school districts that varied in size, population, and geographic location. To make the selection as random as possible while ensuring results were acquired from across the state, the state was divided into four geographic portions. School districts from each geographic region were drawn separately. The same system was implemented to determine which high school would be surveyed from each district. In cases where there was only one high school in the school district, that high school was selected.
Surveys were mailed in self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes on Sept. 15, 2008 with a requested deadline of Sept. 26, 2008. On Sept. 19, reminder letters were sent out to teachers and principals. Most surveys were received by the deadline, but several were received after the date and incorporated into the database.

To select special education teachers, systematic random sampling was implemented by accessing school staff directories online and selecting the first name from the first high school listing, then the second name from the second high school listing, and so forth. General education teachers were recruited to participate by sending survey packets directly to high school principals. Each selected high school principal received a packet with two surveys, two self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes, and a set of instructions. High school principals were asked to pass on the survey packets to two general education teachers, with an expressed preference for teachers who represent different critical subject areas such as English, math, and science. To view the instruction letters for school principals, please refer to the appendix of this document.

Though a tedious and uncommon method given modern technological advances, the mail survey method was selected as the most effective in reaching teachers. High school teachers spend most of their workday in contact with students, not at their desks. A mail survey provided teachers with the freedom to transport the questionnaire and answer the items during spare moments rather than seeking Internet access. It was also an easier method with regard to selecting participants. School addresses were much easier to access than individualized teacher e-mail addresses. The implementation of this method produced a much better response rate than expected.
RESULTS

The survey data collected from respondents was coded and recorded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which became the database for future testing. The spreadsheet was then exported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 15.0 software to conduct the statistical analyses with my acquired data. Means and standard deviations were calculated from each section of the survey – behavior, inclusion implementation, and NCLB legislation. t-tests and analyses of variance were conducted to determine the significance of the responses that various demographic groups provided.

The qualitative data consisted of comments from respondents written on the back of collected surveys. These comments were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document to be read and categorized by the researching team. Though comments were not coded or tested for significance, at times they provided supplemental understanding to the findings in the survey response items.

**t-tests**

_t-tests_ were selected as an analysis method to determine the significance of a teacher’s perception on inclusion based on student behavior and their position, gender, and amount of inclusive resources their school offered to students with disabilities. Significant results were obtained on the _t_-test for position. In this test, the teacher’s position as a special or general education teacher served as the independent variable, and the mean of their responses to the survey items served as the dependent variable. The special education teachers responded on average in strong agreement of student inclusion
based on behavior, while general education teachers responded with weaker agreement.

These results are supported with small standard deviations in relation to the means.

Table 1: t-tests for position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Special education teacher</th>
<th>General education teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>N=22</td>
<td>N=13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 1.81</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S.D. 0.35</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td>N=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 2.65</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S.D. 0.38</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB legislation</td>
<td>N=23</td>
<td>N=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 2.74</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S.D. 0.79</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: * <.05 ** <.01 ***<.001

The t-test based on gender and student behavior garnered similarly significant results supported by small standard deviations. According to the results of this test, female teachers responded more favorably in support of inclusion than male teachers.

Table 2: t-tests for gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 2.30</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S.D. 0.49</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 2.68</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S.D. 0.24</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB legislation</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 3.06</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S.D. 0.58</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: * <.05 ** <.01 ***<.001
A t-test was also conducted to determine if a school’s status as “fully inclusive” or “not fully inclusive” had significance. No statistically significant results were determined on the basis of the number of inclusive resources the school offered.

Table 3: t-tests for resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Inclusion</th>
<th>Not full inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCLB legislation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA)

A univariate analysis of variance test analyzing gender and teacher position was conducted to substantiate the findings in the t-tests of gender and position. Despite the fact that both of these factors received significant results in the t-tests, the ANOVA test concluded that when compared to each other, these factors had no significant interactions.

Table 4: Univariate ANOVA for behavior by position and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SpEd teacher</th>
<th>GenEd teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N=4</strong></td>
<td>N=18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S.D.</strong></td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oneway ANOVA

A oneway analysis of variance test was conducted to relate multi-categorical demographics to the three groups of means. The test concluded with significance that respondents in the youngest category responded less favorably to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom on the basis of behavior than teachers in the other two age categories. Respondents in the youngest category of teachers averaged a “neutral” response to survey items, while teachers in the other two categories responded with “agree.” Despite being represented by a much smaller group of respondents, these three young teachers responded in close agreement and garnered the smallest standard deviations throughout the entire survey.

Table 5: ANOVA for age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>29 and under (N=3)</th>
<th>30-44 years (N=13)</th>
<th>45+ years (N=19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB legislation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key:</td>
<td>*&lt;.05 **&lt;.01 ***&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

The only compelling findings from this study were derived from the section about inclusion and student behavior. This segment of the survey garnered three significant findings that will be addressed in further detail:

- Special education teachers are more supportive of students with disabilities on the basis of behavior than general education teachers.
- Younger teachers are less supportive of the inclusion of students with disabilities on the basis of behavior than older teachers.
- Female teachers are more supportive of inclusion on the basis of student behavior than their male counterparts.

Position

Our findings confirmed that special education teachers are more supportive of inclusive programming than general education teachers. Special education teachers answered survey items in close agreement and demonstrated greater tolerance of students from various behavioral disabilities than general education teachers. General education teachers expressed on average more "neutral" opinions about the inclusion of special education students in their classroom settings. Given the open-ended comments received on the issue, special education teachers may have a perception that general education teachers are unwilling or not prepared to work with students with disabilities. Special education teachers may also be more prepared to work with students with disabilities and demonstrate a greater tolerance for their needs. The classroom management aspect of working with students with disabilities does not affect them the same way it does a
general education teacher. General education teachers are challenged more by students who are tough to manage.

Many researchers support that the attitudes teachers demonstrate toward inclusion is one of the most critical factors to its success (Short, 2005). A 2000 study conducted in Texas found that approximately 54 percent of high school teachers surveyed had negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classroom, and the most negative attitudes were derived from teachers with little to no experience working with students with disabilities (Van Reusen, 2000). However, it is important to consider that most of the teachers surveyed in this localized study, regardless of position, had experience working in a school that utilizes inclusive practices. Thirty-five of the 38 teachers who responded indicated that they worked in schools that implemented partial or full inclusion through the use of co-teaching, resource rooms, classroom aides and tutors, or other inclusive methods.

Another thing to consider is despite having stronger support for inclusive programming, the special education teachers who offered commentary argued that full inclusion should not be the only option for students with disabilities. Rather, the focus should be on providing resources and opportunities that will be most beneficial to the student. For some students, full inclusion will be the best option. Others may require the additional assistance of a classroom tutor and time in a resource room. General education teachers who provided comments stated that they were generally supportive of the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms, as long as the inclusion of the student with disabilities did not interfere with or compromise the learning experience for
the other students and that the student does not endanger the instructor or peers through physically aggressive behaviors.

Age

This result can be interpreted in two ways. One interpretation is that younger teachers are more indecisive about their feelings toward inclusion. The other is that they are generally more intolerant of inclusive teaching environments than older teachers. Younger teachers may have demonstrated these results because they have had less interaction with students with disabilities. They may feel less prepared to work with these students than older teachers with years of experience under his or her belt. The 2000 inclusion attitudes study in Texas also supported that a lack of preparation may contribute to negative sentiments of less experienced teachers toward inclusion. This study found with high significance that teachers who also experienced a low level of special education training or interaction and those who had a low or minimum level of training or experience had generally negative sentiments toward inclusion (Van Reusen, 2000). These teachers may have also had negative experiences with their students on an individualized education program that dampened any former support they had for inclusion.

Additionally, the perceptions of young teachers may be influenced by the way they were prepared to teach through college courses and the opinions of course content, college professors, and fellow students. These sentiments may have been fostered by a lack of preparation at the university level. At Washington State University, for example, only one special education class is required for teacher endorsement (WSU College of
Education, 2009). Though the course does focus on teaching in inclusive classrooms, one Teaching & Learning student I spoke with said it was hardly enough exposure for her to feel comfortable working with students with disabilities. The teaching and learning degree does not require observation or practicum hours where students are required to work in inclusive settings or directly with students with disabilities. One must consider if one class produces an adequate amount exposure to content oriented toward teaching students with special needs. Can certified teachers truly feel comfortable teaching special needs students after only three credits?

The results from our study may be perceived as worrisome for the future of inclusive education. Today’s young skeptics are going to be educators for years to come. Their opposition and uncertainty toward inclusion now has the potential to prolong negative sentiments and hinder the progress of inclusive practices. On a more positive note, it is important to consider that these teachers are still young and developing their careers. Their attitudes may change with more experience and time in the field.

**Gender**

Results showed that female teachers demonstrated greater support of inclusion than male teachers. Data from male respondents demonstrated less internal validity and reliability, because their responses had higher means and greater variability. Support for differences inclusion attitudes based on gender could not be found in past research to support it. This result may be due to the environment in which secondary schools are structured, and how it varies from the primary school environment. Secondary schools tend to function in a more content-oriented setting and therefore attract more equal
numbers of male and female teachers than primary schools, where teaching staffs have a stronger female representation and more engaging content.

The lack of support available for this finding may also support that inclusion attitudes do not typically vary based on gender and that this finding was unique to our study. Future research will help to determine if this is actually the case.

Other findings

There were a few findings that are worth noting but did not garner significance among demographic groups. Almost all respondents – regardless of position, gender or age – were not supportive of a “zero reject” or total inclusion model for all students, and instead valued the system currently in place, where more dynamic solutions were available for students. This sentiment aligns with previous studies that resulted in a lack of teacher consensus toward total inclusion (Avramidis et al., 2000).

No Child Left Behind also inspired a lot of commentary from teachers but no significant findings when tested. Many teachers provided open-ended comments in response to the NCLB portion of the survey, providing insight mostly on the legislation and what they thought of it. Their survey responses generally garnered little internal validity due to the inconsistency of their responses based on the demographics tested by the research team. There was greater variability in responses to these questions than there were to the other segments of the survey, and therefore no significant findings were garnered from their responses to the survey items.
Barriers to inclusion

Why are there varying levels of agreement based on teacher position, age and gender? For general and special education teachers, the opportunity to interact closely to improve a student’s educational experience may be an unfamiliar concept. It requires the cooperation of both parties to provide curriculum and resources that meet the child’s needs first, rather than leaving the child to adapt to the academic setting on his or her own. A similar attitudinal study conducted with secondary teachers in 2003 resulted in 86 percent of respondents stating that successful inclusion required a collaborative effort between special education and general education teachers (Olson, 2003).

Students with disabilities may never feel fully accepted in the classroom as long as teachers are uncertain of their support toward their integration. This may affect their interaction with peers as well. Teacher attitudes may affect the perceptions students without disabilities have toward their peers with disabilities. If students with disabilities continue to be marginalized by general education teachers in the classroom setting, then students without disabilities may develop confusion or negative perceptions toward how to treat these peers. At a minimum, successful inclusion requires a support system of special educators, general educators, and administrators to be supported by the students and implemented effectively, improved and refined.

Recommendations to the field

Clearly special education teachers and general education teachers alike are skeptical as to whether inclusion is the best strategy to cater to the needs of students and educators. Many are hesitant to deem it as the one best way of solving special education
issues. These sentiments are important to take into consideration as steps toward inclusive reform are considered. This survey exposed that young teachers in particular are more hesitant to get on board with inclusive practices than their older peers. If this is the case, it is important to understand what fosters these sentiments and then take steps to expose tomorrow’s teachers to inclusive educational settings while teaching them tactics that will allow them to succeed in both environments. Some of these strategies may include:

- Assigning teaching practicums to schools with inclusive settings.
- Building inclusion-friendly tactics, case studies, and discussion into curriculum for the teaching degree for teachers of all backgrounds

Limitations

The sampling methodology is an area that can be strengthened in the future. At the beginning of this survey process, an attainable goal was set by the research team to receive responses from 24 teachers around the state: 12 special education teachers and 12 general education teachers. This goal was determined by taking into account budget and time restrictions on the part of the student researcher. Forty-eight schools were initially contacted with 38 responses received at the end of the data collection period, which exceeded the goal that was set. Though the goal was achieved and exceeded, reaching a larger audience would have been preferred had time and funding allowed. Another regret on the part of the research team was that the sampling method was not entirely random. The student researcher was restricted by access to specialty sampling software and
knowledge of how to conduct completely randomized sampling. Therefore, the method of teacher selection implemented by the research team made this sample not random.

The survey instrument experienced a terminology error that was pointed out by a couple of teachers in their open-ended comments: a lack of people-first language. In several instances throughout the instrument, the phrase “disabled students” was used instead of “students with disabilities.” In research directed toward traditionally marginalized groups, people are at the heart of this research. Therefore, when conducting research on a controversial issue such as inclusion, it is important to recognize the student before the disability. Neither the student researcher nor thesis advisor caught the error before the surveys were distributed to teachers. This error is not attributed to a preconceived bias on the part of the student researcher, but rather a lack of background knowledge on appropriate terminology to use in this setting. This is because the topic of the thesis was conducted outside of the student’s area of study. In retrospect, this error may have been avoided had the student researcher utilized a focus group or in-depth interview method prior to conducting the survey, in order to gain a sense of terminology used in the field.

If this study were to be expanded upon in the future, a qualitative component would be a good addition to support the quantitative data gathered. In-depth interviews with teachers may be a reasonable component to include in the future, because they could provide supplemental information to explain why some of the significant findings occurred. Should time and budget allow, field observations within secondary schools would also be a good component to include. Observations could support some of the findings and allow for a greater understanding of the field as a whole.
Significant findings regarding position, age, and gender were supported by strong internal validity and close agreement among respondents, so it is reasonable to assume that these findings would remain consistent should this study be duplicated in the future. Supportive evidence from previous studies was also located with regard to position and age, so our findings have already demonstrated that they corroborate with published literature.

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that inclusive practices do vary across the state that perceptions on inclusion also vary based on teacher position, gender, and age. This has two implications for the state as a result. First, policymakers must determine whether or not they want to implement inclusive practices beyond federal guidelines in an effort to shift our classrooms as a whole toward fully inclusive settings. Secondly, teacher perceptions of students with disabilities will have to be addressed in curriculum. If this is to be realized, then efforts will have to be made to bring teachers on board with this movement.


Jha, M. M. Barriers to student access and success, 33-43.


APPENDIX
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
CONSENT LETTER
SURVEY ON INCLUSION IN WASHINGTON SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Researchers:
Monique LeTourneau, Honors College undergraduate student
Phone: (253) 820-2334
E-mail: mletourneau@wsu.edu
Dr. Paulette Mills, thesis advisor, associate professor of Teaching & Learning
Phone: (509) 335-5015
E-mail: pmills@wsu.edu

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent letter is to give you the information you need to help you decide whether to participate in the study or not. Please read the letter carefully. You may contact us at any time to ask questions about the purpose of the research, the survey, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or survey that is not clear. This process is called ‘informed consent.’ You may retain this letter for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

This survey is part of an Honors undergraduate thesis to research how inclusion is implemented in Washington secondary schools and understand the attitudes general and special education teachers have toward inclusion within their own schools. With your help, we hope to develop a better understanding of inclusion as a whole at the state level.

PROCEDURES

This survey consists of a three-page questionnaire. You will be asked demographic information regarding yourself and the school you work in. Following that, a series of Likert scale items will assess your attitudes of inclusion, its implementation within your school, and the No Child Left Behind law. The survey will conclude with an open portion to write in suggestions or comments. You may refuse to answer any item on the questionnaire. Your information will be kept confidential and safely stored with access granted only to my advisor and myself. When you have completed the survey, please return it in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope by September 26, 2008.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Please be aware that stress or discomfort could result from taking this survey. If you have any questions about the possible risks or benefits of completing this survey, please contact Monique LeTourneau or Dr. Mills with the contact information provided at the top of this letter.

Thank you for your participation in this survey.
Dear Principal [Last name]:

We are requesting your assistance in the conduction of a survey on inclusion in Washington high schools. This survey is part of an Honors undergraduate thesis to research how inclusion is implemented in these schools and understand the attitudes general and special education teachers have toward inclusion within their own schools.

Enclosed you will find three packets containing a survey, consent letter, and self-addressed, stamped envelope. Please distribute a packet to two general education teachers within your high school, preferably from different subject areas. Teachers who specialize in fundamental subjects such as English, math and science are preferred. Please do not distribute this survey to special education teachers.

Each consent letter has instructions for the teachers that explain the survey’s purpose, procedures, and return date. They will be able to complete the survey and return it on their own with the materials provided. We are requesting that the teachers return their survey in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope by September 26, 2008.

Thank you very much for your assistance. With your help, we hope to develop a better understanding of inclusion as a whole at the state level.

Sincerely,

Monique LeTourneau, Honors College undergraduate student
Dr. Paulette Mills, associate professor of Teaching & Learning

Washington State University
The first portion of this survey will focus on demographics and questions related to the structure of your current school.

1. Gender: □ Male □ Female

2. Age range: □ 29 years and under □ 30-44 years □ 45+ years

3. Ethnicity:
   □ Asian American □ African American/Black □ Caucasian
   □ Latino/a □ Multiracial □ Native American □ Other

4. Highest education level completed:
   □ B.A. □ B.A.+ □ M.A. □ M.A.+ □ Doctorate

5. Years of experience teaching:
   □ Less than five years □ 5-10 years □ 11-19 years □ 20+ years

6. Teaching position: □ Special education teacher □ General education teacher
   □ Other (specify) __________________________

7. Subject area of specialty: □ English/Language Arts □ Math □ Science
   □ Social Studies/History □ Other (specify) __________________________

8. Grade levels you have taught (check all that apply):
   □ 6th □ 7th □ 8th □ 9th □ 10th □ 11th □ 12th

9. If you have taught outside of Washington, please specify other states:

   __________________________

10. Your consider your current school location to be:
    □ Urban □ Suburban □ Rural

11. Size of the school you currently teach in:
    □ Less than 100 students □ 100-399 students □ 400-699 students
    □ 700-999 students □ More than 1,000 students (specify) ________________
12. Please specify the number of students on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for whom you are the primary teacher: _______________

13. Your school has (check all that apply):

- [ ] Full inclusion  
- [ ] Resource room  
- [ ] Classroom aides/tutors  
- [ ] Co-teaching  
- [ ] Partial inclusion  
- [ ] No inclusion  

For the remainder of this survey, please follow the key and circle one response for each item. The subsequent statements pertain to inclusive education which involves students from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and abilities learning with their peers in regular schools that adapt and change the way they work in order to meet the needs of all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following items pertain to your opinion on the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classroom settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students should have the right to be in regular classrooms.</th>
<th>SA A N D SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am personally supportive of inclusion.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most educators are generally supportive of inclusion.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who need assistance with personal care should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who are physically aggressive towards others should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who need an individualized academic program should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who require communicative technologies (for example, Braille and sign language) should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who are inattentive should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who frequently fail exams should be in regular classes.</td>
<td>SA A N D SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting I would accept students with learning disabilities into my classroom.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

Given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting I would accept students with emotional disabilities into my classroom.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

Given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting I would accept students with behavioral disabilities into my classroom.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

The following items pertain to your opinion of ways to implement the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classroom settings.

I believe most disabled students should not be taught in regular classes at all.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

I believe most of these disabled students should generally be in regular classes for most of the day and attend special classes or resource rooms for part of the day.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

I believe most of these disabled students should be enrolled in co-operatively taught classes that feature a general educator and special educator on-site.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

I believe most of these disabled students should be enrolled exclusively in regular classes with a classroom aide or tutor.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

I believe most of these disabled students should be enrolled exclusively in regular classes with no additional resources in the form of classroom aides or tutors.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

The last items pertain to how you believe the passage of No Child Left Behind has affected your position.

I believe No Child Left Behind has affected the amount of disabled students integrated into my classroom.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

I believe No Child Left Behind has increased the amount of work I do.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

In general, I am supportive of No Child Left Behind.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

In general, I feel that most aspects of my position are the same as they were prior to the passage of No Child Left Behind.  

| SA | A | N | D | SD |
---|---|---|---|---|

**NOTE:** Please write additional comments and suggestions on the back page.

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact Monique LeTourneau at mletourneau@wsu.edu, or by phone at (253)820-2334.
Greetings,

You were recently sent a survey on inclusion in state high schools. This is a reminder that the survey due date is approaching! **We are requesting you return your survey in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope by September 26, 2008.**

If you have any questions about the distribution process for the survey, please do not hesitate to contact Monique LeTourneau with the information provided at the bottom of this letter.

Again, thank you very much for your assistance. With your help, we hope to localize previous research on inclusion and develop a better understanding of inclusion as a whole at the state level.

Best,

Monique LeTourneau, Honors College undergraduate student
Washington State University  
Phone: (253) 820-2334  
E-mail: mletourneau@wsu.edu

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Washington State University  
Phone: (509) 335-5015  
E-mail: pmills@wsu.edu
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