Georgia High School Principals' Perceptions of Inclusion

James Timothy Yarborough

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GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

James Timothy Yarborough
GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

A Dissertation

Presented to
the College of Graduate Studies of
Georgia Southern University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

in
Educational Administration

by
James Timothy Yarborough

August 2002
July 26, 2002

To the Graduate School:

This dissertation entitled “Georgia High School Principals’ Perceptions of Inclusion” and written by James Timothy Yarborough is presented to the College of Graduate Studies of Georgia Southern University. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Administration.

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Charles Hardy, Acting Dean
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DEDICATION

In recognition of all her assistance, patience, and devotion

I hereby dedicate this dissertation to my wife

India Day Yarborough
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher wishes to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Cathy Jording for her consistent support and assistance during the entire Doctoral Program, particularly during the research and writing phases.
VITA

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ABSTRACT

GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

AUGUST 2002

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While considerable research has been conducted concerning the perceptions of teachers regarding the practice of inclusion, there is little corresponding research about the perceptions of principals towards inclusion. Also, much of the existing research is contradictory. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide educational policymakers with data regarding inclusion. Since principals are responsible for designing and instituting inclusion programs at the school level, their current and prevailing perceptions regarding inclusion were the missing pieces of the information puzzle.

In an attempt to fill this void, the researcher created a survey with quantitative and qualitative components. The survey was distributed to all public high school principals
in the state of Georgia. The returned surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (1999).

The researcher found that Georgia public high school principals perceived that inclusion had an average impact on academic achievement and discipline and disruptions. They perceived that collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers were highly important and that they had received more than adequate college training to serve students with and without disabilities in an inclusion classroom. Gender, age, and years of experience had an average impact on the principals’ perceptions of inclusion, while area of certification was a significant factor in a principal’s willingness to accept inclusion as a method of serving students with and without disabilities.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the passage of legislation requiring that all students, even those with
disabilities, be provided with a free and appropriate public education, no pressing need
existed for research on the topic of principals’ and teachers’ perceptions regarding
the practice of inclusion or any other special education-related topic. After 1997,
the question was no longer whether inclusion should be a standard practice in all public
school districts, but rather how best to implement the model (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997).
The rationale for research was set. Increasingly, children with disabilities were being
served alongside children in ordinary school settings, rather than being segregated
in special education classrooms (Sandoval & Strong, 1999).

General Introduction

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997) mandated that
children with disabilities receive as much of their education as possible in the general
education classroom and the general education curriculum. With this growing trend of
partial and full inclusion, it was an important time for educators, researchers, advocates,
policymakers, and practitioners to develop a framework for understanding the needs and
concerns of key stakeholders involved in the educational planning of children with
disabilities (Yell, Rogers & Rogers, 1998).
Based upon this reasoning, copious research has been conducted on the topic of inclusion as it relates to high school principals' and teachers' perceptions, academic achievement, discipline and disruptions, collaboration and planning, principals' and teachers' training, and principals' and teachers' demographics. For persons inside and outside the field of education, the issue of inclusion was an emotional one (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999). Some drew clear lines separating themselves from those with differing views on the issue. At odds over inclusion were those advocates suggesting that placing students with disabilities into regular classrooms was a moral imperative that could not wait for empirical justification, legislative mandates, or court decisions (Glazer, 1997). To their manner of thinking, in order to correct centuries of neglect of students with disabilities, immediate and complete inclusion was called for. Opponents questioned the overall effect this would have upon the achievement levels of students with and without disabilities, as well as the possible disruptive effects for classroom environments (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999).

Not surprisingly, there was considerable disagreement between general and special education teachers and their principals concerning the creation and installation of inclusion programs (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000). Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham concluded that general and special education teachers often disagreed on who should assume primary responsibility for instruction. They also concluded that while general and special education teachers agreed that inclusion increased their workload, principals perceived the workload for an inclusion program and a traditional pullout program to be equal. Interestingly, these researchers also found that general and special
education teachers perceived that inclusion increased classroom management problems, while principals saw no difference in management responsibilities between the two.

The initiative to create and implement inclusion programs was a new one, with energy supplied by the United States Congress' reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (Damer, 2001). However, researchers had not reached any consensus about whether inclusion was superior to traditional pullout programs used by special education teachers for many years. Also, sufficient agreement did not exist among the personnel responsible for the day to day operation of an inclusion program concerning its practicality and merit, namely, principals and teachers. Therefore, additional research and interpretation of results was needed before full-scale agreement to convert from the pull out model to an inclusion one could be made in good conscience.

Background of the Study

The move to end segregated educational environments had its origins in the Normalization Principle (Wolfensberger, 1972) of the late 1960s. In essence, this principle stated that if deviant persons were treated in a normal manner in normative settings they would act more normally. What followed was a period of court-ordered deinstitutionalization and mainstreaming among adult and school-aged persons with disabilities. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) required that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment in which their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) could be reasonably implemented. The most extreme application of these principles was the Regular Education Initiative that proposed a merger of special and general education bureaucracies and an end to classification among students and instructional placements (Kavale, 2000).
Most of the early mainstreaming programs were failures (Mamlin, 1999). Special education professionals realized that in abandoning their service delivery model they had abandoned strategies that had proven effective in segregated settings. At the heart of these strategies was the ability to control environmental variables. In self-contained settings, teachers were able to control schedules and routines. This allowed for ordered, appropriately paced instruction, and tolerance for aberrant behavior. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the development of inclusion practices that promoted accommodation of students in general education settings. As of this writing, many models and intervention packages were offered that described patterns of staffing, instruction, accommodation, and support for children with disabilities in inclusion settings.

The inclusion movement had its impact on subsequent amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The amendments of 1997, Public Law 105-17, placed clear responsibilities on educators to involve students with disabilities in the general education curriculum and to consider supplementary aids and services as part of the Individualized Education Plan process in order to accomplish inclusion. These amendments strengthened the presumption that students with disabilities should receive general education placements and clarified procedures for accomplishing this end (Etscheidt & Bartlett, 1999). The law specified a clear role for general educators in planning and implementing Individualized Education Plans. In the past, students with disabilities were excluded from general state and district-wide, standardized test assessments. The law now specified that when possible, students with disabilities were to be included with appropriate accommodations (Wood, 1998).
The direction inclusion would take in the future was unclear. Studies of placement trends yielded mixed results (Kavale, 2000). For students with learning disabilities, more received services in general education settings, fewer in separate schools, but also the number in separate resource settings increased (McLesky, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999). Apart from the increase in students served in this category, this reflected increased inclusive placements. These placements increased opportunities for interaction among students with and without disabilities. Whether inclusion would serve either or both groups well remained to be seen (Cronis & Ellis, 2000).

Principals’ Perceptions

Successfully dealing with special education students has long been a challenge for principals, who must balance the requirements of students with disabilities, teachers, and parents with the interests of the rest of the school community (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). According to these authors, since most schools were still in the process of moving toward compliance with the mandates of IDEA, inclusion occurred in one of three ways, depending upon the outlook of the principal: embraced as a responsible initiative that a school deliberately undertook to place students in the least restrictive environment, through individual IEP conferences at the urging of parents or advocates, or by enforcement of the law to provide the least restrictive environment over the objections of the principal.

Dyal and Flynt (1996) stated that building level principals historically have shown mixed support for the concept of inclusion; in general, however, they concurred with the guiding principle of including students with disabilities in general education classes. The
amount of time that these principals felt was necessary for students with disabilities to spend in general education classrooms was far less than that mandated by advocates of inclusion. Generally, they favored appropriate inclusion over full inclusion. Dyal and Flynt (1996) reported principals preferred inclusion schools that provide a continuum of services. They appeared to resist major changes in service delivery and seemed at ease with the status quo, that is, pull out programs for special education services (Kavale, 2000). A large percentage of principals wanted no part of inclusion in their schools (Curley, 2000). Curley conducted a study to determine the attitudes of principals towards inclusion education in public schools. Principals favored inclusion that prescribed minor accommodations for social integration, physical disabilities, and academic needs. They did not agree that students requiring major accommodations or those who would not follow rules should be allowed in the regular classroom. This same attitude was found outside the United States. Alghazo (2000) conducted a study regarding perceptions of Jordanian public school principals towards inclusion. He found that principals held negative perceptions about students with disabilities in general, especially those with mental retardation. They did not perceive the general education classroom as an appropriate setting for such students.

The research of Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) pointed out the existence of substantial differences in willingness to accept an inclusion program between special education teachers and principals. The authors found that while a substantial number of principals were open to the inclusion model, special education teachers disputed its worth for increasing the achievement of students with disabilities. The authors'
reason for this discrepancy arose from the differing roles the two groups played in the implementation of the inclusion model. Principals may have ordered that inclusion be installed in their schools, yet they were not responsible for its daily operation. Special education teachers viewed from a first-hand perspective the performance of their students in inclusion programs. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) reported these teachers were not convinced that an inclusion program raised achievement. Therefore, they could not support it.

Academic Achievement

Concerning inclusion programs and achievement, two major questions were routinely posed. First, would the behavior disorders associated with students with disabilities create excessive disruptions, thereby decreasing the time and energy the classroom teacher could devote to instruction? Glazer (1997) noted that with sufficient ongoing professional development to prepare teachers for the types of disabilities they would encounter and strategies to deal with them, disruptions could be managed or eliminated altogether. Next, would inclusion lower the academic achievement of general education students, effectively holding them back, while the needs of disabled students were addressed? Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) stated that data had never been introduced to uphold this reservation. In addition, they claimed that research indicated that students with disabilities benefited from general education classes and curricula. Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999) similarly stated that students with disabilities benefited, general education students were not impeded, and classroom teachers served everyone more appropriately in an inclusive setting.
The work of Mamlin (1997) represented the other side of the achievement issue. She found that in the age of accountability the emphasis on enhanced academic performance for students increased the pressure for schools to boost overall achievement levels. The emphasis on performance, as well as development of higher order thinking skills, posed a potential problem for students with disabilities. In general, current reform movements that stressed higher, more inflexible academic standards did not bode well for students with disabilities.

Discipline and Disruptions

While most professionals in education presumed that the addition of students with disabilities to a general education classroom would increase disruptions and discipline referrals, research did not bear out this presumption (Glazer, 1997). Glazer stated that the opposite was often true, with students with disabilities improving their behavior so as to fit into the general education classroom. Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) also reached the same conclusion. Disruption levels did not increase when students with disabilities were served in the regular classroom. However, general education teachers and students had to be prepared to deal with diverse activities in the classroom as students with disabilities were served by their visiting teachers. Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999) discovered through their research that students without disabilities did not feel they were exposed to more disruptions when students with disabilities were integrated into their classes.

Collaboration and Planning

Since the task of implementing an inclusion program in a school usually rested with special education teachers, collaboration and planning between these teachers and general
education teachers was essential. Since general education teachers tended to focus on students without disabilities, special education teachers needed to collaborate with general education teachers to devise plans to implement in the general classroom to assist the student with disabilities (Snyder, 1999; Austin, 2000). General education teachers needed behavior modification tactics which could be applied to students with disabilities. In cases in which the student with disabilities displayed inappropriate behavior, this would allow general educators to address the undesired behavior, minimize it, and bring the student with disabilities back to the lesson and the rest of the class. These specific tactics could be supplied by the special education teacher (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997). Finally, while collaborating with general education teachers, research indicated that it was most productive if special education teachers guarded against assuming the role of leader, relegating the general education teacher to a secondary role and appearing to place the needs of the student with disabilities above those of the students without disabilities (Wood, 1998; Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000).

Principals’ and Teachers’ Training

In university preparation programs, four areas have been identified as most critical for improving teacher training to prepare college students to instruct students with disabilities in general classroom settings. First, preservice teachers should be exposed at the outset of college training to the realities of delivering the curriculum and managing behavior for students with disabilities (Lanier & Lanier, 1996). Too often, the study reported, students received too little instruction too late in their college career to put the knowledge into practice before being expected to act as a general classroom teacher. In a related area, college professors tended to expose their students to far too little special education
coursework, opting to include one class in their teacher training curricula (Snyder, 1999). In Snyder’s opinion, this was inadequate. Instead, specific methods of instructing students with disabilities should be taught as well as preparing preservice teachers to manage negative behaviors associated with the disabilities they would encounter. Further, Smith, Polloway, Patton, and Dowdy (1995) found that for the inclusion movement to be successful, general education faculties had to be trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities. They further stated that general education teachers needed competencies which would allow them to communicate effectively when required and to implement accommodations and modifications for individual learning.

Third, Monahan, Marino, and Miller (1996) noted that the only way to give a preservice teacher the skills he or she would need to perform in the classroom was by increasing the time students were required to spend in clinical settings with students with disabilities. By more individual interaction with students with disabilities, preservice teachers could accurately draw conclusions regarding the best methods of instructing and managing students with disabilities. Stainback and Stainback (1992) also addressed the amount of time colleges expend preparing students to instruct students with disabilities. More special education theory should be taught to all preservice teachers. Second, in order for teachers to effectively function in an inclusion classroom, he or she should have spent a considerable amount of time observing and assisting in inclusion settings while still in college.

Fourth, to successfully teach in an inclusion classroom, a teacher must have solid training in intervention techniques for students with disabilities. Bruneau-Balderrama
found that hands on, experiential learning techniques work best with students in inclusion classrooms. The study concluded that most traditional teaching models, while acceptably effective with students without disabilities, are largely useless when applied to students with disabilities. Thus, university education programs were advised to prepare graduates to serve the needs of all students, even if modifying their teacher training programs was required.

Principals’ and Teachers’ Demographics

A number of studies have sought to draw a relationship between principals’ and teachers’ demographic and biographic characteristics and their perceptions regarding inclusion. Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997) discovered that principals and teachers who received their educational training many years ago had less positive perceptions regarding inclusion. Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996) found similar perceptions through their study. They reported that a definite correlation existed between a principal’s or teacher’s years of experience and open-mindedness towards inclusion. Those with less experience tended to accept the practice of inclusion as most beneficial for students with disabilities. Lampropoulou and Padeliadu (1997) found through their study that all teachers seemed to harbor greater feelings of resentment for students with disabilities as their years of experience increased. Of all groups that they studied, male teachers of the deaf were the most likely to favor inclusion as the best method for teaching students with disabilities. Perhaps most surprising of all was the finding that teachers with special education training did not necessarily have positive feelings about serving students
with disabilities in inclusion settings. Instead, they frequently chose a traditional pull out program. Stoler (1992) and Vidovich and Lombard (1998) reached the same conclusions as a result of their research.

Statement of the Problem

While considerable research has been conducted concerning the perceptions of teachers regarding the practice of inclusion, there was little corresponding research about the perceptions of principals towards inclusion. Also, much of the research was contradictory. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to provide educational policymakers with data regarding inclusion. Since principals were responsible for designing and instituting inclusion programs in schools, their current and prevailing perceptions regarding inclusion were the missing pieces of the information puzzle.

In an attempt to fill in this missing information, all public high school principals in the state of Georgia were surveyed regarding their perceptions of inclusion. This data was analyzed and reported in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

Research Questions

The proposed study was designed to answer the following major research question: What were the perceptions of Georgia high school principals regarding inclusion? The following five related subquestions were also addressed in the study:

1. How did an inclusion program impact students' with and without disabilities academic achievement, as perceived by principals?

2. To what extent did principals perceive a relationship between an inclusion program and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals?
3. To what extent were collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers perceived to be necessary for an inclusion program to be effective?

4. To what extent did principals perceive they received adequate training in college to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion program?

5. How did demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification affect perceptions of principals about inclusion?

Significance of the Study

This study was intended to contribute to the existing literature related to the subject of inclusion. Its second goal was to publish the perceptions of public high school principals and teachers concerning the topic. Its intent was to benefit the policy makers attempting to create and install an inclusion program at the school or district level by providing data regarding inclusion, allowing them to build on the positives and avoid the pitfalls created by the negatives while pushing student achievement upwards. The researcher intended that the ultimate beneficiaries of the study would be the students with and without disabilities. Thus, the educational profession would experience greater success in its attempts to accommodate, teach, and serve students with disabilities. Of equal importance, by implementing an inclusion program most effectively, the academic achievement of the students without disabilities and the workload of the general education teacher would not be negatively affected. Finally, the researcher intended that the data provided by this study would be useful to educational policymakers, university educators, state department of education officials, and state legislators responsible for training and certifying principals.
Definition of Terms

**Academic achievement** is the level of knowledge and performance that students attain in the general education classroom.

**Collaboration** is a form of cooperation between general and special education teachers. Its goal is the creation of academic plans for the student with disabilities. These plans are used to accommodate and serve the student when in the general education classroom.

**Continuum of services** refers to providing special education services to a student for as little as one class period per day up to but not including full inclusion.

**Demographic factors** are the personal characteristics of principals such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification.

**Disciplinary referrals** are written documents provided by the classroom teacher to the school principal that detail negative student behaviors in the general education classroom. These written documents are used by the principal to assist him/her in reaching disciplinary consequences.

**Disruptions** are interruptions of the normal instructional process in the general education classroom. They are usually associated with negative student behaviors.

A **general education teacher** is one who delivers the standard curriculum to students with and without disabilities. The inclusion program is provided in this teacher’s room.

**Inclusion** provides special education services for all or part of the day in the general education classroom setting. Instead of removing students from the general education classroom and serving them in a resource room, the teacher goes to the students and provides the instruction.
An Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifies the accommodations and services to be provided to a student enrolled in a special education program.

Perceptions are the knowledge, understanding, insight, feelings and viewpoint that principals possess regarding inclusion.

Planning is the act of reserving time for general and special education teachers to meet and devise academic plans for students served by inclusion.

A preservice teacher refers to a teacher in training at the university level.

Principals are public high school administrators who oversee the implementation of the instructional program for special and general education teachers.

A special education teacher is one who delivers customized instruction to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This customized instruction is designed to address the specific learning disability or handicapping condition of the student with disabilities.

A survey is a device used to record the perceptions of public high school principals regarding inclusion.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following conditions were assumed: (a) the principals surveyed responded honestly and consistently to the survey regarding their current perceptions concerning inclusion, (b) the survey was designed and written in such a way that participants responded with their actual perceptions regarding inclusion and (c) the respondents to the survey understood its intent and the statements in the survey.
Limitations

This study was limited in the following ways: (a) the study employed the entire population of public high school principals in the state of Georgia, thus limiting the researcher’s ability to generalize the data to the public high school principal population of the United States, (b) the participation rate and return rate for the survey depended totally on the will of the respondents, and (c) the survey relied on self-reporting, therefore environmental factors, such as the respondent’s state of mind, affected the results of the survey.

Delimitations

This study contained two delimitations: it was conducted in the 2001 - 2002 school year and only at the high school level.

Summary

Consensus clearly did not exist in the field of education regarding the perceptions of principals and teachers towards inclusion. Those who followed the path of advocacy for the rights of students with disabilities tended to hold positive perceptions regarding inclusion. Research indicated that they were willing to attempt partial or full inclusion programs and that they did not believe that achievement or classroom environments would suffer as a result of inclusion. These advocates tended to be relatively young, with less years of experience, and generally willing to attempt changes in the traditional special education pull out programs that had served students with disabilities for many years successfully.

Those principals and teachers who were veterans in the field held a different perspective. They received their educational training long ago. They had witnessed the
stable functioning of traditional resource rooms for all of their careers. They often entertained negative perceptions of inclusion. They perceived that achievement levels of general education students would fall as inclusion brought about more disruptions in the general classroom. Research existed which supported this view.

Research of the type proposed in this study, conducted on principals throughout all public high schools in the state of Georgia, would provide insight into the perceptions of principals about inclusion and contribute to the existing professional literature on the topic. Additionally, this study examined several demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification to determine if these variables affected principals’ perceptions regarding inclusion. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in this research study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In public educational systems, before the early 1970s, research on the perceptions of high school principals and teachers about the special education strategy called inclusion did not exist. In fact, prior to this period, little research existed on any topic in special education. Until the United States Congress realized that the educational needs of students with disabilities were not being addressed and mandated Individualized Education Plans to serve them, they were expected to function in the same classroom environments as students without disabilities. Thirty years later, experts in the field no longer questioned whether inclusion was the best method to provide a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997), rather, they focused on how the strategy could be legally implemented. Bruneau-Balderrama saw this as a moral imperative as much as a legal requirement. Since the needs of students with disabilities were blended in with the needs of students without disabilities for centuries in America's educational system, the researchers stated that educators and policymakers should make every effort to correct the neglect immediately.

Some states and school districts were heeding this call more quickly than others (Sandoval & Strong, 1999). These researchers found a wide variance in how educational
systems across America interpreted their responsibility to serve students with disabilities. Sandoval and Strong discovered that in some instances, full inclusion existed already. They identified these districts as progressive and stated that they were living up to the charge to include students with disabilities in general classrooms whenever possible. However, a spectrum of special education delivery systems was being used. Traditional resource rooms and pullout systems were still much more common than inclusion.

The federally reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997) appeared to be at odds with traditional resource and pullout programs. This divergence between what had been mandated and what existed in daily practice was identified by Yell, Rogers, and Rogers (1998). These researchers advised educators, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to consider the research which had already been performed on the subject of inclusion and design strategies for putting it into practice in such a way that money and effort were not wasted.

The practitioners at the school level who were responsible for installing educational systems, such as inclusion, were teachers and their principals. When searching the field of educational research on the topic of inclusion, one found a great amount of information regarding the perceptions of teachers towards inclusion. Corresponding data regarding the perceptions of principals about inclusion was difficult to locate. However, those inside and outside the field of education had very passionate feelings about the issue (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999). These authors found that those on differing sides of the ideological fence of inclusion bitterly disagreed about when and how students with disabilities should be served by public schools. They found that advocates of inclusion demanded the need for implementation of full inclusion, meaning that students with
disabilities receive all their services in regular classrooms. Opponents of inclusion raised concerns over achievement levels for students with and without disabilities as well as if the practice would cause new disruptions and disciplinary problems for the general education teacher (Glazer, 1997).

There was considerable disagreement between general and special education teachers and their principals concerning the creation and installation of an inclusion program (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000). These authors found that general and special education teachers were unable to agree on who should lead the teaching of students with disabilities. To compound the problem, their research stated that while general and special education teachers agreed that an inclusive program increased the workload for teachers affected, principals perceived that a traditional pullout program and an inclusion one required the same effort from the teachers. Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham also discovered that teachers believed an inclusion system increased classroom management problems, but their principals perceived no difference in the level of management responsibilities between an inclusion program and a pullout program.

The push to implement inclusion special education programs was a relatively new initiative fired by the United States Congress’ decision to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (Damer, 2001). The reauthorization affirmed the original action taken by Congress twenty years earlier to tie the states’ compliance with IDEA mandates to federal money to fund those mandates. In short, the states were required to guarantee free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities if they expected to receive tax dollars from Congress. Damer stated that even though a certain amount of research indicated that inclusion was the most favorable method of
teaching students with disabilities, research could be found to refute that claim. Also, general and special education teachers and principals were not in concert regarding the merits of inclusion versus traditional pullout programs. This lack of agreement was the basis for further research into the topic of inclusion as it related to principals’ perceptions.

Background of the Study

In the late 1960s, America’s developing social conscience spread to include the teaching of public school students with disabilities. Wolfensberger (1972) theorized that if persons displaying deviant behavior were treated in a normal manner in normative settings, they would act more normally. This finding harkened back to the long held concept that students tended to live up to the expectations educators held for them. Following this revelation, the federal government took perhaps the strongest action in its history to provide for the education of students with disabilities with the passage of Public Law 94-142, also called The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990). The purpose of the law was comprehensive: to insure that all children had available to them a free and appropriate public education which emphasized special education and related services designed to meet their specific needs. Special education meant specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the needs of a student with disabilities, including classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals or institutions. Related services meant transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as were required to assist a student with disabilities.
Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan also stated that a notable part of Public Law 94-142 was the detail specified for the state plan, which had to be submitted to the U.S. Commissioner of Education for the state to qualify for federal assistance. For instance, the plan had to include: a statement of the goal of providing full educational opportunity to students with disabilities, a detailed timetable for accomplishing such a goal, and a description of the facilities, personnel, and services necessary to achieve the program. The plan also had to give assurance that the state education agency was responsible for seeing that all educational programs for students with disabilities, including those provided by any local agency, met the standards of the state education agency. Indeed, the state education agency was required to proscribe rules and regulations for local agencies and to oversee compliance with these rules.

The impetus created by Public Law 94-142 led to extreme interpretations and applications of the spirit of the law, such as the Regular Education Initiative, which proposed a merger of general and special education bureaucracies and an end to classification among students and instructional placements (Kavale, 2000).

Because of many factors, most of the earliest mainstreaming programs were failures (Mamlin, 1999). Special education teachers were disappointed to find that the new, inclusive strategies, which emphasized serving students with disabilities in general classroom settings when possible, deprived them of the methods which had proven effective in the past. More than any other factor, these teachers missed the ability to exercise complete control over the environment in which they instructed their students. According to Mamlin, in traditional pullout or self-contained classroom settings, teachers
could control schedules and routines. This allowed for ordered, appropriately-paced instruction, and tolerance for aberrant behavior. During the decade of the 1970s and 1980s, the development of inclusion practices that promoted accommodation in general education settings continued. Up to the present, many models which prescribed patterns of staffing, instruction, accommodation, and support for students with disabilities in inclusion settings have been created and implemented.

The inclusion movement has forced legislatures to consider its impact and requirements when creating new laws. When the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized in 1997 as Public Law 105-17, it was clear that public educators would have to include students with disabilities in the general curriculum and provide supplementary aids and services to guarantee compliance with the specifications of each child's Individualized Education Plan (Kavale, 2000). These laws have solidified the presumption that in order to provide a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, inclusion had to be considered as a viable option (Etscheidt & Bartlett, 1999). Standardized testing, once thought to be an area in which students with disabilities should not be expected to perform, has been opened up to these students (Wood, 1998). Advocates only requested that necessary accommodations be provided to give students with disabilities a chance to perform with students without disabilities, according to Wood.

The movement of more students with disabilities into the regular classroom setting, as well as the implications of inclusion, were important to principals (Tonnsen, 2000). Inclusion was not a finite destination but a continuing process of providing more effective
educational programs for all students within the school. Advocates of inclusion made the following assumptions: students had a basic right to be educated in school alongside those without disabilities; there was a generalized benefit to all students in an inclusion setting; students who were pulled out of the general classroom setting were often stigmatized and deprived of instruction, and teaching approaches in some special education classes did not differ greatly from the approaches in the general classroom (Friend & Bursack, 1996; Reynolds, Wang & Wahlberg, 1987). Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) found that the inclusion movement tended to separate and move in two divergent directions. These researchers stated that those advocates of appropriate inclusion, meaning those who advocated inclusion for a part of the school day, could be classified as favoring a continuum of services. Academic benefits for students with and without disabilities was the primary consideration for this type of inclusion. Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian found that those favoring the full inclusion of students with disabilities in all general education classes had as their primary concern the social benefits for these students. Full inclusionists advocated the need to correct what they perceived as centuries of neglect for students with disabilities by erasing all distinctions based upon special education classifications. The authors stated that full inclusionists believed that all special education services should be provided to students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Skeptics about the effectiveness of inclusion with all students offered the following points: serving all students in the regular classroom denied all students the right to a continuum of service options; some students, due to the nature of their disability, required specialized services or highly individualized services which could not be given effectively
in the general classroom; and general classroom teachers lacked the skills, training, and resources needed for students to succeed in a regular classroom (Friend & Bursack, 1996; Lieberman, 1992).

Some additional considerations which principals kept in mind were the amount of training and time needed to initiate an effective inclusion program. Training for all teachers within the school was imperative. Teachers had to be given the skills needed to implement effective instructional experiences and the management strategies required for students with disabilities prior to the implementation of an inclusion program which would place them in a regular classroom. Principals could be successful with this endeavor if they sought support, guidance, and training from the district level and/or from an outside consultant (Tonnsen, 2000).

Efforts to develop inclusion environments, as well as cross categorical placements for students with disabilities, had changed the traditional role of the special education teacher. Resource teachers had historically served small groups of students in a small group setting, remediating specific skills. With the return of many students with disabilities to the general classroom, resource teachers now spent a considerable amount of time serving as a special education resource to the general classroom teachers. Collaborative consultation (Heron & Harris, 1990) was one of the methods of sharing knowledge that teachers used to plan for and maintain effective learning environments for students with disabilities.

Teachers in self-contained classrooms were also experiencing changes in their role. Traditionally, self-contained teachers were isolated within the four walls of their rooms.
With increased inclusion efforts and practices such as team teaching, teachers were then working together and sharing their classrooms with other professionals (Tonneson, 2000).

The future of inclusion was anything but clear. Even though federal laws had been passed which seemed to indicate that inclusion was the expectation for students with disabilities, states and school districts were left to interpret the meaning and scope of these laws. Differences in interpretation led to a wide variance in how students with disabilities were served. More of these students were receiving services in general education settings, less in separate schools, but also the number in separate resource settings had increased (McLesky, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999). The authors concluded that the sheer number of students then being diagnosed as requiring special services, up dramatically in the last twenty years, was the reason for the increase in separate resource settings. The rise in inclusion placements presented a larger number of opportunities for interaction among students with and without disabilities. Whether inclusion would serve both groups well remained to be seen (Cronis & Ellis, 2000).

**Principals’ Perceptions**

Successfully dealing with students with disabilities has always been a balancing act for principals. They were faced with the difficult task of attending to the needs of the students, teachers, and parents who made up the school’s special education faction while also trying to pursue the best strategies for the general school population (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). Traditionally, principals have fallen into one of three categories regarding their level of compliance with the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act as it applies to inclusion: full acceptance of the spirit and the specifics of the legislation,
resolving to accept what parents and advocates of special education request for their students, or resisting the installation of an inclusion program (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997).

Idol and Griffith (1998) have conducted research which has yielded some of the most positive results yet regarding the perceptions of principals towards the practice of inclusion. Their report discussed the outcomes of a study that examined how special education services were being provided in four schools in the Austin Independent School District in the 1997-1998 school year. The study’s intent was to determine how much, if any, inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes was occurring. Principals, assistant principals, special and regular education teachers, and teaching assistants were interviewed at the four schools for a total of one hundred twenty five interviews. The number and type of students with disabilities on each campus varied considerably and the number of students with disabilities seemed to be related to how far advanced each school was with its plans for inclusion. The school with the fewest number of students with disabilities made the most advances with inclusion. In general, the principals in these four schools were found to be doing a good job of working with and supporting teachers, as evidenced by the teachers’ perceptions of them. Many teachers viewed their principals as being supportive instructional leaders. In return, the principals had positive perceptions regarding including students with disabilities in general education programs.

Dyal and Flynt (1996) found that building level principals have shown mixed reactions to the concept of inclusion; in general, however, they seemed able to follow the principle of allowing students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Dyal and
Flynt recorded that the amount of time that these principals believed was necessary for students with disabilities to spend in general education classrooms was far less than that mandated by full inclusionists. Generally, they favored a continuum of services over full inclusion. Dyal and Flynt reported that inclusion schools which provided a continuum of services appealed to most principals. They appeared to resist major changes in service delivery and were more at ease with the status quo, that is, pull out programs to satisfy special education requirements (Kavale, 2000).

A large percentage of principals wanted no part of inclusion in their schools (Curley, 2000). Curley conducted a study to determine the perceptions which principals held regarding inclusion in public schools. Most favored inclusion which prescribed minor accommodations for social integration, physical disabilities, and academic needs. They did not agree that students requiring major accommodations or those who would not follow basic rules of acceptable behavior should be allowed to enter general classrooms. Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) also came to the same general conclusion in their study. In a survey of sixty five principals, they sought to determine the perceptions and knowledge level of principals towards inclusion. They were not able to determine if all principals had a common definition of the concept of inclusion. However, they did conclude that these principals only favored including students with mild disabilities in the general classroom. Those with emotional and behavior disorders as well as those requiring major physical accommodations to function in the general classroom were not viewed as candidates for inclusion.
Miller (1995) came to the same conclusion. She conducted a study among principals to gather data about full inclusion of students with disabilities in general classrooms. The clear majority of principals in the survey had negative perceptions of full inclusion. Again, a clear bias was raised towards students with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities and those whose physical impairments were of such a magnitude that serving them in the regular classroom setting would present an unacceptable level of disruption. Chalmers (1993) found what she determined to be a lack of administrative support and involvement from principals in her study. She conducted a naturalistic participant observation study for six weeks in four high school classrooms: language arts, social studies, health, and biology. Principals perceived that they lacked the training and expertise to assist the general classroom teachers with strategies to improve the inclusion program. Also, Chalmers found that the principals in her study did not require collaboration between the special education teachers and general classroom teachers. She concluded that in this atmosphere, inclusion had little chance of success.

Alghazo (2000) studied the perceptions of Jordanian principals towards inclusion. He discovered that principals held negative feelings about students with disabilities in general, especially those with mental retardation. They did not perceive the general education classroom as an appropriate setting for such students. Thus, the negative perceptions regarding inclusion were not limited only to the United States.

Some research, although incomplete, has been conducted regarding principals' perceptions of their responsibility and role in an inclusion school setting. Krajewski and Krajewski (2000) concluded in their study that principals see themselves as having
primary responsibility for making an inclusion program function in their schools. Gameros (1995) conducted a study which examined effective principals' roles in providing services to students with disabilities. As inclusion principals, study participants accepted the ownership of all students, supported inclusion placement decisions, promoted a policy specifying all school employees' responsibility for students with disabilities, and worked to ensure an effective instructional environment for all students.

Morgan and Demchak (1996) have also investigated the theme of principals' perceptions regarding what considerations must be made when attempting to input a successful inclusion program in a school. They found that the principal’s involvement became critical because the attitudes of school personnel and students toward inclusion often mirrored those of the principal. Morgan and Demchak provided guidelines to assist principals to support successful changes toward inclusion. The principal had to be informed of and actively involved in the planning and implementation of the following nine areas: number of students to be included, impact on students with and without disabilities, specific needs of students with disabilities, strategies and supports needed for successful inclusion, roles of general and special education teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals, training needs of all school staff, parental involvement, potential costs and funding sources, and potential resource personnel to assist with training and implementation. Morgan and Demchak found that the key to success of any inclusion program was open and honest communication between all parties involved. The building principal could help guarantee success, but also, perhaps unwittingly, could be a hindrance to the process. Early involvement was a key ingredient for a positive outcome.
Parker and Day (1997) and Powell and Hyle (1997) have used explanatory case studies to examine secondary schools’ adoption of inclusion and principals’ perceptions of their role in making successful inclusion a reality. These researchers reported that inclusion schools did not merely happen, but hinged on five interrelated instructional leadership dimensions. Principals had to clearly define and articulate an inclusion school mission, foster a school climate geared to all students’ success, manage and coordinate curriculum and instructional resources to support inclusion goals, monitor and support each student’s progress, and model reflective management and teacher supervision practices.

The research of Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) pointed out the existence of substantial differences in willingness to accept inclusion between special education teachers and principals. The authors found that while a rather substantial number of principals were open to the idea of inclusion, special education teachers were not as willing to accept the practice as a means of delivering the curriculum to students with disabilities. The authors reasoned that the difference came about as a result of the divergence in the roles the groups played in the education of students with disabilities. The principal could issue a directive that inclusion must be implemented in the school, but it was up to the classroom teacher to actually put it into place. It was the classroom teacher who operated on a day to day basis within the new system. Even though a responsible principal would be deeply involved with the design of an inclusion program and would closely monitor its progress after it was started, the classroom teacher was the person accountable for its functioning. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber reported that these
teachers were not convinced that an inclusion program raised achievement. Under these circumstances, in good conscience, they did not feel they could completely support it.

Teachers’ Perceptions

Researchers have sought to investigate teachers’ perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classroom settings. Relatively conclusive findings have emerged. According to Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996), empirical data pointed out that teachers were much more willing to accommodate students with physical disabilities than those with cognitive, emotional, or behavioral ones. The root cause of this inequity, according to Jobe, Rust, and Brissie, was the teachers’ perceived feelings of inadequacy to serve the student with cognitive, emotional, or behavioral disabilities. In short, they felt unprepared to serve and manage such a student. Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) came to similar conclusions as a result of their research. In a study carried out in England, students with severe mental disabilities and multiple disabilities were perceived to be least suited to integration in a general classroom, while medical and physical conditions were thought to be the simplest to manage. Overall, about one-fourth of the teachers surveyed perceived that students with sensory impairments could be taught in the general classroom, while less than ten percent held this view for students with severe intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities.

Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden also discovered that general educators had not developed an empathetic understanding of disability conditions, nor did they appear to be ready to accept students with disabilities. They explained this by the fact that inclusion often took place in an ad hoc manner, without systematic modification to a school’s
organization or due regard to teachers' instructional expertise and the guarantee of continuing resource provision. Much like other research has indicated, these authors also found that teachers' perceptions regarding inclusion reflected lack of confidence in their own instructional skills and in the quality of support personnel available to them. They were positive about integrating only those children whose disabling characteristics were not likely to require extra instructional or management skills on the part of the teacher. Finally, teachers, who were the prime agents of the installation of the inclusion policy, were often unprepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities and were therefore less enthusiastic than principals and policy makers about the inclusion program.

As a result of their research, Vaidya and Zaslavsky (2000) also pointed out that many teachers perceived that they had little first hand knowledge of the challenges they faced in creating positive learning environments that met the academic and social needs of students with learning disabilities and emotional or behavioral disorders. These teachers desired more preservice and inservice programs to prepare themselves to modify curricula, deliver effective instruction, and employ alternative assessment strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners in inclusion settings.

In a study conducted twice in five years on the same teachers, Lanier and Lanier (1996) concluded that while two thirds of those surveyed were open to the idea of inclusion, a sizeable majority of general education teachers expressed genuine concern over their perceived inability to effectively serve students with severe or profound disabilities in a general classroom. In a study conducted by Scruggs and Mastropieri
(1996), roughly half of all teachers surveyed responded that while they were willing to teach students with disabilities, the degree of disability was a limiting factor. Specifically, students with severe or profound disabilities intimidated most classroom teachers from the perspective of their perceived lack of training and resources to address and serve the students with disabilities.

In a study conducted by Smith (2000), the research indicated that special education teachers were more supportive of inclusion than general education teachers. General education teachers’ perceptions appeared to alter with the severity of the disability and the amount of extra responsibility required. Only twenty eight percent of the teachers who responded to the survey reported having enough time for inclusion. Ninety two percent of teachers were willing to teach students with a variety of disabilities, but almost none expressed the same willingness to serve those with severe disabilities or mental retardation. In addition, teachers felt the need for a great amount of support from principals if inclusion was to be successful.

According to Stoler (1992), teachers raised five perceived concerns when surveyed about their views of inclusion. First, they felt that implementing the process of teaching students with disabilities in the general classroom required a change in curriculum and teaching methods, which affected other aspects of the instructional process. Second, teacher attitude was closely tied to the effectiveness of teaching students with disabilities. Third, they questioned the perception that students with and students without disabilities benefited socially from inclusion. Fourth, they were concerned that time did not exist to address the needs of the student with disabilities without neglecting students without
disabilities. Fifth, the acceptance of students with moderate to severe physical or mental disabilities and emotional and behavioral problems represented an additional and unpleasant commitment for teachers already strained with multiple responsibilities.

D'Alonzo, Giordano, and Van Leellwen (1997) reported that teachers also harbored feelings of resentment about the prospect of serving students with disabilities because they perceived that doing so involved more liability than teaching students without disabilities. Medically fragile students, in their opinion, presented the possibility of emergencies which could result in injury or even death to these students, and they felt ill-prepared to address such emergencies. Also, they voiced negative feelings about the possibility of verbal or physical confrontations between students with emotional disabilities and their peers.

A look at the perceptions of teachers in countries other than the United States, particularly those which have had inclusion in place for twenty or thirty years, reveals quite a different set of views than those of American teachers. Guttman (1999) studied the educational system in the African country of Guinea. She discovered teachers held generally positive perceptions about the practice of educating students with and without disabilities in the same classroom. She pointed out that successful inclusion hinged on the teacher’s level of preparation to address students’ with disabilities needs. Guttman made a very insightful observation about the reason that inclusion worked in Guinea. Guinea was a poor, developing, Third World nation. It did not have the resources allocated to its educational system to segregate students with disabilities and without disabilities. So few teachers existed that necessity required that all students were taught in the same class by the same teacher. Inclusion was a daily reality of educational life in Guinea.
In 1977, Law 517 was passed in Italy. This law sought to abolish the widespread use of special schools and special classes for students with disabilities and to replace those practices with inclusion instruction in general education classes for all students (Cornoldi & Terreni, 1998). Additional relevant laws were passed several times over the next twenty years (Vianello, 1996), but in each case the mandate for including students with disabilities in the general education classroom was maintained or strengthened.

Law 517 had many features which appealed to most advocates of inclusion in the United States. First, almost all students with disabilities were taught entirely in the general education class. Teachers generally had no more than one student with a disability in a class; moreover, if a classroom contained a student with a disability, that classroom could contain no more than twenty students in all. For each student with a disability certification, classroom teachers were supported for a period ranging from six to eighteen hours per week by a special education teacher, referred to as a support teacher. This special teacher had had the same training as a general education teacher, but supplemented with support teacher training, received the same salary, and was largely dependent upon the decisions of the general education teacher (Del Ben, 1996). Each support teacher could have no more than four students with disabilities in his or her case load, with the prevailing mean ratio of one support teacher to 2.2 students (Vianello, 1996).

Individual schools were given a certain level of autonomy when enacting Law 517. In some cases when the general education classroom was not seen to meet the needs of the student with disabilities, some separate type of resource room instruction was arranged.
Although students with learning disabilities were not included for services under Law 517 (Fabbro & Masutto, 1994), special education teachers were allowed to assist any student with special learning needs in addition to students with disabilities (Vianello, 1996).

Although most educational experts favored inclusion, Law 517 was not without its critics. Meazzini (1987) argued that the law replaced academic goals with poorly defined social objectives. Furthermore, Meazzini suggested that students with disabilities lacked sufficient personal interaction with teachers who had been trained in their disability area. Nevertheless, it was certainly argued that Law 517 had largely accomplished its goal of moving students with disabilities into the general education classroom (Del Ben, 1996). Whereas thirty years ago in Italy only about twenty percent of students with disabilities were served in general education classes, by 1996, 98.5 percent of students with disabilities attended general education classes (Vianello, 1996).

Law 517 has been in effect for well over twenty years. Because experience with students with disabilities has often been reported as an important factor in improving teacher perceptions toward inclusion, (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edleman, & Schattmen, 1993; Hone, 1985; Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996), it could be argued that Italian teachers would report more positive perceptions towards inclusion than their colleagues in the United States, who were generally less experienced in accommodating students with diverse learning needs in general education classrooms.

Former studies have surveyed Italian teachers’ perceptions towards inclusion. Mega, Castellini, and Vianello (1998) reported that many Italian teachers had a positive outlook about inclusion. These teachers generally agreed that inclusion enhanced social skills,
learning skills, the autonomy of students with disabilities, and tolerance and understanding of diversity and acceptance in the other students in the general education classroom.

In Great Britain, the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream public high schools was a focus of debate across the country. Successive governments have affirmed a commitment to reducing the numbers of pupils educated in segregated special schools and to moving more of these pupils into the mainstream of education. Rose (2001) described a small-scale survey of teachers and head teachers that attempted to gauge their opinions of the necessary conditions for greater inclusion. These teachers identified seven common features of schools in which inclusion had been successfully implemented: collaborative teamwork between teachers and principals, a shared framework of common goals and objectives, family involvement, general education teacher ownership of the program, clear role relationships amongst professionals, effective use of support staff, meaningful Individual Education Plans, and procedures for evaluating effectiveness.

Rose suggested that perhaps the greatest impediment to inclusion was the great emphasis which the current educational system placed upon the difficulties presented by students with disabilities rather than on the development of strategies and classroom practices which would enable inclusion to be achieved. He further stated that changes in classroom practices would not only benefit the students with disabilities, but also would greatly enhance the learning of all pupils. In calling for a move away from the focus on pupil deficits towards a whole-school approach of reviewing practices and learning styles, Rose was echoing the views of other researchers.
If the management of schools was to be changed to create a climate more conducive to inclusion, Rose stated there was a need for a radical reappraisal of teacher expectations with regard to students’ with disabilities needs. Current legislation did not help. In fact, it worked against teachers and schools who were prepared to accept the undoubted challenges which came with inclusion practice. The emphasis upon an outcomes-driven curriculum, where success was measured only in academics and school performance was judged through performance tables, was a direct impediment and disincentive to schools. The latter saw students with disabilities as presenting a challenge to the image of the school in the wider educational community.

Whitworth (1999) reported on the Lighthouse Project, an attempt in the United States to successfully include students with disabilities in elementary, middle, and high school general education classes in a school district in Tennessee. Drawing on findings of the Lighthouse Project, Whitworth’s report described the following seven steps that had to be present if a school was to move from exclusion to inclusion education: the building principal had to assume a leadership role towards implementing an inclusion system, the school had to develop a common vision and all members of the school community had to understand why inclusion was being installed, adequate time had to be given to the process of planning inclusion and this planning had to continue during the implementation phase, there had to be a collaborative spirit and atmosphere in the school, provisions had to be made for formal and informal communication, all personnel had to strive to converse freely, teachers, administrators, and support staff had to be flexible and capable of changing to meet the needs of students, and inclusion training had to be provided for all.
Academic Achievement

Concerning inclusion programs and achievement, two major questions were routinely posed. First, did the behavior disorders associated with students with disabilities create excessive disruptions, thereby decreasing the time and energy the classroom teacher devoted to instruction? Second, did inclusion lower the academic achievement of general education students, effectively holding them back, while the needs of disabled students were addressed?

According to Daniel and King (1998), arguments supporting inclusion generally centered around the benefits derived both academically and socially for students with disabilities. Academic achievement was enhanced, advocates contended, when students with disabilities were expected to adhere to the higher standards that existed in the general classroom setting. Furthering this argument, supporters stressed these higher standards were needed because students with disabilities were far less likely than students without disabilities to graduate from high school, maintain employment, or live without some assistance provided from a variety of sources (O'Neil, 1993). Models of appropriate social behavior were more readily available in general classrooms; students had the opportunity to form friendships with students without disabilities as well as those who lived in surrounding neighborhoods (Willis, 1994).

The research of Daniel and King (1998) stated that advocates of full inclusion endorsed the placing of all students with disabilities in a general education classroom housed in their neighborhood schools regardless of the nature or severity of their disabilities. Full inclusionists favored the abolishment of placement options such as self-
contained classrooms, homebound instruction, and special schools, advocating instead that all special education students should receive instruction in the general education classroom. This environment, Daniel and King reported, more appropriately reflected mainstream society and established a supportive, humane atmosphere for all students (Behrmann, 1993; Johnson, Proctor, & Corey, 1994; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Staub & Peck, 1994). Advocates further implied special education provided outside the general education classroom was cost ineffective; student potential was limited when labels were applied; students frequently endured long bus rides to sites housing special education programs; and the special education curriculum lacked flow and continuity (Behrmann, 1993; Haas, 1993; O’Neil, 1993).

Glazer (1997) noted that with sufficient ongoing professional development to prepare teachers for the types of disabilities they encountered and strategies to deal with them, disruptions could be managed or eliminated altogether. Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) reported that data had never been introduced to support the assertion from critics of inclusion that the mingling of students with and without disabilities in the same classroom lowered the academic progress of general education students. Also, the authors’ data indicated that students with disabilities benefited from the socialization and higher academic standards which were a part of the general education environment. Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999) reported similar results from their research, stating that students with disabilities benefited, general education students were not academically impeded, and the classroom teacher served all students more appropriately in an inclusion setting.
The research of Sharpe and York (1994) focused on the effect of inclusion for the academic performance of general education students. Their data was derived from a pretest-posttest post hoc study. For the purposes of the study, an inclusion environment was defined as a general education classroom with students who had significant disabilities and had previously been taught in self-contained special education classrooms. This study examined the academic performance differences between thirty-five students without disabilities taught in an inclusion environment and one hundred eight students without disabilities who were not in inclusion environments. Group achievement test scores and report card ratings were used as performance indicators in the academic areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and the behavioral areas of conduct and effort. The results of the study revealed no statistically significant differences between the two groups for every academic and behavioral measure.

In contrast to inclusion advocates’ calls for full inclusion classrooms, critics argued that many students with disabilities were best served in noninclusion settings, noting that many students with disabilities or those who were gifted were originally pulled from the general education classroom because they were not well served in that setting (Kauffman, 1995). Teaching as if one size fits all disregarded the individual needs of students with disabilities. Moreover, when the demands of servicing students with disabilities, some severe, were added to the general education classroom, the needs of low, average, and above average students were often ignored (Delisle, 1994). Data indicated that enhanced academic achievement and self-concept of students with disabilities, regardless of placement, were unsubstantiated through prolonged research (Kauffman, Gerber, &
Semmel, 1998; O'Neil, 1994). This lack of systematic and comprehensive empirical evidence supporting inclusion practices negatively affected both students with and without disabilities, as well as their teachers (Lewis, Chard, & Scott, 1994).

Opponents of inclusion asserted that many local school boards, state departments of education, and legislators favored inclusion simply to reduce the costs of special education programs (Shanker, 1994). Furthermore, skeptics of inclusion charged that, in an effort to make the inclusion classroom appropriate for all students, more able children probably experienced boredom, and students with disabilities experienced frustration when trying to keep up with the average instructional pace. Consequently, achievement test scores of all students in inclusion classrooms could decline, and inclusion teachers would likely be held accountable (Brackett, 1994; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

Daniel and King (1998) further emphasized in their study that critics of inclusion had additional misgivings about the practice. Inclusion possibly limited the choices for parents and students and adversely affected the general education classroom in several ways. For example, they accused full inclusionists of being mainly concerned with socialization for students with disabilities, thereby placing achievement as secondary. Moving students with pressing medical needs which required direct care (e.g., changing catheters, removing mucus from lungs) or interventions (e.g., students who displayed disruptive, uncontrollable behavior) in general education classrooms adversely affected the environment both academically and socially (Kauffman, 1995). Opponents of inclusion stressed that general education teachers lacked the appropriate support and assistance to adequately meet the needs of all their students (Shanker, 1994; Willis, 1994).
The work of Mamlin (1997) also represented support for the noninclusionary viewpoint. She found that in the age of accountability, when taxpayers and educational policy makers were searching for results from public schools in the form of higher standardized test scores and the development of higher order thinking skills, students with disabilities posed a threat. The need for enhanced academic performance for all students increased the pressure for public school principals and teachers to boost overall achievement levels. The inclusion of low-achieving students with disabilities in this atmosphere of more inflexible academic standards was seen by many as a liability. Under pressure to produce improved scores or face the termination of their employment, principals in particular perceived inclusion as a roadblock to better performance. It was not surprising that under these circumstances, they held a dim view of inclusion.

Discipline and Disruptions

While most professionals in the education field presumed that the addition of students with disabilities to a general classroom increased disruptions and discipline referrals, research did not bear out this presumption (Glazer, 1997). In fact, Glazer stated that the opposite was often true, with students with disabilities improving their behavior so as to fit into the general education classroom. Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) also reached the same conclusion. They found that disruption levels did not increase when students with disabilities were served in the general classroom. However, they advised that students without disabilities and teachers had to be prepared for diverse activities in the classroom as students with disabilities were served by their visiting teachers. Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999) discovered that students without disabilities did not feel they
were exposed to more disruptions when students with disabilities were integrated into their classrooms, rather, most students without disabilities did not notice any difference.

The other side of the discipline and disruptions argument included stories of students with disabilities who were so violent and uncontrollable that opponents of inclusion could not see the reason in allowing them to remain in school, much less attend general classrooms. They pointed to cases such as the fifteen year-old ninth grader in Alabama who lunged at his teacher with a sharpened pencil, spit into the food of other students, hurled batteries at other students, disrupted classes by jabbering nonsensical words he claimed were Spanish, greeted the principal with vulgarity each morning, and assaulted the special education aide assigned to shadow him (Roche, 1999).

In California, a six year-old ran around the classroom and yelled when the teacher tried to present a lesson, hit and bit his teacher, threw chairs and desks, struck classmates, and kicked staff members (Schnaiberg, 1995). Schnaiberg details other similar stories of students apparently out of control, such as the elementary student in Ohio who exposed himself in the cafeteria and then became so enraged that several adults were required to restrain him, or the seventeen year-old high school student in Florida who punched the teacher as well as other students in one classroom.

Collaboration and Planning

Kagan (1991) defined collaboration as organizational and interorganizational structures where resources, power, and authority were shared, and where people were brought together to share common goals that could not be accomplished by a single individual or organization independently. Friend and Cook (1992) defined interpersonal
collaboration as a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal. The education literature offered many other definitions, each with a slightly different emphasis. All reflected assumptions about values, roles, and skills required for collaboration which were relevant to the process of educating students in inclusion schools. The literature presented a core set of values underlying collaborative relationships: parity, shared goals, and shared responsibility (Friend & Cook, 1992; Rainforth, York, & Macdonald, 1992; Thousand & Villa, 1992).

Since the task of implementing an inclusion program in a school usually rested with special education teachers, collaboration and planning between these teachers and general education teachers was essential. Since general education teachers tended to focus on the needs of their general students, special education teachers were advised to work closely with their general education counterparts to devise plans to assist students with disabilities (Snyder, 1999; Austin, 2000). General education teachers required behavior modification and intervention tactics which could be applied to students with disabilities. If the students with disabilities displayed inappropriate behavior, this would allow the general education teacher to address the undesired behavior, minimize it, and bring the students with disabilities back to the lesson and the rest of the class. These tactics were to be supplied by the special education teacher (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997). Finally, while collaborating with general education teachers, research indicated that it was most productive if special education teachers guarded against assuming the role of educational leader, relegating the general education teacher to a secondary role and appearing to place
their plans, strategies, methods, and techniques for assisting students with disabilities above all else (Wood, 1998; Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000).

When collaborating for inclusion, educators became members of a team and assumed many team roles. Tasks that had been done more independently were done more collectively. Student assessment may not have been done by the full team, but the team planned it to be more holistic and authentic. Team members shared observations and impressions, developed consensus about the student’s needs and abilities, and wrote one comprehensive assessment report (rather than many separate, sometimes disparate reports). The team developed an Individualized Education Plan with one set of goals and objectives, and designed comprehensive strategies to address student needs. The team planned units and lessons that addressed the needs of all students, with their diverse learning styles and range of abilities. The team taught heterogeneous groups of students. Also, the team worked together to solve problems related to collaboration and inclusion education (Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis, & Edelman, 1994; Rainforth, York, & Macdonald, 1992).

Depending on which task was performed, the number of team members working together varied. General education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, paraeducators, family members, and students collaborated in the planning and implementation of inclusion practices. To assure that the collective store of knowledge, skills, and perspectives was used, every team member, including staff, students, and family members, assumed the role of teacher, learner, and implementor.
Assuming active and effective roles in the tasks outlined above required a range of skills. First, collaboration required educators and related service providers to have current knowledge and competence in their own discipline (Rainforth, York, & Macdonald, 1992). Without this foundation, their contribution was limited, and frustration and defensiveness were likely. Team members also needed to develop skills in communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution (Friend & Cook, 1992). In efforts to meet the needs of students in a more diverse society, many schools now addressed these areas as part of the curriculum. This offered a wonderful opportunity for students and staff to learn to use these skills together so that they became part of the culture of an inclusion school (Reardon, 1988). The effects were further enhanced by inviting families to staff development courses in communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution. This prepared the entire team to deal with the range of issues that arose when educating all students in inclusion settings. The values, roles, and skills outlined above provided the framework within which the collaboration occurred. Individual interest and ability, as well as organizational support, had a great impact on the extent of collaboration in schools.

An important step in providing an inclusion education had been exploring new teaching roles that moved beyond resource room and teacher support models. Collaborative teaching, also known as cooperative teaching, had been defined as restructuring of teaching procedures in which two or more educators possessing distinct sets of skills worked in a coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in educationally integrated settings, that is, in general education classrooms (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995). General education
teachers may have taught with special education teachers, related service providers, Title I teachers, teachers of students who were gifted and talented, and/or paraeducators.

Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) identified three different co-teaching roles for collaborative teachers. Collaborative teachers may have used this framework as the basis for discussion with general educators as they started working together for the first time. Which roles the collaborative teacher assumed and how much time was spent in each role differed from classroom to classroom. Certainly in the area of team teaching the collaborative teacher's comfort with the course content determined the extent to which he/she instructed the whole class. The three co-teaching roles identified by Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend were complementary instruction, team teaching, and supportive learning activities. They were detailed in the following paragraphs.

Complementary instruction was presented to the entire class or small groups and was designed to support the course content or class activity. In a social studies class, for example, the general education teacher was responsible for the core content, which focused on the historical aspects of how conflicts impacted various civilizations. The special education teacher presented a complementary lesson on outlining, which helped all students, but was essential for some students with learning disabilities to prepare their reports on conflicts in history (Holzberger, 2000).

Another way collaborative teachers provided complementary instruction was to take responsibility for the anticipatory set each day before the general education teacher began the presentation of content to the whole class, according to Holzberger. During the first five to ten minutes of class, the collaborative teacher clarified, summarized, and
reviewed what was taught in the previous lesson or previewed vocabulary that would be introduced in the day's lesson. This activity helped prepare all students to learn from the general education teacher's presentation (Rainforth & England, 1997).

Team teaching involved the general education teacher and the collaborative teacher sharing responsibility for planning and teaching academic subject content to the class throughout the year (Barnes, 1999). This could take a variety of forms. The collaborative teacher may have taken responsibility for every other unit, chapter, or trade during the year, or she may have divided entire subject areas. For example, the general education teacher was the lead teacher for language arts with the collaborative teacher supporting instruction, while the collaborative teacher was the lead teacher for math with the general education teacher supporting instruction. Based upon Barnes research, they could have divided responsibilities within a subject area. For example, the general education teacher was responsible for the grammar section of language arts and the collaborative teacher then taught the spelling or phonics lesson each day. Similarly, the general education teacher provided whole class instruction each day and the collaborative teacher designed the cooperative or small group activities that followed.

Collaborative teachers did not team teach academic content in all the classes they co-taught, but this kind of teaming role was very important to them. Many collaborative teachers who have had their own classroom have feared that moving into general education classrooms would mean giving up teaching as they knew it, that is, being relegated primarily to support roles (Barnes, 1999). Usually this fear was not totally
justified, but an understanding of the variety of ways roles were divided provided security to staff who had not worked in this way, and helped guide decisions about role definition.

Supportive learning activities included adapting tests, developing study guides, taking notes on the overhead while the teacher lectured, designing alternative materials for the general education teacher's lesson, providing direct support to an individual student, or grading papers for half of the class (whether or not the students had disabilities) (Austin, 2000). One particularly valuable role that has been underrated by collaborative teachers was supporting students by moving about the room while the general education teacher instructed the class. The supporting teacher kept students focused, helped avoid discipline problems, and encouraged students who rarely volunteered answers by assuring them ahead of time that they had a good or right answer. When students were working independently, in pairs, or in cooperative groups, both the general education teacher and the collaborative teacher could move about the room helping all students.

The necessity for collaboration in an inclusion school has been discussed extensively (Rainforth, York, & Macdonald, 1992). The benefits of collaboration included sharing responsibilities for students and teaching tasks, designing more creative lessons and solutions, developing better understanding of student needs, providing greater individualization, increasing opportunities for successful student participation, and engendering a greater sense of belonging for both students and teachers. Many teachers felt that collaboration helped them become better teachers for all their students, and they preferred to leave the profession instead of returning to their former isolation.
Teachers' early fears of having another professional watch them teach, share their space, and change their curriculum have been replaced with acclamation for collaborative teaching (Michigan Inclusive Education Project, 1991-1993). Unfortunately, these positive attitudes have been giving way to fears that financial restraints or changing laws could jeopardize a system that has benefited all teachers and students.

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act called for assurances that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment. This act gave preference to placements in general education environments, but also called for the use of supplementary aides and services to support students with disabilities in inclusion settings. These supports included staff development, collaborative teaching, and curriculum modifications (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 1994). The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act also called for a multidisciplinary approach, parent participation, and provision for related services in the special education program. Fulfilling these requirements in ways that benefited all students, both with and without disabilities, depended on collaboration among school personnel and families (Rainforth & England, 1997).

Principals' and Teachers' Training

In university preparation programs, four areas have been identified as most critical for improving teacher training to prepare college students to teach students with disabilities in general classrooms. First, preservice teachers should be exposed at the outset of the college experience to the realities of delivering the curriculum and managing behavior for students with disabilities (Lanier & Lanier, 1996). The study reported students received
too little instruction too late in their college careers to put the knowledge into practice before being expected to perform as a real classroom teacher. In a related area, college professors tended to expose their students to far too little special education coursework, opting to include one class in their teacher training curricula (Snyder, 1999). In Snyder’s opinion, this was totally inadequate. Instead, specific methods of instructing students with disabilities should be taught, as well as preparing prospective teachers to manage negative behaviors associated with the disabilities they encountered. Further, Smith, Polloway, Patton, and Dowdy (1995) found that for the inclusion movement to be successful, general education faculties must be trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The authors further stated that general education teachers needed competencies which allowed them to communicate effectively when needed and to implement appropriate accommodations and modifications for individual learning.

Third, Monahan, Marino, and Miller (1996) stated that the only way to give a preservice teacher the skills needed to perform at acceptable levels of competency in the classroom was by increasing the time students were required to spend in various settings with students with disabilities. By experiencing more one on one interactions with students, college students were able to draw conclusions regarding the best methods of instructing students with disabilities. Stainback and Stainback (1992) also addressed the concern of the amount of time colleges expend preparing students to teach students with disabilities. These authors reported that more time should be devoted to teaching special education theory to preservice teachers. Second, the student should have spent considerable time observing and assisting in inclusion settings while still in college.
Fourth, to successfully teach in an inclusion classroom, a teacher must have had a background in intervention techniques for students with disabilities. Bruneau-Balderrama (1997) documented that hands on, experiential learning techniques worked best with students in inclusion classrooms. The study concluded that most traditional teaching models, while acceptably effective with students without disabilities, were largely useless for students with disabilities. Thus, university education programs were advised to prepare graduates to serve the needs of all students, even if modifying their teacher training programs was required.

Principal preparation programs were often criticized as being irrelevant to the actual job demands of school principals (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1988). Because of this criticism, the theory movement in educational administration of the 1950s and 1960s had given way to a more clinical approach that emphasized the acquisition of administrative skills. Principals needed to develop the thinking, reasoning, analyzing, and evaluating skills (March, 1978) that were essential to the fragmented, unpredictable, and fast-paced environment in which they worked (Martin & Willower, 1981; Peterson, 1978). Tanner and Keedy (1995) described one strategy, problem-based learning, which could be applied to management in an inclusion environment.

Barrows (1986) found principals in a problem-based learning encounter solved a problem by using clinical reasoning skills and identifying learning needs in a group process. This involved self-directed study and the application of newly gained knowledge to the problem. At the end of the process, students evaluated how they used information and resources in the solution and how they might have better managed the problem. The
following characteristics of problem-based learning were summarized from Bridges and Hallinger (1992): a real-world problem was the starting point; knowledge that principals should acquire was organized around problems, not disciplines; principals, as a group and individually, assumed the major responsibility for their own instruction and learning; and much of the learning occurred within the context of small groups rather than lectures.

The two types of problem-based learning were: problem-stimulated and principal-centered (Waterman, Akmajian, & Kearny, 1991). The type was determined by whether it was the instructor or the principal who defined the curriculum and goals and chose the resources and methods of evaluation for the problem-based activity.

Tanner and Keedy (1995) focused on a problem-based learning activity directed at preparing principals to function at high levels in an inclusion environment. They stressed role-relevant administrative problems; objectives; references; and questions and instructions having to do with inclusion of students with disabilities. A fictitious school district provided the setting for the problem. The materials required about five and one-half hours of group work and discussion time. The principals received the package a week before beginning the problem-based learning activities. Participants in the activity developed a strategy for educating all students with and without disabilities in the school described in the project and demonstrated the ability to design a mission statement, objectives, and a plan of action which followed the guidelines for placement of students with disabilities. A list of suggested readings for the activity was provided to the principals. The reading list and copies of selected articles were an inherent part of problem-stimulated learning (Tanner & Keedy, 1995).
Tanner and Keedy further reported that contextual information was provided for the fictitious school district. The context included social, demographic, and economic data. Percentages of students with disabilities became one major focal point. The principal leadership team, composed of principals involved in the activity, was responsible for developing a plan to maximize learning opportunities for all students in the school district. The leadership team addressed the following topics: inclusion, mainstreaming, ability grouping, non-graded classes, team teaching, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and mastery learning. The plan included a mission statement. Team members then specifically defined appropriate objectives related to the above topics, or additional topics. Objectives had to align with the mission statement. Upon completion of the above activities, the group or a representative presented its recommendations to the special education director and other school system administrators and defended its recommendation with documentation.

Teacher preparation programs have been under attack for twenty years. Oddly enough, principal preparation programs avoided such attacks until the mid 1980s. Now, under the aegis of the National Board on Educational Administration, principal preparation programs were changing to a more clinical approach (i.e., dealing with problems of practice). Problem-based learning was a strategy designed to prepare future principals for the real world of practice where they, like all administrators, had to confront problems and make decisions (Tanner & Keedy, 1995).
Principals’ and Teachers’ Demographics

A number of studies have sought to draw a relationship between principals’ and teachers’ demographic characteristics and their perceptions regarding inclusion. Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997) discovered that principals and teachers who received their educational training many years ago may have less positive perceptions regarding inclusion than those who have been more recently trained. Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996) found similar results at the end of their study. They reported that a definite correlation existed between a principal’s or teacher’s years of experience and open-mindedness towards inclusion. Those with less experience tended to accept the practice of inclusion as most beneficial for students with disabilities. Lampropoulou and Padeliadu (1997) found as a result of their study that all teachers tended to harbor feelings of resentment for students with disabilities as their years of experience increased. Of all groups that they studied, male teachers of the deaf were most likely to favor inclusion as the best method of delivery for students with disabilities. Perhaps most surprising of all was the finding that teachers with special education training did not necessarily have positive feelings about serving students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Instead, they more often opted for a traditional pull out program. Stoler (1992) and Vidovich and Lombard (1998) reached the same conclusions through their research.

Summary

The incentive to create and put inclusive programs in place in American classrooms was a relatively new movement made possible by the federal Congress’ decision to reauthorize the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1997. The nation’s
Congress took similar action twenty years earlier when it informed the states that they would need to adhere to free and appropriate public education principles in order to be eligible to receive federal money earmarked for education. Researchers tended to conclude that while evidence existed to support the use of inclusion as the most favorable method of educating students with disabilities, studies had also been completed which refuted these conclusions. Since general education teachers, special education teachers, and school principals did not all reach a consensus about whether inclusion or pullout programs were superior, it was necessary to conduct further research into the area of principals’ perceptions regarding the practice of inclusion.

The background was created for the introduction of inclusion as a practice to serve students with disabilities with the passage of Public Law 94-142, also referred to as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This legislation was designed to insure that students with disabilities were guaranteed a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

The movement of more students with disabilities into the regular classroom as well as the implications of inclusion were very important to principals. Inclusion was not to be perceived as a final stopping point in services provided to students, but rather as a continuum of services provided for all students within the school. Advocates and opponents of the practice of inclusion made strong cases for their beliefs. Advocates saw inclusion as a basic right for students to be taught alongside students without disabilities; they felt that all students in the class, with and without disabilities, benefited from the experience; the stigma associated with attending class in a special room, removed from the
general education classroom, disappeared; and services were not duplicated in general and special education classrooms, which inclusion advocates saw as a waste of resources.

A major concern was raised concerning serving students with and without disabilities in the same classroom, thereby increasing the level of disruptions, denying to both classes of students the environment they required to excel; some students, due to the level of their disability, required specialized services or highly individualized services which could not be provided effectively in the general classroom; and general classroom teachers might not possess the skills, training, and resources needed for students with disabilities to succeed in a general classroom.

Principals have always felt the need to perform a balancing act when dealing with the requirements of serving both students with and without disabilities. They have had to be able to serve the needs of students with disabilities without allowing the population of students without disabilities to be deprived of its academic program. Principals tended to fit into one of three categories regarding their perceptions of inclusion: full acceptance of the concept and program; compliance with the requests of parents and advocates; or attempting to resist the design and implementation of the inclusion program. According to the data of prominent researchers, the majority of principals were willing to accept the concept of inclusion, while the special education teachers they supervised favored the traditional pullout programs they had always used for students with disabilities. The researchers felt this divergence in acceptance resulted from the fact that principals were not required to actually operate the inclusion program on a daily basis. While they may have aided in its design and startup, it was left to the teachers to work with students in the
classes. Therefore, while principles might favor the concept, many teachers objected to it. Since the teachers actually oversaw the daily functioning of the program, their negative perceptions often led to its demise.

Relatively conclusive findings emerged concerning the perceptions of teachers toward the practice of inclusion. Generally, they were willing to serve students with physical disabilities over those with cognitive, emotional, or behavioral ones. The major reason cited by these teachers for their feelings was a perceived lack of training and expertise to accommodate such students. It was suggested by some researchers that the primary reason teachers were opposed to inclusion was that the educational system placed undue emphasis upon the difficulties presented by the student with disabilities rather than on the development of strategies and classroom practices which could make inclusion a reality.

Concerning inclusion and academic achievement, the concerns most frequently posed were whether disruptions increased and academics suffered as a result of integration of students with and without disabilities. A great deal of disagreement existed between those researchers who found that inclusion had no ill effects upon achievement and those who were convinced that achievement plunged as a result of the practice. Some researchers stated that the inclusion environment more appropriately reflected mainstream society and established a supportive, humane atmosphere for all students. Critics of inclusion argued that students with disabilities could only be served appropriately in a noninclusion
environment. Specifically, data gathered by some researchers indicated that enhanced academic achievement and self-concept of students with disabilities was unsubstantiated through prolonged studies.

Collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers has been determined to be essential in order for an inclusion program to function effectively in a school. Three different co-teaching roles for collaborative teachers have been identified as the methods which were generally most productive: complementary instruction, team teaching, and supportive learning activities. Complementary instruction was presented to the entire class or small groups and was intended to support the course content or class activity. Team teaching involved the general education teacher and the collaborative teacher sharing responsibility for planning and teaching academic subject content to the class throughout the year. Supportive learning activities included adapting tests, developing study guides, taking notes on the overhead while the teacher lectured, designing alternative materials to support the general education teacher’s lesson, providing direct support to a student, or grading papers.

Regarding university teacher preparation programs, four areas have been identified as most critical for preparing teachers to function efficiently in an inclusion classroom. First, preservice teachers needed to be exposed at the outset of their training to the realities of teaching and managing behavior in an inclusion environment. Second, general education teachers had to be given adequate training to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Failure to do so doomed the inclusion program from its inception. Third, preservice teachers had to be required to spend significantly more time in clinical inclusion settings...
while they were undergraduates. Fourth, to successfully teach in an inclusion setting, teachers must have had a background in intervention techniques for students with disabilities at their disposal.

Principals were now advised to undergo training to prepare them to uphold their professional responsibilities toward all their students, both with and without disabilities. To enable them to do so effectively, researchers advised that all principals enroll in a problem-based learning program. According to prevailing wisdom, principals in a problem-based learning encounter solved a problem by using clinical reasoning skills and identifying learning needs in a group process.

Finally, the demographic makeup of teachers and principals as it related to their perceptions regarding inclusion inspired a significant amount of research. Studies yielded relatively congruent results: teachers and principals who received their educational training many years ago seemed to hold negative perceptions of inclusion. Younger teachers with fewer years of experience were more open-minded to the practice.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In researching the available literature regarding the perceptions of high school teachers and principals about the practice of inclusion, one found a large amount of research has been conducted on teachers and a relatively small amount on principals. Research on both teachers and principals revealed that there was a lack of consensus in the perceptions of the two groups about inclusion. Since all the stakeholders responsible for designing and implementing an inclusion program at the school level collaborated and cooperated in order for their efforts to be successful (Snyder, 1999; Austin, 2000), a basic knowledge of their perceptions regarding inclusion needed be obtained prior to the design and implementation of the program.

This researcher conducted a study collecting data from Georgia high school principals regarding their perceptions about inclusion. This data was compared with the existing research concerning high school principals’ perceptions of inclusion. When the project was completed, the data was to be made available for review and use by researchers, high school principals and teachers, and educational policymakers.

Research Questions

The proposed study was designed to answer the following major research question: What were the perceptions of high school principals regarding the practice of inclusion?
The following five related subquestions were also addressed in the study:

1. How did an inclusion program impact students' with and without disabilities academic achievement, as perceived by principals?

2. To what extent did principals perceive a relationship between an inclusion program and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals?

3. To what extent were collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers perceived to be necessary for an inclusion program to be effective?

4. To what extent did principals perceive they received adequate training in college to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion program?

5. How did demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification affect perceptions of principals about inclusion?

An Item Analysis (Appendix A) was included in the dissertation to relate the research questions to the existing literature.

Research Design

A descriptive survey study design was utilized to address the research questions posed in this dissertation. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used by the researcher to investigate the perceptions of high school principals regarding the practice of inclusion. According to Creswell (1994), a quantitative study was best implemented by creating the most favorable method of data collection, eliminating bias, and selecting a representative sample from the population. Creswell stated that, ideally, the most accurate results were obtained from surveying an entire population, if possible. Therefore, all public high school principals in the state of Georgia were surveyed. A survey was most
economical, provided rapid turnaround for data collection, and allowed the researcher to
determine trends, attributes, and characteristics of the population (Fink & Kosecoff,
1985). A qualitative section composed of two open-ended questions was added to the
survey to assist the researcher in determining the experiences and perceptions of high
school principals towards inclusion. This feedback was useful for drawing conclusions
at the end of the study.

Since the data for this study was collected at one point in time, Fink and Kosecoff
(1985) advised a cross sectional survey design should be followed. Data was collected
by mail outs sent directly to high school principals at their schools. The rationale for this
method was based upon costs, logistics, and time constraints.

The survey instrument was designed by the researcher. Validity was determined
by submitting the survey to a panel of experts in the field of special education for critique
and feedback: a special education professor at the university level, a special education
coordinator in a public school system, a school principal who formerly taught in a special
education classroom, and two teachers practicing in special education classrooms.

Reliability was established by performing statistical analyses on the data from the
surveys with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (1999).

Population

The population for this study was all three hundred forty-six public high school
principals in the state of Georgia (Schrenko, 2000). Since all principals from this
population were surveyed, no sampling was necessary. According to Isaac and Michael
(1981), when possible, using the entire population for a survey was most favorable.
Concerns over representative sampling and generalizing the data to a population did not need to be considered if the entire population was included, as was the case in this study.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher. It was a combination quantitative and qualitative instrument. It contained seventeen statements which required the respondent to indicate the degree to which he or she agreed or disagreed with the statement by using a four-point Likert scale. In addition, the survey contained a demographics section which identified the personal characteristics of gender, age, years of experience, and area of educational certification. Finally, the survey’s qualitative section had two open-ended questions intended to provide the researcher with further insight into the respondent’s experiences with and perceptions of inclusion.

For validity to be assured, the content of the survey had to be sound, related to research, and consistent with the research questions (Creswell, 1994). To fulfill these conditions, the researcher relied upon these special education personnel: a special education professor at the university level, a special education coordinator in a school district, a principal who formerly taught special education, and two special education teachers to critique the survey, provide feedback, and suggest changes, where necessary.

Regarding reliability, all surveys returned from the entire population of Georgia high school principals, including those in the pilot study, were subjected to reliability analyses with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (1999). First, all survey items were analyzed and produced a reliability measure of 0.4. Second, survey items 1 - 6 and 17 were analyzed and produced a reliability measure of 0.4. Third, survey items 7 - 9
were analyzed and produced a reliability measure of 0.7. Fourth, survey item 10 was analyzed and produced a reliability measure of 0.7. Fifth, survey items 11-13 were analyzed and produced a reliability measure of 0.7. Sixth, survey items 14 and 15 were analyzed and produced a reliability measure of 0.7. Survey item 16 was found to skew the reliability results and was therefore removed from the analyses.

Procedures

The researcher petitioned the Institutional Review Board of Georgia Southern University (Appendix B) for permission to utilize human subjects in the study. The most current data base of Georgia high school principals was located and obtained from the Georgia Department of Education. Each principal on the list was mailed a consent letter to explain the survey's purpose and request his/her participation in the study, a copy of the survey, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Each survey was coded with a three-digit number, ranging from 001 for the first high school on the alphabetized list of public high schools in Georgia to 346 for the last school on the list. This numerical code allowed the researcher to check off each survey as it was returned. As the surveys were returned, each one's data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (1999).

After a waiting period of two weeks, the alphabetized list was to be checked to determine which principals had not returned surveys. Those principals were mailed a postcard reminding them of the researcher's request to participate in the study and stressing that they would remain anonymous. After a period of two more weeks passed, the alphabetized list was checked to determine which principals had not returned surveys. These principals were mailed another consent letter, survey, and stamped, self-addressed
envelope. A follow-up phone call to each of these principals was used as this second wave of surveys was mailed out in an attempt to obtain a one hundred percent participation rate in the study. However, none of these follow-up measures were required, as a sufficient number of surveys were returned to the researcher. The survey return rate was forty-nine percent.

Treatment of the Data

Quantitative research methodology was used to analyze data generated from the surveys. The answer to each question was generated by data analyses for the perceptions of high school principals regarding the practice of inclusion. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) was used by the researcher to analyze the data gathered from the surveys. The SPSS software package was frequently used for data analyses in the fields of social sciences and education.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in this research study. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used to examine and report on data concerning perceptions of principals about the practice of inclusion. A mean score of 2.5 was determined to be an average score. Therefore, any mean score above 2.5 was determined to be an above average score and any mean score below 2.5 was determined to be a below average score. Further, for purposes of interpretation, a mean score of 2.5 indicated neither agreement nor disagreement, rather, neutrality. A score below 2.5 indicated disagreement or strong disagreement. A score above 2.5 indicated agreement or strong agreement.
The Analysis of Variance was used to determine if differences existed in the perceptions of principals regarding the practice of inclusion among subgroups of gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification.

Summary

At the time this research was conducted, a disparity existed in the balance of literature regarding the perceptions of high school teachers and principals concerning the practice of inclusion. Extensive research had been conducted and published on the perceptions of teachers towards the practice but very little for principals. This imbalance provided educational policymakers and practitioners with insufficient data to prudently reach decisions about how best to design and implement inclusion in public high schools. This researcher hoped to add to the existing literature in the field of educational research about the perceptions of high school principals regarding the practice of inclusion as well as provide the data needed by state and district level administrators, superintendents, school boards, and universities to make informed choices about inclusion in high schools.

A descriptive survey study design was utilized to answer the questions posed in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods suited the researcher to determine the perceptions of principals towards the practice of inclusion. Surveys were sent directly to participants at their places of employment. These surveys were screened for validity and reliability prior to use. The survey was developed by the researcher. Since every public high school principal in the state of Georgia was surveyed, the sample and the population were the same. A cross sectional survey design was followed.
Once permission was granted by the Institutional Review Board of Georgia Southern University for the survey to be used, it was mailed by the researcher directly to all the prospective participants. Anonymity was guaranteed for all respondents. Since the initial mailing provided adequate surveys for the researcher to use in his statistical analyses, no follow-up procedures were needed to obtain additional surveys.

Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used to analyze data from the surveys. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was the software package chosen for these analyses. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in this research study.
CHAPTER IV
REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In researching the available literature regarding the perceptions of high school teachers and principals toward inclusion, the researcher found that a large amount of data had been collected on teachers' perceptions of inclusion and relatively little for principals' perceptions. Research on both groups revealed that consensus did not exist regarding their perceptions of inclusion. Since all the stakeholders responsible for designing and implementing inclusion at the school level collaborate and cooperate so that their efforts are successful, it was important that a basic understanding of the perceptions of these stakeholders toward inclusion was obtained prior to the implementation of the program.

The researcher conducted a survey to collect data on the perceptions of Georgia high school principals regarding their perceptions of inclusion. This data was compared with the existing research concerning high school principals' perceptions of inclusion. When the project was completed, the data was intended to be made available for use by researchers, principals and teachers, and other educational and public policymakers for their review and use.

Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following major research question: What were
the perceptions of high school principals regarding inclusion?

The following five related subquestions were also addressed in the study:

1. How did an inclusion program impact students' with and without disabilities academic achievement, as perceived by principals?

2. To what extent did principals perceive a relationship between an inclusion program and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals?

3. To what extent were collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers perceived to be necessary for an inclusion program to be effective?

4. To what extent did principals perceive they received adequate training in college to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion program?

5. How did demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification affect perceptions of principals about inclusion?

Georgia High School Principals' Demographic Characteristics

This subheading addressed the demographic characteristics of Georgia high school principals (see Table 1). Regarding gender, 82.5 percent of the respondents were male, 17.5 percent were female. Concerning age, 0.6 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30 years, 9.0 percent were between the ages of 30 and 40 years, 38.0 percent were between the ages of 41 and 50 years, and 52.4 percent were 51 years old or older. For administrative experience, 9.0 percent had from 1 to 5 years of experience, 51.5 percent had from 6 to 15 years of experience, and 39.5 percent had 16 or more years of experience. Regarding educational certification, 4.9 percent were
certified in special education, 92.0 percent were certified in an area other than special education, and 3.1 percent were certified in special education and another area other than special education.

Removal of Survey Item From Data Analysis

During the running of statistical analyses to determine the level of reliability for the items on the survey used in this research, low reliability measures were initially produced. All the survey items were investigated to determine which item or items were the cause of the low reliability measures. Through a process of elimination, survey item sixteen was found to be responsible for the unacceptable reliability measures. This item was removed from the analysis and was not included in the narration or tables in this chapter since it was found to have skewed the results.

Findings on Georgia High School Principals’ Perceptions of Inclusion

This subheading addressed the major research question: What were the perceptions of high school principals regarding inclusion? Survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 17 were designed to specifically answer this major research question.

Regarding survey question 1, the mean response was 2.62. This response indicated that principals did not strongly agree or disagree that inclusion was the best method to serve students. Regarding survey question 2, the mean response was 1.89. This response indicated that principals disagreed with the statement that students who required major accommodations should be served in the general education classroom. Regarding survey question 3, the mean response was 1.64. This response indicated that principals strongly disagreed with the statement that students with severe mental disabilities should be served
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Georgia high school principals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender -</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age -</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Experience -</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Certification -</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education and other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the general education classroom. Regarding survey question 4, the mean response was 2.41. This response indicated that principals did not strongly agree or strongly disagree that their teachers agreed that inclusion was the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school.

For survey question 5, the mean response was 2.76. This response indicated that principals agreed that their teachers were more willing to serve students with physical disabilities in the general education classroom than those with mental disabilities.

Regarding survey question 6, the mean response was 2.84. This response indicated that principals agreed that students with disabilities in the general education classroom presented a higher level of legal liability than general education students. Regarding survey question 17, the mean response was 2.90. This response indicated that principals agreed that their special education teachers tended to be more willing to accept inclusion than general education teachers.

A variable labeled TOTGEN was created to compute the average score of the responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 17, collectively. This value was computed as 2.47. This response indicated that principals did not agree or disagree that inclusion was the best method to serve students with disabilities. They were neutral regarding the benefits of inclusion (see Table 2).

Findings on How Inclusion Impacts Students' Academic Achievement

This subheading addressed the subquestion: How did an inclusion program impact students' with and without disabilities academic achievement, as perceived by principals? Survey questions 7, 8, and 9 were designed to specifically answer this subquestion.
Table 2: Georgia high school principals’ perceptions of inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>M</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Inclusion is the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school.</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students who require major accommodations should be served in the general education classroom.</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students with severe mental disabilities should be served in the general education classroom.</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most of my teachers generally agree that inclusion is the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>My teachers are more willing to serve students with physical disabilities in the general education classroom than those with mental disabilities.</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students with disabilities in the general education classroom present a higher level of legal liability than general education students.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>My special education teachers tend to be more willing to accept inclusion than general education teachers.</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average -</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding survey question 7, the mean response was 3.05. This response indicated that principals agreed that the behavior disorders associated with some students with disabilities created excessive disruptions, thereby decreasing the time general education teachers could devote to instruction. Regarding survey question 8, the mean response was 2.29. This response indicated that principals disagreed that the inclusion of those students with disabilities in the general education classroom lowered the academic achievement of students without disabilities. Regarding survey question 9, the mean response was 2.29. This response indicated that principals disagreed that the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom lowered the standardized test scores of students without disabilities.

A variable labeled TOTSUB1 was created to compute the average score of the responses to questions 7, 8, and 9, collectively. This value was computed as 2.54. This indicated that principals did not agree or disagree that inclusion had an impact on students' with and without disabilities academic achievement. They perceived a neutral impact (see Table 3).

Findings on the Relationship Between Inclusion and Disruptions and Discipline

This subheading addressed the subquestion: To what extent did principals perceive a relationship between an inclusion program and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals? Survey question 10 was designed to specifically answer this subquestion. Regarding survey question 10, the mean response was 2.58. This response indicated that principals were neutral regarding whether the addition of students with disabilities in the general education classroom increased disruptions and disciplinary referrals.
Table 3: Impact of inclusion on student achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. The behavior disorders associated with some students with disabilities create excessive disruptions, thereby decreasing the time general education teachers can devote to instruction.</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom lowers the academic achievement of general education students.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom lowers the standardized test scores of general education students.</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average -</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A variable labeled TOTSUB2 was created to compute the average score of the responses to question 10. This value was computed as 2.58. This value indicated that principals did not agree or disagree that the addition of students with disabilities in the general education classroom had any effect upon disruptions and disciplinary referrals (see Table 4).

Findings on Collaboration and Planning Between General and Special Education Teachers

This subheading addressed the subquestion: To what extent were collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers perceived to be necessary for an inclusion program to be effective? Survey questions 11, 12, and 13 were designed to specifically answer this subquestion (see Table 5).

Regarding survey question 11, the mean response was 3.71. This response indicated that principals strongly agreed that collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers was essential for inclusion to function successfully. Regarding survey question 12, the mean response was 3.67. This response indicated that principals strongly agreed that special education teachers should provide general education teachers with strategies to help students with disabilities be successful in the general education classroom. Regarding survey question 13, the mean response was 3.37. This response indicated that principals agreed that special and general education teachers should equally share in the direction of the instruction of the students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

A variable labeled TOTSUB3 was created to compute the average score of the responses to questions 11, 12, and 13, collectively. This value was computed as 3.59.
Table 4: Perceptions of relationship between inclusion and disruptions and discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. The addition of students with disabilities in the general education classroom increases disruptions and disciplinary referrals.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average -</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This response indicated that principals strongly agreed that it was important for
collaboration and planning to take place between general and special education teachers
for successful inclusion to occur (see Table 5).

**Findings on Principals’ Perceptions Regarding College Training**

This subheading addressed the subquestion: To what extent did principals perceive
they received adequate training in college to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion
program? Survey questions 14 and 15 were designed to specifically answer this
subquestion (see Table 6).

Regarding survey question 14, the mean response was 3.32. This response indicated
that principals agreed that preservice teachers should be exposed at the outset of their
college training to inclusion classroom settings. Regarding survey question 15, the mean
response was 3.16. This response indicated that principals agreed that preservice teachers
should be required to perform part of their training in an inclusion classroom setting.

A variable labeled TOTSUB4 was created to compute the average score of the
responses to questions 14 and 15, collectively. This value was computed as 3.24.
This response indicated that principals agreed that they had more than adequate college
training to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion program (see Table 6).

**Findings on Demographic Factors’ Effects on Perceptions of Inclusion**

This subheading addressed the subquestion: How did demographic factors such as
gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification affect perceptions of principals
Table 5: Perceptions of collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers is essential for inclusion to function successfully.</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Special education teachers should provide general education teachers with strategies to help students with disabilities be successful in the general education classroom.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Special and general education teachers should equally share in the direction of the instruction of the students with disabilities in the general education classroom.</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average - 3.59 0.44
Table 6: Perceptions regarding college training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Statement</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Preservice teachers should be exposed at the outset of their college training to inclusion classroom settings.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Preservice teachers should be required to perform part of their training in an inclusion classroom setting.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
about inclusion? Survey question 18 addressed gender, survey question 19 addressed age, survey question 20 addressed years of experience, and survey question 21 addressed area of certification (see Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10).

Regarding survey question 18, the between groups sum of squares was 0.33, the between groups degrees of freedom was 1, and the between groups mean square was 0.33. The within groups sum of squares was 10.55, the within groups degrees of freedom was 108, and the within groups mean square was 1.0. The F value was 3.33, and the significance level was 0.07 (see Table 7).

Regarding survey question 19, the between groups sum of squares was 0.14, the between groups degrees of freedom was 3, and the between groups mean square was 0.05. The within groups sum of squares was 10.07, the within groups degrees of freedom was 106, and the within groups mean square was 0.09. The F value was 0.49, and the significance level was 0.69 (see Table 8).

Regarding survey question 20, the between groups sum of squares was 0.03, the between groups degrees of freedom was 2, and the between groups mean square was 0.01. The within groups sum of squares was 10.86, the within groups degrees of freedom was 108, and the within groups mean square was 0.10. The F value was 0.14 and the significance level was 0.87 (see Table 9).

Regarding survey question 21, the between groups sum of squares was 1.10, the between groups degrees of freedom was 2, and the between groups mean square was
0.55. The within groups sum of squares was 9.70, the within groups degrees of freedom was 105, and the within groups mean square was 0.09. The F value was 5.97 and the significance level was 0.00 (see Table 10).

This subheading addressed the subquestion: How did demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification affect perceptions of principals about inclusion? Analysis of variance was used to determine if the gender of the respondents to the survey made a significant difference in their perceptions of inclusion. An F-value of 3.33 indicated that gender made no significant difference in principals’ perceptions of inclusion at the 0.05 level.

Analysis of variance was used to determine if the age of the respondents to the survey made a significant difference in their perceptions of inclusion. An F-value of 0.49 indicated that age absolutely made no significant difference in principals’ perceptions of inclusion at the 0.05 level.

Analysis of variance was used to determine if the years of administrative experience of the respondents to the survey made a significant difference in their perceptions of inclusion. An F-value of 0.14 indicated that administrative experience absolutely made no difference in principals’ perceptions of inclusion at the 0.05 level.

Analysis of variance was used to determine if the area of certification of the respondents to the survey made a significant difference in their perceptions of inclusion. An F-value of 5.97 indicated that area of certification made a significant difference in principals’ perceptions of inclusion at the 0.05 level.
The data discussed in the previous two subheadings were represented in Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10. Table 7 specifically represented data regarding gender, Table 8 specifically represented data regarding age, Table 9 specifically represented data regarding years of administrative experience, and Table 10 specifically represented data regarding area of certification. Survey questions 18, 19, 20, and 21 corresponded to variables GENDER, AGE, EXPERI, and CERTIFI, respectively.

Since it was determined that area of certification made a significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion, further analyses were performed to determine the exact values associated with principals' areas of certification and their perceptions of inclusion (see Table 11).

Regarding principals with educational certification in the area of special education only, their mean response to survey items 1 through 17 was 2.43. This value indicated that these principals displayed average support for inclusion. Regarding principals with educational certification in areas other than special education, their mean response to survey items 1 through 17 was 2.04. This value indicated that these principals displayed below average support for inclusion. Regarding principals with educational certification in special education and areas other than special education, their mean response was 3.0. This value indicated that these principals displayed above average support for inclusion (see Table 11).

Regarding the mean responses of the principals regarding area of educational certification, 8 responded that they held certification in special education, 150 responded that they were certified in areas other than special education, and 5 responded that they
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</table>

* p ≤ .05
Table 8: ANOVA results for Georgia high school principals by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>10.07</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .05
Table 9: ANOVA results for Georgia high school principals by years of experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>10.86</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .05
Table 10: ANOVA results for Georgia high school principals by area of certification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>5.97*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ .05
Table 11: Georgia high school principals' perceptions of inclusion by area of certification

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>M</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals with special education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certification only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal with certification in areas</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other than special education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal with certification in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special education and areas other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than special education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
held certification in special education and areas other than special education. Since the response rates of 8 and 5 were so low, it was not possible to validate whether certification in special education or special education and areas other than special education created a level of statistical significance.

Open-Ended Responses

The final section of the survey contained two qualitative, open-ended response questions. There was a degree of variation in the responses of the participants. However, certain responses occurred frequently enough to establish a pattern. Regarding principals’ experiences with inclusion, many of those who had used the model in their school voiced negative impressions. They wrote that they were not prepared at all or had little preparation before being expected to supervise an inclusion program in a school. Also, principals responded that teachers and students in varying degrees were in some cases unwilling to try inclusion over more traditional models of service delivery. They expressed that more traditional models served many students more effectively than inclusion.

Regarding where principals obtained their knowledge of inclusion, they responded that they learned about inclusion through research, conferences, workshops, from other teachers, and through daily work experiences. Almost none responded that they received training for inclusion in college.

Summary

Regarding the major research question of the study, principals’ perceptions toward inclusion as a means of serving students with and without disabilities were neutral.
Principals perceived that inclusion did not have an above average or below average effect upon achievement, rather, it had an average impact. Principals perceived that the relationship between inclusion and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals was an average relationship. Principals strongly agreed it was important for collaboration and planning to occur between general and special education teachers in order for inclusion to be effective. Principals in general agreed that they had more than adequate educational training to prepare them to serve students with inclusion.

Regarding the demographic characteristics of principals, gender made no significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Age absolutely made no difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Years of experience absolutely made no difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Whether principals had special education certification, certification in areas other than special education, or certification in special education and areas other than special education made a significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, those principals with certification in special education and areas other than special education were more likely to agree that inclusion was the best method to serve students with disabilities.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Three years ago, the researcher began an investigation of the topic of inclusion. The original intent of the research was to determine the amount and type of data available for reference purposes concerning the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and principals toward inclusion. A considerable amount of research on this topic was collected. After securing the pertinent data, the researcher discovered that far more existed on attitudes and perceptions of teachers toward inclusion than on attitudes and perceptions of principals toward inclusion.

When the researcher reached the preprospectus stage in the dissertation process, it was suggested by the supervising committee, particularly the professor from the field of special education, that more than an adequate amount of research had already been performed on attitudes and perceptions of teachers regarding inclusion. Principals' attitudes and perceptions regarding inclusion, however, was a topic which had only been lightly investigated. With guidance from the supervising committee, the researcher decided to narrow the research topic to Georgia public high school principals' perceptions of inclusion.

At the prospectus stage of the dissertation process, the researcher decided to develop a survey instrument to be distributed to all public high school principals in the state of
Georgia. With guidance from the supervising committee, this instrument was developed and refined. It was presented to experts in the field of special education for review and feedback to improve its content. The researcher obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board of Georgia Southern University to begin the survey. The researcher conducted a pilot study in Richmond County and Columbia County and then mailed surveys to every public high school principal in the state of Georgia. Working closely with the methodologist for the study, the data from the returned surveys was entered into and analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (1999) by the researcher. The results of the data analyses were reported in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

Summary of Research Findings

The major research question of the study addressed the perceptions of high school principals regarding the practice of inclusion. Specifically, perceptions about whether inclusion was the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school were detailed by the major research question. Generally, the findings indicated that there was average support among Georgia high school principals for inclusion.

The first subquestion of the study addressed the perceptions of high school principals regarding the impact that inclusion had upon the academic achievement of students with and without disabilities. Specifically, perceptions about whether inclusion decreased the time general education teachers devoted to instruction and lowered the academic achievement and standardized test scores of students without disabilities were detailed by the first subquestion. Generally, principals perceived that inclusion had an average level of impact in these three areas.
The second subquestion of the study addressed the perceptions of high school principals regarding the extent to which a relationship existed between inclusion and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals. Specifically, perceptions about whether the addition of students with disabilities to the general education classroom increased disruptions and disciplinary referrals were detailed. Generally, principals perceived an average relationship existed between inclusion and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals.

The third subquestion of the study addressed the perceptions of high school principals regarding the extent to which collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers was necessary for an inclusion program to be effective. Specifically, perceptions about whether special education teachers should provide general education teachers with strategies for instruction of students with disabilities and the sharing of teaching responsibilities between special education teachers and general education teachers were detailed. Generally, principals strongly agreed it was highly important for collaboration and planning to occur between general education teachers and special education teachers for inclusion to be effective.

The fourth subquestion of the study addressed the perceptions of high school principals regarding how well their college training prepared them to serve students with inclusion. Specifically, perceptions about whether preservice teachers should receive training in inclusion settings at the beginning of their college education, whether they should perform part of their student teaching in an inclusion setting, and whether principals who received their college training many years ago had negative feelings about
inclusion were detailed. Generally, principals agreed that they and their teachers had more than adequate college training to prepare them to serve students with inclusion.

The fifth subquestion of the study addressed the perceptions of high school principals regarding how demographic factors affected their perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, the demographic factors of gender, age, years of experience, and area of certification were detailed.

Gender made no significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Age absolutely made no difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Years of experience absolutely made no difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Area of certification made a significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, principals who held certification in special education and areas other than special education tended to agree that inclusion was the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school.

Discussion of Research Findings

In the literature review of Chapter II of this dissertation, the topic of principals' perceptions of inclusion was reported. Dyal and Flynt (1996) found that principals tended to favor inclusion schools which provided a continuum of services, from partial to full inclusion. They were more comfortable with traditional pull out programs to satisfy the needs of students with disabilities (Kavale, 2000). Curley (2000) reported that a significant percentage of principals wanted no part of inclusion in their schools. Most favored inclusion which prescribed minor accommodations for social integration, physical disabilities, and academic needs. Curley found that principals did not agree
that students requiring major accommodations or those who would not follow basic rules of acceptable behavior should be allowed to enter general education classrooms.

Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) reported that principals favored only including students with mild disabilities in general education classrooms. Those with severe emotional and behavioral disorders as well as those requiring major physical accommodations to function in the general education classroom were not viewed as candidates for inclusion. Miller (1995) reported similar findings, with principals presenting a clear bias towards students with severe emotional and behavioral disabilities and those requiring major physical accommodations.

The principals surveyed in this study reported similar perceptions of inclusion. They reported only average support for inclusion as the best method to serve students with disabilities in the high school setting. Much like the research reported in Chapter II of this study, the principals surveyed in this study did not agree that students requiring major physical accommodations and those with severe mental disabilities were best served with inclusion. The conclusions reached in Chapter IV of this study and the existing data reported in the literature review of Chapter II were not contradictory regarding high school principals’ perceptions of inclusion.

In the literature review of Chapter II of this study, the topic of research on perceptions of the impact of inclusion upon the academic achievement of students with and without disabilities was reported. Conflicting research was found on this topic. Daniel and King (1998) stated that students with disabilities tended to perform at higher academic levels in the general education classroom because they were expected to
compete with students without disabilities. Glazer reported that with sufficient ongoing professional development, teachers could be prepared to deal with the disabilities they encountered, thus keeping the level of instruction at acceptable levels and not negatively affecting academics. Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) reported that mixing students with and without disabilities in the general education classroom had never been shown to drop the level of academic achievement of students without disabilities. Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999) and Sharpe and York (1994) reached similar findings.

In contrast, Kauffinan (1995) stated that the special academic needs of students with disabilities were ignored in the general education classroom, thus causing these students’ academic achievement to fall. Delisle (1994) reported that the academic needs of low, average, and above average students without disabilities were often ignored to allow teachers to devote more instructional time to students with disabilities. Kauffinan, Gerber, and Semmel (1998) and O’Neil (1994) stated that data indicated that enhanced academic achievement and self-concept of students with disabilities, regardless of placement, were unsubstantiated through prolonged research. Brackett (1994) and Fuchs and Fuchs (1995) reported that in an inclusion classroom the students without disabilities experienced boredom, the students with disabilities experienced frustration, and academic achievement from both groups suffered.

The principals surveyed for this study reported they perceived that inclusion did not have an above average or below average impact on academic achievement of students with and without disabilities, rather, it had an average impact. The research reported in the literature review of this study tended to either support inclusion as a means of
increasing academic achievement or blame it for decreased academic achievement. Therefore, there was a definite contradiction between the research conducted for this dissertation and the existing literature in Chapter II concerning the effect of inclusion on academic achievement for students with and without disabilities.

This research contributed to the existing literature in the field of educational administration by adding a neutral perspective which contrasted with the research which indicated that academic achievement was positively or negatively affected by inclusion. Therefore, three viewpoints emerged by combining the existing research detailed in the literature review of Chapter II and the data collected for this dissertation: those who determined that inclusion had a positive impact on academic achievement, those who determined that inclusion had a negative impact on academic achievement, and those who determined that inclusion had neither an above average or below average impact on academic achievement, but rather, an average impact.

In the literature review of Chapter II of this study, the topic of the extent to which researchers found a relationship between inclusion and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals was reported. Contrasting research was found. Glazer (1997) stated that students with disabilities often improved their behavior when they were included in general education classes. Fisher, Sax, and Pumpian (1996) reported that disruptions did not increase when students with and without disabilities were instructed in an inclusion classroom. Salend and Garrick-Duhaney (1999) stated that students without disabilities did not believe they were exposed to a higher number of disruptions and disciplinary incidents when they attended an inclusion classroom.
Roche (1999) presented the other side of the discipline and disruptions issue, reporting on the case of the fifteen year-old ninth grader in Alabama who lunged at his teacher with a sharpened pencil, spit into the food of other students, hurled batteries at other students, disrupted class by jabbering nonsensical words he claimed were Spanish, greeting the principal with vulgarity each morning, and attacking the special education aide assigned to shadow him. Schnaiberg (1995) reported on the California student who ran around the room and yelled when the teacher tried to present a lesson, hit and bit his teacher, threw chairs and desks, struck classmates, and kicked staff members. Schnaiberg also reported that a Florida student punched the teacher and students in one classroom.

The principals surveyed in this study reported that regarding the extent to which they perceived a relationship existed between inclusion and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals, the relationship was neither above or below average, rather, it was an average relationship. The research reported in the literature review of Chapter II tended to either claim that inclusion lowered the number of disruptions and disciplinary referrals or raised the number of disruptions and disciplinary referrals in classrooms. Therefore, there was a definite contradiction between the results of this research and the existing literature included in the literature review of Chapter II regarding inclusion and classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals.

This research contributed to the existing literature in the field of educational administration by adding a neutral perspective which contrasted with the research which indicated that inclusion either lowered the incidence of disruptions and disciplinary referrals or raised the incidence of disruptions and disciplinary referrals. Therefore, three
viewpoints emerged by combining the existing research included in the literature review of Chapter II and the data collected for this dissertation: those who determined that inclusion lowered the incidence of disruptions and disciplinary referrals, those who determined that inclusion raised the incidence of disruptions and disciplinary referrals, and those who determined that inclusion neither raised nor lowered the incidence of disruptions and disciplinary referrals, rather, it had a neutral impact.

In the literature review of Chapter II of this study, the topic of the extent to which collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers was perceived to be necessary for an inclusion program to be effective was reported. Collaboration and planning between special education teachers and general education teachers was identified as essential for inclusion to work (Snyder, 1999; Austin, 2000). Snyder and Austin agreed that since general education teachers tended to focus on the needs of students without disabilities, special education teachers needed to work in close collaboration with them to devise plans to implement in the general education classroom to assist the students with disabilities. Bruneau-Balderrama (1997) reported that general education teachers required specific behavior modification and intervention tactics which could be applied to students with disabilities. These tactics could be supplied by the special education teacher. Wood (1998) and Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham (2000) stated that their research indicated inclusion was most effective if the special education teacher refrained from assuming the role of educational leader in the general education classroom. In the true spirit of collaboration, relegating the general education teacher to
a secondary role and appearing to place the needs of the students with disabilities above the needs of students without disabilities was not desirable if inclusion was to be effective.

The principals surveyed for this dissertation reported that regarding the extent to which collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers was needed for inclusion to be effective, they perceived that it was highly important for collaboration and planning to occur between special education teachers and general education teachers. The research reported in the literature review of Chapter II solidly supported the need for close collaboration and planning between general education teachers and special education teachers in order for inclusion to be effective. Therefore, there was strong agreement between the results of the research conducted and the existing literature included in the literature review of Chapter II regarding collaboration and planning.

This research contributed to the existing literature in the field of educational administration by affirming and adding to the body of evidence that stated that collaboration and planning between general education teachers and special education teachers was necessary for inclusion to be effective. Therefore, public high school principals in Georgia tended to place great importance upon the need for collaboration and planning between general education teachers and special education teachers. Their perceptions tended to agree closely with the existing research on this topic.

In the literature review of Chapter II, the topic of whether the college training principals and teachers received prepared them to instruct students in an inclusion setting was reported. Lanier and Lanier (1996) stated that preservice teachers should be
exposed at the outset of their college training to the reality of delivering instruction to
students with and without disabilities in an inclusion setting. Lanier and Lanier stated that
too often preservice teachers received too little training too late in their college careers
to put the training into practice before being expected to perform as a classroom teacher.

Snyder (1999) reported that college preparation programs tended to expose
preservice teachers to inadequate amounts of special education coursework, sometimes
only requiring one or two such courses in a four-year program. Stainback and Stainback
(1992) also addressed this same topic of time spent at the college level preparing teachers
with special education training. These researchers also stated that considerably more time
should be devoted to teaching special education theory to preservice teachers. Stainback
and Stainback also stated that preservice teachers spend inadequate amounts of time
observing and assisting in inclusion settings. Finally, Bruneau-Balderrama (1997) reported
that hands-on, experiential learning techniques worked best with students with disabilities
in inclusion classrooms. This study concluded that university preparation programs should
prepare graduates to serve the needs of students with and without disabilities, even if
modifying preservice teacher training programs was required.

The principals surveyed reported that they perceived that they had more than
adequate training to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion setting. The research
reported in the literature review of Chapter II tended to state that teachers and principals
were inadequately prepared by their college training to serve students in an inclusion
setting. Therefore, there was a definite contradiction between the results of the research
conducted and the existing literature included in the literature review of Chapter II regarding principals' and teachers' training.

This research contributed to the existing literature in the field of educational administration by adding a different perspective which directly contrasted with the research which indicated that principals were not prepared by their college training to serve students in an inclusion setting.

In the literature review of Chapter II of this study, the topic of the relationship between principals' and teachers' demographics and their perceptions regarding inclusion was reported. Concerning gender, males tended to favor inclusion more often than females as a means of instructing students (Lampropoulou & Padeliadu, 1997). Bennett, Deluca, and Bruns (1997) and Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996) reported that as principals' and teachers' age and years of experience increased, their willingness to accept inclusion as a means of instruction decreased. Regarding educational certification, teachers and principals with special education certification did not necessarily have positive perceptions of inclusion, rather, they more often opted for traditional pull out or resource programs (Stoler, 1992; Vidovich & Lombard, 1998).

The principals surveyed for this study reported that gender made no significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. The research reported in the literature review of Chapter II contradicted that finding, with males more likely to favor inclusion than females. The principals surveyed for this study reported that age made no significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. The research reported in the literature review of Chapter II contradicted that finding, such that as age increased, willingness to
accept inclusion decreased. The principals surveyed reported that years of experience made no significant difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. The research in the literature review of Chapter II of this study contradicted that finding, such that as years of experience increased, willingness to accept inclusion decreased. The principals surveyed for this study reported that educational certification made a significant difference in principals' willingness to accept inclusion, specifically, those principals with special education certification were more willing to accept inclusion than those without it. The research reported in the literature review of Chapter II concluded that teachers and principals with special education certification tended to favor traditional pull out or resource options for students with disabilities over inclusion. Therefore, while in both cases educational certification made a difference, the differences were opposite in nature.

This research contributed to the existing literature in the field of educational administration by adding information regarding the effects of gender, age, years of experience, and educational certification on principals' perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, gender, age, and years of experience made no difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion, while educational certification did make a difference in principals' perceptions of inclusion. Namely, those with certification in special education and areas other than special education were more likely to favor inclusion over other service delivery models.

Conclusions

Based upon the data analysis from Chapter IV, a number of conclusions were reached. First, regarding principals' perceptions of whether inclusion was the best method
to serve students with disabilities in a high school, there was average support among principals for inclusion. Second, regarding whether principals perceived that inclusion had an impact upon students’ with and without disabilities academic achievement, principals perceived an average impact. Third, regarding whether principals perceived that inclusion had an impact upon classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals, principals perceived an average relationship. Fourth, regarding whether principals perceived collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers to be necessary for inclusion to be effective, principals agreed it was highly important for collaboration and planning to occur for inclusion to be effective. Fifth, regarding whether principals perceived that they received adequate training in college to prepare them to serve students in an inclusion setting, principals agreed that they received more than adequate training. Sixth, demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and educational certification had no effect upon principals’ perceptions of inclusion, while educational certification made a significant difference.

In addition to these factual conclusions, the researcher reached other conclusions as well. First, common planning between general and special education teachers is important if these teachers are to be able to collaborate on educational decisions regarding students with and without disabilities. It should be the responsibility of the principal to design the teachers’ schedules in such a way that this common planning can occur. Second, most principals responded in the quantitative section of the survey that they were prepared to supervise students in an inclusion program. Yet, these same principals expressed reservations regarding their level of preparedness for inclusion in the qualitative section of
the survey. The researcher believes that this contradiction indicates that whatever training they received in college was theoretical only. Principals are indicating by their qualitative responses that they need more practicum experiences involving inclusion prior to starting their roles as supervisors of inclusion programs. Third, a small number of the respondents to the survey held certification in special education and areas other than special education. These respondents held an above average opinion of inclusion as the best method to serve students with and without disabilities. Their certification influenced their perceptions.

Implications

This section is linked to the Significance of the Study section found in Chapter I. One goal stated in that earlier section was that this study should contribute to the existing literature found on the topic of inclusion. It has accomplished that goal, reinforcing the conclusions already drawn by some researchers and challenging others, thus introducing the prospect of further research to attempt to reach a consensus in these areas of dispute.

A second goal of the study was to publish the perceptions of high school principals and teachers concerning inclusion. By doing so, principals and teachers who are charged in the future with installing inclusion programs in their schools will be able to draw upon this research and benefit from the prior knowledge. It is appropriate at this point to detail the conclusions drawn from the data obtained in the survey process and speculate on the implications for principals and teachers. An area of debate exists regarding whether inclusion impacts the academic achievement of students with and without disabilities. The researcher found that Georgia high school principals do not perceive that it does. Thus,
principals and teachers should feel that they can integrate classes for the purpose of inclusion and not have to fear lowering academic standards.

Next, principals and teachers should not fear that if they use inclusion in their schools they will experience higher rates of classroom disruptions and disciplinary referrals. The data gathered for this study does not support this viewpoint. In fact, Georgia high school principals do not perceive that inclusion has any significant effect upon rates of disruption or discipline.

The data gathered in this study strongly supported the existing research regarding the importance of collaboration and planning between general education and special education teachers. Principals strongly perceived a need for collaboration and planning in order to benefit the students with and without disabilities in an inclusion program. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that Georgia high school principals and teachers using or planning to use inclusion programs in their schools design those programs with mandatory provisions for generous collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers.

The data gathered for this study in the area of demographics and how they affected Georgia high school principals' perceptions of inclusion did not support the existing literature on inclusion. The literature review presented in Chapter II stated that males tended to favor inclusion more than females and that as teachers' and principals' age and years of experience increased, their willingness to accept inclusion decreased. The data gathered for this study did not support all those existing conclusions. The data helped the researcher conclude that gender, age, and years of experience had no effect on Georgia
high school principals’ perceptions of inclusion. Therefore, it is logical to suggest that
principals, regardless of gender, age, or years of experience, may effectively function in an
inclusion program. The data gathered for this study suggested that area of certification
was significant for principals’ perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, those with dual
certification inside and outside the field of special education tended to favor inclusion
more than those without dual certification. Therefore, this information may be used when
personnel decisions are made concerning the best candidates to serve as principals in
schools with inclusion programs.

In the Significance of the Study section in Chapter I, other stakeholders were
identified as part of the group who could benefit from the data collected in this study. It
was suggested that educational policymakers, state department of education officials, and
state legislators take note of the findings of this study that indicate that it is those
principals with dual certification inside and outside the field of special education who were
most likely to accept inclusion as the most favorable method of serving students
with and without disabilities. Since so few of these candidates exist, with most principals
only holding certification outside the field of special education, the researcher suggests
that programs to encourage teachers with special education certification to attain
administrative certification should be initiated. Also, principals without any special
education exposure should be required to obtain this experience through coursework or
practicum experiences. By doing so, educational policymakers, state department of
education officials, and state legislators could increase the size of the pool of candidates
available for principals’ positions in schools with inclusion programs.
Another group of stakeholders identified were university educators. The data gathered from the open-ended, qualitative survey questions may be of the most use to them. Many of the principals who responded to the survey contradicted themselves between the information they provided in the quantitative and qualitative sections of the survey. On the one hand, principals tended to respond in the quantitative section that they perceived that they were well-prepared by their university training to serve students with inclusion. Yet, many of these same respondents wrote in the qualitative open-ended section that they had no experience with inclusion programs prior to being expected to supervise them in their schools. Many also spoke of negative experiences with these programs and indicated that they were not convinced that inclusion was the best answer to serve students with and without disabilities. The researcher suggests that university educators should take notice of these responses. It may not be in the best interests of the principals, teachers, and students involved in an inclusion program to expect a principal with no prior inclusion experience to manage such a program. University educators will hopefully respond to this lack of preparation by increasing the special education coursework required for preservice teachers and students enrolled in educational leadership programs in graduate schools. Also, the researcher suggests that university educators require practicum experiences for preservice teachers and students enrolled in educational leadership programs in graduate schools to prepare them to serve students in inclusion programs.
Dissemination

When the dissertation process was begun by the researcher, it was intended that the data and conclusions produced from this study would be made available to anyone who could make use of it. Specifically, however, the researcher would hope that teachers, principals, educational policymakers at the school district level, university educators, state department of education officials, and state legislators responsible for establishing the standards for training and certifying teachers and principals would consider this dissertation when deliberating inclusion.

The researcher anticipates that two or more articles should be generated from the dissertation. If the researcher is afforded the opportunity to write these articles, this will serve as a means of dissemination for the results of the study to those persons who are candidates for utilizing the data. In addition, the researcher anticipates inquiries from persons inside and outside the field of education who are in need of data and research sources concerning inclusion. The researcher will make any data needed available to these persons requesting it. The data will be provided in regular hard copy or through electronic means, such as email or facsimile, if requested.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following actions to implement the results of the study: (1) Inclusion programs should always include a collaboration and planning component for general and special education teachers. The existing research on inclusion as well as the data from this research strongly indicate the need for collaboration and planning between general education and special education teachers in order for inclusion
to serve students with and without disabilities; and (2) University education programs should prepare preservice teachers and students enrolled in educational leadership programs by requiring more special education coursework and practicum experiences which expose students to inclusion.

The researcher makes the following recommendations for further research: (1) Since consensus does not seem to exist regarding whether inclusion has a positive, negative, or neutral effect upon academic achievement and disruptions and disciplinary referrals, more data should be collected from high school principals regarding their perceptions on these issues; (2) Principals did not report consistent responses on the survey instrument used for this study in the quantitative and qualitative sections regarding the degree of college preparation to serve students with inclusion. Therefore, more research is suggested to ascertain why principals perceived that they were trained well in college to serve students with and without disabilities in an inclusion setting, yet these same principals expressed feelings of inadequacy when they were actually placed in charge of designing and installing an inclusion program; and, (3) Since demographic factors such as gender, age, years of experience, and area of educational certification affected principals’ perceptions of inclusion differently in this study than reported in the existing literature, more research is suggested to determine if consensus can be reached on these issues.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
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Stoler (1992)
Vidovich & Lombard (1998)
To: James T. Yarborough  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

Cc: Cathy S. Jording, Faculty Advisor  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

From: Mr. Neil Garretson, Coordinator  
Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: March 11, 2002

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I am writing to inform you that we have completed the review of your Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in your proposed research, “High School Administrators and Teachers Perceptions Regarding the Practice of Inclusion.” It is the determination of the Chair, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board, that your proposed research adequately protects the rights of human subjects. Your research is approved in accordance with the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR §46101(b)(2)), which states:

(2) Research involving the use of …survey procedures, interview procedures (as long as)
(i) information obtained (either) is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can (cannot) be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and (or) (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could (not) reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the exempted research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, whether or not it is believed to be related to the study, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator prior to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, please notify the IRB Coordinator so that your file may be closed.
Survey

Georgia High School Principals’ Perceptions of Inclusion

This survey represents part of the research component of a doctoral dissertation at Georgia Southern University. It is intended to yield data regarding Georgia high school principals’ perceptions of inclusion. Please provide information based upon your perceptions, even if your experience with the practice of inclusion is only theory-based. Your responses will be kept absolutely confidential, and you will not be identified individually in the final report. Please complete all pages of the survey and return it in the envelope provided. Thank you for your participation.

Inclusion: The practice of placing students with disabilities in general classroom settings for the full day or part of the day and providing appropriate in-class support services from special education teachers.

Perceptions: A mental position based upon knowledge or experience.

Please circle the response that best describes your degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements.

SA=Strongly Agree  A=Agree  D=Disagree  SD=Strongly Disagree

Part I: Perceptions

1. Inclusion is the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school.

2. Students who require major accommodations should be served in the general education classroom.

3. Students with severe mental disabilities should be served in the general education classroom.

4. Most of my teachers generally agree that inclusion is the best method to serve students with disabilities in a high school.

5. My teachers are more willing to serve students with physical disabilities in the general education classroom than those with mental disabilities.
6. Students with disabilities in the general education classroom present a higher level of legal liability than general education students.  
7. The behavior disorders associated with some students with disabilities create excessive disruptions, thereby decreasing the time general education teachers can devote to instruction.  
8. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom lowers the academic achievement of general education students.  
9. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom lowers the standardized test scores of general education students.  
10. The addition of students with disabilities in the general education classroom increases disruptions and disciplinary referrals.  
11. Collaboration and planning between general and special education teachers is essential for inclusion to function successfully.  
12. Special education teachers should provide general education teachers with strategies to help students with disabilities be successful in the general education classroom.  
13. Special and general education teachers should equally share in the direction of the instruction of the students with disabilities in the general education classroom.  
14. Preservice teachers should be exposed at the outset of their college training to inclusion classroom settings.  
15. Preservice teachers should be required to perform part of their training in an inclusion classroom setting.  
16. Principals who received their educational training many years ago have less positive feelings towards inclusion.
17. My special education teachers tend to be more willing to accept inclusion than general education teachers.

Part II: Demographics

Please check the appropriate response.

18. Gender: Male  Female

19. Age: 20 - 30 years  31 - 40 years  41 - 50 years  51+ years

20. Administrative Experience: 1 - 5 years  6 - 15 years  16+ years

21. Educational Certification: Special Education  Other

Part III: Open-Ended Responses

22. What has been your experience with inclusion?

23. Where did you obtain your knowledge of inclusion (e.g. special education director, professional readings, advocates, parents, professional development, classroom experience)?