

AWARENESS, ATTITUDES, AND PERCEPTIONS OF REGULAR EDUCATION
STUDENTS TOWARDS STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION
SERVICES IN THEIR CLASSES

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to investigate, determine, and analyze the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of sixth through eighth grade students receiving regular education services toward the students receiving special education services in inclusive classrooms. This study also determined and analyzed the attitudes and perceptions of students in regular education toward the special education services students in their classes receive. A total of 266 sixth through eighth grade students in a south Twin Cities suburb middle school participated in the study by completing a survey using a 3-point Likert response scale consisting of 13 questions, each with room for comments.

This research examined and analyzed each student’s ability to: a) identify those in their classes with special needs, (b) classify their actions toward and friendships with

students receiving special education services, and (c) identify their attitudes about students receiving special education services in regards to rules and disruptive behavior, special education teachers in their classes and special help received, and academic fairness.

The results of this study revealed valuable information regarding how students receiving general education services feel about the students receiving special education services in their classes. This study concludes that most students feel neutral or positive about students receiving special education services in their classes, as well as the services they receive.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Prior to 1975, most children with disabilities were denied access to education, an opportunity to learn, and were not being served in public schools. When and if they were allowed to attend public schools, they did not receive an education appropriate to their needs or they were not included in regular education classrooms, and were often removed and placed in separate schools. For example, “in 1970, U.S. schools educated only one of five children with disabilities, and many states had laws excluding certain students, including those children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or mentally retarded” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003, n.p.).

Based on data from public schools across the country, Congress found that millions of American children with disabilities were not receiving even a satisfactory education. People debated as to where special education should be taught, although the intent was never to be a place, but a service. Others argued that the service special education was to provide was the same as what regular education was to provide: guidance and preparation for students to live independent and productive lives after high school, so the “place” should not matter (BEC-Inclusion of special education students, 1997).

As a result, *the Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EHA), Public Law 94-142, was passed in 1975, and mandated that all children with disabilities, regardless of the nature and severity of their disability, were entitled to a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Also, Public Law 94-142 mandated that

students with disabilities should be removed from regular education classes only when their needs could not be met in the regular education classroom with supplemental aids and supports (U.S Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2002). The least restrictive environment was considered to be the regular education classroom in many cases (Hansen & Boody, 1998).

Several amendments were made to the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, each bringing unique and much-needed changes. In 1990, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* was renamed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), also called Public Law 101-476. The main purpose of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* was to protect the rights of, meet the individual needs of, and improve the educational outcomes for people with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003).

Including students with disabilities into regular education classrooms became used more frequently in education after the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Inclusion did not mean that students in special education had the same educational goals and objectives as students in regular education, but that they were included in as much of the regular curriculum as possible, as much of the time as possible, and were members of the regular education classroom (U.S Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2002).

Currently nearly 6 million students ages 3-21 receive special education services to meet their individual needs, while nearly 200,000 infants and toddlers receive early intervention programs and services (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003). Data collected from the U.S. Department of Education

(2002) shows that since 1991-92, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance continue to account for the majority of students served under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. The category of other health impairments has shown the most growth, with the developmental delay and autism categories also growing substantially. Data from the U.S. Department of Education, 1998 (as cited in Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004), revealed that boys account for over two-thirds of students receiving special education services.

There continues to be a continuum of placement options for students who receive special education services, including the regular education classroom. Over the past ten years, the percentage of students in special education being served and educated in regular education classrooms has gradually increased (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2000), while the number of students receiving special education services in self-contained and separate facilities has gradually decreased (Turnbull et al., 2004). In the 1999-2000 school year, 47.3% of the 95.9% of students being served in regular schools received special education services outside of the regular classroom for less than 21% of the day (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2002). According to recent research (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003, n.p.), “the majority of children with disabilities are now being educated in their neighborhood schools in regular classrooms with their non-disabled peers”.

These inclusion trends have lead to increasing the rates of students with disabilities who graduate from high school, enroll in post-secondary education, and/or find employment after high school (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special

Education Programs, 2000). In the 1999-2000 school year, 56.2% of students with disabilities ages 14 and over received a graduation diploma (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2002). High school graduation rates for students with disabilities have increased 14% from 1984 to 1997 and post-school employment is twice that of adults who did not have the benefit of IDEA (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003).

Positive social effects and increased learning were just two outcomes that have taken place with students with disabilities when they were included with their non-disabled peers in regular education classrooms (BEC-Inclusion of special education students, 1997). Hansen and Boody (1998) found that students in special education mainstreamed with students in general education perceived their classrooms as positively as the students in general education in the same classrooms did in the areas of participation, feelings about one another, teacher-student relationships, student contribution curriculum planning and achievement, and behavior, rules, and discipline.

It is also important to consider the perceptions and attitudes of the students in regular education in the classroom. The students in regular education may have an impact on whether or not the students in special education view their inclusive environment as a positive one. Although the students in special education are in the “least restrictive environment,” there may be factors, such as other students, which impede their ability to succeed. Kauffman and Sabornie (cited in Hansen & Boody, 1998) found that students in special education included in regular education classrooms faced rejection and unpopularity from the students in regular education, which negatively related to their learning.

Hansen and Boody's (1998) review of the literature indicated that attitudes and perceptions about inclusion were just as important as the inclusive environment that students receiving special education services were placed in. This researcher examined how students in regular education perceived students receiving special education services in the inclusive classrooms, as well as the actual special education services that they received.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate, determine, and analyze the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of sixth through eighth grade students receiving regular education services toward the students receiving special education services in inclusive classrooms. This study also determined and analyzed the attitudes and perceptions of students in regular education toward the special education services students in their classes receive.

Research Hypothesis

This study was designed to assess if students receiving general education services exposed to and directly involved in inclusion had positive or negative attitudes and perceptions of the students who receive special education services in their classes. This study hypothesized that, for the most part, students receiving general education services had a neutral or positive attitude and/or perception of the students receiving special education services.

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms were defined:

Inclusion - “term used to describe a professional belief that students with disabilities should be integrated into general education classrooms whether or not they can meet traditional curricular standards and should be full members of those classrooms” (Friend & Bursuck, 1999, p. 489).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) - an IDEA principle that requires students with disabilities to be educated with students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible, with removal from regular education settings only when supplementary aids and services do not meet their needs (Turnbull et al., 2004).

Regular Education – students in this placement receive no additional education services outside of the regular education classroom and have not been identified as needing special education services. Term to be used synonymously with general education.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions that were apparent in this research. These were:

1. This researcher assumed that the participants in the study would answer the survey questions honestly.
2. This researcher assumed that the study would accurately measure the attitudes and perceptions of students in general education regarding students in special education.

Limitations

There were several limitations identified by the researcher. These were:

1. The subjects may answer the survey questions the way in which they believe the researcher wants them to answer the survey questions.
2. Since there are no measures of validity or reliability with this study, there is no way to verify that the survey truly measures the attitudes and perceptions of students in general education regarding students in special education.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to present the reader with literature regarding the history of inclusion, information regarding the nature of attitudes and attitude formation, and research on social contact between students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services.

History of Inclusion

For most of our nation's history, schools were allowed to exclude and unsatisfactorily educate students with disabilities. Tremendous progress has been made toward including students with disabilities into schools and into the general education classrooms and curriculum over the years. Views and inclusive practices today are directly and indirectly related to Federal laws, court cases, and advocacy groups that involved people with disabilities and the treatment of people with disabilities as early as the end of the 18th century. Each action played a crucial role in making inclusion what it is today (The IDEA Amendments of 1997, n.d.).

In 1798 the Fifth Congress passed the first Federal law to assist individuals with disabilities. This law authorized hospitals to provide medical attention and rehabilitate sick and disabled war veterans with service-related disabilities. This law was one of the few to provide assistance to individuals with disabilities (The IDEA Amendments of 1997, n.d.).

Early in history, individuals with cognitive, emotional, hearing, visual, and mental disabilities were institutionalized in residential facilities or asylums where their minimal basic needs were being met. Researchers say better treatment of people with disabilities

began in 1819 with *McCulloch v. Maryland*, which mandated that “the government’s purpose should be served with as little imposition on the individual as possible – if less dramatic means for achieving the same basic purpose could be found, they should be taken” (Zigmond, 2003, p. 193). As early as the early 1900s individuals with disabilities were discriminated against. There were inaccurate tests to determine disabilities, which led to inaccurate labels, which led to ineffective educations for students with disabilities. Most children were completely excluded from public education and were provided with an inadequate and inappropriate education and setting in special day schools segregated from individuals without disabilities. Others were mislabeled or identified as having a disability when in reality there were only linguistic or cultural barriers (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004).

In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* case decided that schools must include students of all races (Salend, 2001). Although this Federal court decision was based on race, advocates of fair and equal treatment for students with special needs argued that if schools could not segregate by race, they should not segregate or discriminate according to abilities and/or disabilities (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004).

What started out as a plan in 1965 for addressing the needs of economically underprivileged children, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), also called Public Law 89-10, transformed into a Federal program when amended with Public Law 89-313, specifically targeted to provide state-operated schools and institutions with grant money to help educate students with disabilities. The *ESEA Amendments* of 1966, Public Law 89-750, extended the grant money to the local school level. The *ESEA Amendments* of 1968 and 1970, Public Law 90-247 and 91-230, respectively, were

further concerned with the development and improvement of special education programs (The IDEA Amendments of 1997, n.d.).

The term normalization, which first became popular in Scandinavia and later in the United States in the 1970s, was a philosophy that encouraged the integration of people with disabilities into all areas of life, including school, work, and community, regardless of the level of severity of their disability. People with disabilities were taught skills in independent living, socialization, and community living. With the wave of moderate societal acceptance came deinstitutionalization, allowing many more individuals with disabilities accessibility to special education services. Advocacy groups and families of individuals with disabilities, along with civil rights lawyers, voiced concerns about the rights of students with disabilities and their lack of access to schools and programs. These factors contributed to the movement of educating students with disabilities in public school systems, mainly in resource room settings and self-contained classrooms (Salend, 2001).

Two court cases in 1972 were catalysts for change regarding service delivery and placements for students with disabilities. *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* decided that the general education classroom is a more preferable placement for students with mental retardation, noting their right to a free, appropriate public education. The courts extended the right to all students with disabilities with the *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* ruling (Salend, 2001). The courts ordered the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia to educate all students with disabilities by providing a free, appropriate public education, educate students with and without disabilities together in

the general education classroom with access to the general education curriculum, and due process rights (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004). States were then responsible for educating students with disabilities.

The Education Amendments of 1974, Public Law 93-280, were the first to identify an appropriate education for children with disabilities in its establishment of the *Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1974* (The IDEA Amendments of 1997, n.d.). The terms in the amendment were left to the discretion of schools, which led to different interpretations of “appropriate education”.

Congress determined in 1975 that “more than half of the handicapped children in the United States do not receive appropriate educational services which would enable them to have full equality of opportunity” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2000, n.p.). Noting that changes needed to be made to improve how children and youth with disabilities were identified, tested, labeled, and educated, Congress enacted the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, Public Law 94-142, in 1975. The law mandated that all children ages 3-21, regardless of the severity of their disability, were entitled to a free, appropriate public education designed to meet their unique needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE meant that students with disabilities should be educated with students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible, and with appropriate supports. In addition, students receiving special education services cannot be removed from the general education classroom unless the student continues to be unsuccessful due to his/her disability, even after supplemental aids and services have been provided. This law stipulates that schools must make a continuum of services available for each students based on his/her needs. The

most typical inclusive environment is general education classrooms on a full- or part-time basis, followed by resource rooms, center-based special education classrooms, special education schools, homebound services, and most restrictive, hospitals and institutions (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004).

Two additional provisions of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* required due process rights with procedural safeguards to ensure that parental and student rights were protected, and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), individually tailored, collaborative legal documents updated yearly outlining the student's present levels of performance, needs, goals and objectives, and the most appropriate educational placement throughout the day (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). All the provisions of this act became the core of special education funding from the Federal government, authorizing financial incentives for states and school districts to comply (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003).

The debate over where students with disabilities should be taught continued into the 1980s. Although students with disabilities were being educated within public schools, most continued to be segregated in separate self-contained classrooms, also called center-based classrooms. Programs like "Special Friends" were created to develop and enhance interactions with kids receiving general education by having them go into self-contained classes for short periods of time (Downing, 2002).

Mainstreaming, also called integration, was then introduced, allowing students receiving special education services to interact with students receiving general education classes at certain times, usually non-academic classes such as physical education, art, music, lunch, or recess (Sailor, Gee, & Karasoff, 2000). The amount of time and which

activities to be included in were determined by educators and was generally based on their ability to learn a skill (Salend, 2001), although the students receiving special education services spent the majority of their day in special self-contained classes.

The *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* of 1975 was updated with the *Education of the Handicapped Act* (EHA) Amendments of 1983, Public Law 98-199, which created services to improve vocational transition programs for students receiving special education services. The law also provided funding for research in early intervention for early childhood special education. It was updated further with the *Education of the Handicapped* (EHA) Amendments of 1986, Public Law 99-457, and required special education services for individuals with disabilities from birth to three, in addition to ages 3-21 as required in Public Law 94-142 (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003).

To provide students with disabilities with assistive technology devices and services, the *Technology-Related Assistance to Individuals with Disabilities Act* of 1988 (also called the Tech Act), Public Law 100-407, was created. Amendments were made in 1994 (Public Law 103-218) and 1998 (Public Law 105-394), changing the name to the *Assistive Technology Act* of 1998. The purpose of the amendments was to strengthen and expand the Tech Act, which made it easier for schools to provide assistive technology services to students with disabilities in regular education classrooms (Salend, 2001).

Public Law 101-476 was an additional improvement of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* of 1975, called the *Education of the Handicapped Act* (EHA) Amendments of 1990. The law was updated and renamed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) to reflect person-first language. Transition planning

and services were mandated as part of IDEA, in addition to adding autism and traumatic brain injury to the categories eligible for special education and related services. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) further addressed assistive technology devices and services by focusing on the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students receiving special education services (Salend, 2001).

The *EHA* Amendments of 1990 strengthened Public Law 94-142 by encouraging students receiving special education services to be educated with students receiving general education services in the regular education classroom to the greatest extent possible (Sailor, Gee, & Karasoff, 2000). Inclusion, a philosophy that establishes a “right to belong” based on acceptance and community (Salend, 2001) was validated and utilized by many school districts by including students receiving special education services in the general education classroom. It is based on the beliefs that every person has the ability to learn, and that it is the schools responsibility to provide for and meet the needs of each and every student receiving special education services (Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003). Services and supports are brought into the general education classroom as needed, and students receiving special education services are included whether or not they can meet the grade-level curricular standards (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004). This approach emphasizes membership and belonging to the general education classroom, with education in other settings only “when the goals and objectives require a different environment to use natural cues and experiences” (Sailor, Gee, & Karasoff, 2000, p. 11). Examples of different environments where natural cues and experiences are beneficial to students receiving special education services could be functional, community, and independent living skills such as cooking, grocery shopping, or brushing

teeth. The functional curricular model (Downing, 2002) taught skills needed to be as independent as possible in the areas of school, work, community, and home.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) Amendments of 1992 primarily addressed the infant and toddler programs, and brought little change to public schools. Public Law 105-17, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, further updated the original *EHA* of 1975 by reviewing, strengthening, and improving services and results by better educating and serving students receiving special education services (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, 2003).

Nature of Attitudes

“An attitude is a general tendency of an individual to act in a certain way under special conditions. The general tendency can be displayed in two kinds of action: what the individual does and what the individual says” (Shapiro, 1999, p. 8). This general tendency could be a positive or negative reaction, thought, or perception toward someone or something based on values or beliefs from their social experiences (Shapiro, 1999). Attitudes can be toward something or someone specific, such as a certain individual, or toward something less specific, such as a change in something or someone. The attitude is often a predisposition to either approach or to avoid something or someone, which leads to acting one way or another, which in most cases will be either positive or negative (Johnston, 2002).

If attitudes are positive toward someone or something, there are tendencies for people to want to be around the person or thing, or act in positive ways in regards to it. The opposite is true for negative attitudes toward a person or an object – there are

tendencies for people to avoid being around it, or act in negative ways in regards to it (Shapiro, 1999). To sum it up, attitudes are how people think, what people do, and how people feel about someone or something.

Attitude Formation

Attitudes start from a very early age and are learned behaviors (Shapiro, 1999; Johnston, 2002). In the American culture, people have many attitudes, thoughts, and feelings that they may not be aware of. Specifically, most adults remain unaware of how they have the strong potential to affect children and their developing attitudes (Shapiro, 1999). An assumption is that some parents do not discuss people with special needs with their children until questions arise after contact or exposure has been made (Rossiter & Horvath, 1996). When children are around other children with disabilities for the first time, they may choose to shut down and avoid contact rather than open up and explore with them. Children develop their attitudes not only from adults, but also from peers, school, the media, their language, and literature (Shapiro, 1999).

Children learn attitudes from observing people important to them, by being talked into a position or perception toward an object or a person, or by being rewarded or punished for a particular view or action (Johnston, 2002). According to Triandis (cited in Horne, 1985), children develop and maintain attitudes as a way to help them understand and simplify the world around them, and as a way to protect themselves. Rees, Spreen, and Harnadek (cited in Rossiter & Horvath, 1996) found that two factors greatly influenced attitudes toward students receiving special education services, as well as children with special needs in general. The first had to do with exposure. The amount and type of contact that a student currently had, or had in the past, with students receiving

special education services, or students with special needs, influenced attitudes. Limited exposure or even indirect exposure could negatively influence attitudes. The second had to do with information and education received about people with special needs. Lack of information and education could also result in negative attitude formation, or maintenance of negative attitudes, within students in general education.

Because many of those influences may teach children that people who are different are to be avoided, pitied, and ridiculed, they enter school at a young age having stereotypes and attitudes toward them (Shapiro, 1999). Further, students in general education's attitudes may be influenced by the "label(s)" given to students in special education when they first enter school. Similarly, researchers found that specifically the level achievement of students in special education, attractiveness of students in special education, and behaviors of students in special education determine attitudes and perceptions of students in general education (Horne, 1985). Biklen, Ford, and Ferguson (cited in Shapiro, 1999) found that attitudes of students were acquired through observational learning, and that was how many children learned to accept that people who were different from them were to be apart from people who were the same as them. Although a learned behavior is what creates an attitude, Johnston (2002), pointed out that what has been learned can be unlearned and changed, which provides a more positive outlook about attitude change. Gellman (cited in Horne, 1985) pointed out that individual attitudes are generally very hard to change because of the reinforcing nature they receive from other peers.

Research on Social Contact

Recent research suggests that the benefits of inclusion rely tremendously on students in general education's perceptions and attitudes of students with special needs (Rossiter & Horvath, 1996). The degree to which social contact of students in general education with students in special education is successful relies on three components: affective aspects, cognitive aspects, and behavioral aspects. The way a student feels about a student with special needs, what a student knows and understands about a student with special needs, and how a student acts toward a student with special needs are key components to making inclusion a positive experience (Schulz & Carpenter, 1995). It seems essential that programs and interventions to existing programs need to be implemented into inclusive classrooms and schools to promote positive social interactions and attitudes between students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services.

Because research has found that new learned attitudes override and add to the old learned attitudes, but may not replace them (Ajzen, 2001), it is essential that old attitudes and perceptions are dealt with as well. Without teaching students in general education about identifying their attitudes and dealing with them in positive manners, integration and exposure to students receiving special education services may actually increase their negative attitudes (Shapiro, 1999).

Warren (cited in Horne, 1985) found that one of the main reasons for including students receiving special education services with students receiving general education services in general education classrooms was to facilitate and maintain positive interactions and relationships. Researchers Goodman, Gottlieb, and Hanson, and Gottlieb

and Budoff (cited in Rossiter & Horvath, 1996) concluded that contact of students in general education with students receiving special education services may result in negative attitudes in students in general education. Similarly, students with disabilities were found to be rejected and alienated in regular classrooms by peers (Schulz & Carpenter, 1995). Rees, Spreen, and Harnadek (cited in Rossiter & Horvath, 1996) found that structured and direct contact, rather than just exposure itself, elicited more positive attitudes within students in general education. Direct and continuous contact with individuals with disabilities can positively influence and improve attitudes of individuals without disabilities (Van Hook, 1992). Other researchers, such as Cook; Fortini; Ballard, Gottlieb, Corman, and Kaufman; Stainback, Stainback, Raschke and Anderson; and Schild (cited in Rossiter & Horvath, 1996) suggested that the degree of closeness or contact, peer tutoring, small group activity, and mutual interests affect attitudes of students in general education in a positive way.

Additional research by Schur (cited in Cook & Semmel, 1999) shows that an individual can be accepted in one context, but rejected in another. Festinger (cited in Cook & Semmel, 1999) found that similarities among students and recognition of those similarities account for initiation of contact and acceptance by general education students. While some researchers say that severity of disability is not a factor of peer acceptance (Williams & Downing, 1998), others counter that severity of disability is a factor to consider (Cook & Semmel, 1999). Amount of exposure time, coupled with disability type and severity, seem to be a crucial element in inclusion and acceptance, as students with mild disabilities are more likely to be included in the general education classroom with

students receiving general education services for the largest percentage of time (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004).

Although the previous findings of social contact between students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services were mere suggestions to increase and maintain positive attitudes among students in general education toward students in special education, several researchers found approaches that have worked. Donaldson; Israelson; Jones, Sowell, Jones, and Butler; Dewey; Popp; Kilburn; Bergantino; Bauer; Binkard; Raschke and Dedrick; Riester and Bessette; and Fielder and Simpson (cited in Shapiro, 1999) found that multidimensional-experiential approaches to making inclusion work helped reduce attitudes and were successful. The approaches included: exposure to students receiving special education services with varying severity of disability, information about disabilities that students receiving special education services could have, disability simulations for students in general education to “feel” what it is like to have a disability, persuasive messages and group discussions, and information and analysis about their attitudes and prejudices.

Perceptions about what happens inside of the inclusive classroom among students receiving general education services can determine their views about students receiving special education services. Although there is not an abundance of research on student views regarding inclusion, many agree that it is important, as Hating (as cited in Cook & Semmel, 1999) found that the experiences of students with disabilities during their school years influence their quality of life. One study found that students receiving general education services could identify the students the students in their classes with disabilities (Fisher, 1999), however, a study by Vaughn and Bos (as cited in Vaughn, Schumm,

Kouzekanani, 1993) revealed that older students were more knowledgeable about special education services than younger students. A review of research by Kochhar, West, and Taymans (cited in Hines, 2001) indicates that inclusion benefits students receiving general education services, as it facilitates better understanding of similarities among themselves and students receiving special education services. Also, inclusion supports an awareness that students receiving special education services are not always easy to identify.

A partnership between special education teachers and general education teachers has evolved with inclusion (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004), as most middle schools use a co-teaching model, with a special education teacher and a general education teacher collaborating and teaching together in the classroom (Hines, 2001). Pugach and Wesson (cited in Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998) found in a study from individual interviews that the special education teacher in the co-teaching model was viewed as the general education teacher's "helper" by students, not a special education teacher providing special education services to a specific group. Likewise, Vaughn & Klingner (1998) found that students receiving special education services prefer the co-teaching model with the special education teacher providing help to all, not singling them out. The students receiving special education services in the study also reported that they prefer the co-teaching model because they feel stigmatized to get up and leave to get help in resource room. Within the classroom, teacher modifications (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999) and additional help from two teachers as opposed to one teacher (Hines, 2001) were viewed as useful to both students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services.

Researchers Fisher; Fisher, Pumpian, and Sax; and Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan (cited in Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004) found that most students without disabilities prefer inclusion. They discovered that students receiving general education services have a desire to help students receiving special education services increase their social skills. The students receiving general education services did not like that students receiving special education services were not consequence the same as they were, and felt a need for more consistent rules and consequences. In a synthesis of 20 studies, Klingner and Vaughn (1999) found that students receiving general education services recognize that not all students learn the same way or at the same speed, however, Williams and Downing (1998) revealed that students in a middle school study felt more positive toward other students who completed the same work as they did.

Inclusion of students receiving special education services does not compromise the learning, progress, and academic success of students receiving general education services, as found by researchers Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth, and Palombaro; McDonnell, Thorson, McQuivey, and Kiefer-O'Donnell; and O'Connor and Jenkins (cited in Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith, 2004). In fact, students receiving special education services add a dimension of diversity (Fisher, 1999), and students in a middle school study were impacted in a positive way, which included a reduced fear of individual differences and disabilities, and increased ability to make friends with people with differences (Salend, 2001). Students receiving special education services also benefit both academically and socially when included in the general education classroom and curriculum, as found by Jorgenson; and Kennedy and Itkonen (cited in Fisher, 1999).

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methods and procedures for the study. Included in this is a description of the subjects studied, the data gathering instrumentation, the procedures for data collection and analysis, and the limitations with this study.

Selection and Description of Subjects

The principal and guidance counselors at the middle school, in addition to the UW-Stout Human Subjects Review Committee, approved this study before the project took place. The subjects for this study were students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services in grades 6-8 from a south Twin Cities suburb. All of the students in sixth through eighth grades had the opportunity to participate in this study.

E-mails were sent out to all 5th period teachers informing them about the research and asking them to participate in the research study. There were 828 students in grades 6-8 eligible to take the study, based on the 5th period teachers willing to participate. Of the 828 parental consent forms distributed on March 24, 2004, 298 (36%) were approved, 19 (2%) declined, and 512 (62%) were not returned. Of the 298 students granted parental permission to complete the survey, 266 (89%) completed the survey and 32 (11%) were absent.

Instrumentation

The survey used was a 3-point Likert response scale consisting of 13 questions, each with room for comments. The survey consisted of questions in which students

receiving general education services and students receiving special education services were asked to respond regarding their awareness, attitudes, and perceptions toward students receiving special education services by rating their responses as yes, no, or I don't know. The survey asked two basic demographic information regarding gender and grade level of each student participating in the study. The original instrument used for this study was created and administered to elementary students by student researcher Christopher Nemitz. This researcher modified the instrument with permission from Christopher Nemitz to be administered to middle school students.

The instrument was modified to analyze student's ability to: a) identify those in their classes with special needs, (b) classify their actions toward and friendships with students receiving special education services, and (c) identify their attitudes about students receiving special education services in regards to rules and disruptive behavior, special education teachers in their classes and special help received, and academic fairness (Nemitz, 2001). All questions were reviewed for use in this study by this researcher's advisor. No measure of reliability or validity was established; the instrument was used only once previously and modified only for use in this study. Refer to Appendices A and B, respectively, for copies of the consent letter and survey used in this study.

Data Collection

The 5th period teachers were asked to hand out parental consent forms to all students in their 5th period classes on Wednesday, March 24, 2004, to be returned within the following two days. Parents were asked to sign the parental consent letter, either to approve or decline participation on the part of their son/daughter, and send to school with

their son/daughter to return to their 5th period teacher within the following two days. The parental consent form included a brief description of study, including their rights. Once signed parental consent forms were collected and evaluated, surveys were distributed to teacher's mailboxes with names of students eligible to participate. Teachers were asked to hand out the surveys to the students given parental permission to complete the survey. Each teacher was given a paragraph to read to the students and inform them of what their responsibilities and involvement would be. Data was collected with a group-administered survey. When students completed the surveys, each teacher collected the surveys and returned them to the researcher. Upon retrieval, the answers to questions, with comments, of the completed surveys were tabulated.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics to determine and analyze the results. The responses were separated by grade and gender.

Limitations

Two limitations of the survey were identified by the researcher. These were:

1. The subjects in the study may have answered the survey questions the way in which they believed the researcher wanted them to answer.
2. Since there were no measures of validity or reliability with this study, there was no way to verify that the survey truly measured the attitudes and perceptions of students receiving general education services regarding students receiving special education services.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate, determine, and analyze the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of sixth through eighth grade students receiving regular education services toward the students receiving special education services in inclusive classrooms. This chapter will present the results of study, demographic information, and item analysis of the survey.

Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of 266 students; 108 (40.6%) 6th graders, 68 (25.6%) 7th graders, and 90 (33.8%) 8th graders. The 108 sixth grade students consisted of 66 (61%) females and 42 (39%) males; the 68 seventh grade students consisted of 45 (66%) females and 23 (34%) males; and the 90 eighth grade students consisted of 51 (57%) females and 39 (43%) males. A total of 162 (61%) females and 104 (39%) males completed the survey in sixth through eighth grades.

Item Analysis

The following results are based on the responses to the thirteen-question survey administered to 266 sixth through eighth grade students. Percentages were used to show the results. Respondents were asked to mark their response for each question and add any comments pertaining to each question.

Question 1: *Do you receive any special help in or outside of the regular classroom?*

A review of Table 1 indicates that majority of the students in grades sixth through eight responded “no” (82%), answering that they do not receive special help in or outside of the regular education classroom.

Table 1

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	6 (9%)	60 (91%)	0 (0%)
Male n=42 (39%)	5 (12%)	37 (88%)	0 (0%)
All n=108	11 (10%)	97 (90%)	0 (0%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade male: “ELP.” (advanced classes)			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	5 (11%)	38 (84%)	2 (4%)
Male n=23 (34%)	5 (22%)	18 (78%)	0 (0%)
All n=68	10 (15%)	56 (82%)	2 (3%)
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	11 (22%)	36 (71%)	4 (8%)
Male n=39 (43%)	9 (23%)	28 (72%)	2 (5%)
All n=90	20 (22%)	64 (71%)	6 (7%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “ELP classes.” 8 th grade male: “Advanced classes.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	22 (14%)	134 (83%)	6 (4%)
Male n=104 (39%)	19 (18%)	83 (80%)	2 (2%)
All n=266	41 (15%)	217 (82%)	8 (3%)

Question 2: *Do you know of any students in your school who receive special help?*

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of total students (79%), including 88% of females and 66% of males, responded "yes", that they do know of students in their school who receive special help. A total of 15% of students in grades six through eight responded "no", that they do not know of any students in their school who receive special help, and 2% and 10% of females and males, respectively, responded "I don't know".

Table 2

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	57 (86%)	6 (9%)	3 (5%)
Male n=42 (39%)	30 (71%)	6 (14%)	6 (14%)
All n=108	87 (81%)	12 (11%)	9 (8%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: "You don't really know if someone has special help." 6 th grade female: "I don't treat them any different. They are still kids like me."			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	40 (89%)	4 (9%)	1 (2%)
Male n=23 (34%)	16 (70%)	7 (30%)	0 (0%)
All n=68	56 (82%)	11 (16%)	1 (1%)
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	45 (88%)	6 (12%)	0 (0%)
Male n=39 (43%)	23 (59%)	12 (31%)	4 (10%)
All n=90	68 (76%)	18 (20%)	4 (4%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade male: "I've seen some but don't personally know them."			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	142 (88%)	16 (10%)	4 (2%)
Male n=104 (39%)	69 (66%)	25 (24%)	10 (10%)
All n=266	211 (79%)	41 (15%)	14 (5%)

Question 3: *Are you friends with any students who receive special help?*

Of the 266 students surveyed, 44% of students in 6th grade, 46% of students in 7th grade, and 41% of students in 8th grade responded that they are friends with students who receive special help. The majority of students in all grades (57%) responded either “no” or “I don’t know” regarding being friends with students who receive special help.

Table 3

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	32 (48%)	19 (29%)	15 (23%)
Male n=42 (39%)	15 (36%)	18 (43%)	9 (21%)
All n=108	47 (44%)	37 (34%)	24 (22%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: “I don’t know any of them.” 6 th grade female: “I have tons and tons of friends that go to special classes for them.”			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	20 (44%)	15 (33%)	10 (22%)
Male n=23 (34%)	11 (48%)	9 (39%)	3 (13%)
All n=68	31 (46%)	24 (35%)	13 (19%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: “Kind of.” 7 th grade male: “Usually advanced students.”			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	21 (41%)	26 (51%)	4 (8%)
Male n=39 (43%)	16 (41%)	11 (28%)	12 (31%)
All n=90	37 (41%)	37 (41%)	16 (18%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “Only if they’re in advanced classes.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	73 (45%)	60 (37%)	29 (18%)
Male n=104 (39%)	42 (40%)	38 (37%)	24 (23%)
All n=266	115 (43%)	98 (37%)	53 (20%)

Question 4: *Do you feel it is fair for a student in your classroom to get special help?*

A review of data from Table 4 indicates that the majority of all students in grades sixth through eight (82%) feel that it is fair for students in their classrooms to get special help. Of the 266 students surveyed, 11% responded “I don’t know” and 7% responded “no” when asked if they felt it was fair for students to get special help.

Table 4

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	50 (76%)	7 (11%)	9 (14%)
Male n=42 (39%)	31 (74%)	5 (12%)	6 (14%)
All n=108	81 (75%)	12 (11%)	15 (14%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: “So they can be with regular kids and know how to behave.” 6 th grade male: “It’s simple – if they need it, they should get it.”			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	40 (89%)	3 (7%)	2 (4%)
Male n=23 (34%)	18 (78%)	1 (4%)	4 (17%)
All n=68	58 (85%)	4 (6%)	6 (9%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: “If they really need it. If they can be trying harder, no.” 7 th grade male: “Not all of the time.”			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	45 (88%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)
Male n=39 (43%)	33 (85%)	0 (0%)	6 (15%)
All n=90	78 (87%)	3 (3%)	9 (10%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “If they need help getting through the day or understanding things, I think it is fair as long as they have to do their own work.” 8 th grade male: “If they try hard, they deserve it.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	135 (83%)	13 (8%)	14 (9%)
Male n=104 (39%)	82 (79%)	6 (6%)	16 (15%)
All n=266	217 (82%)	19 (7%)	30 (11%)

Question 5: *Have you ever made fun of a student because he or she received special help?*

As shown in Table 5, the majority of respondents in grades sixth through eight (70%) answered that they have not made fun of a student because he or she received special help, 15% admitted that they have, and 14% responded “I don’t know.”

Table 5

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	7 (11%)	51 (77%)	8 (12%)
Male n=42 (39%)	2 (5%)	34 (81%)	6 (14%)
All n=108	9 (8%)	85 (79%)	14 (13%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: “Everybody does it.” 6 th grade female: “No, but I have seen it and try to stop it.”			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	7 (16%)	29 (64%)	9 (20%)
Male n=23 (34%)	9 (39%)	10 (43%)	4 (17%)
All n=68	16 (24%)	39 (57%)	13 (19%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: “No! That’s mean! But sometimes they do funny things and I laugh, not because they’re special, just what they do.”			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	7 (14%)	42 (82%)	2 (4%)
Male n=39 (43%)	9 (23%)	21 (54%)	9 (23%)
All n=90	16 (18%)	63 (70%)	11 (12%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “Sometimes I feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities.” 8 th grade male: “If I did I didn’t mean it.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	21 (13%)	122 (75%)	19 (12%)
Male n=104 (39%)	20 (19%)	65 (63%)	19 (18%)
All n=266	41 (15%)	187 (70%)	38 (14%)

Question 6: *Have you ever made fun of a student because of his or her disability?*

When asked if they ever made fun of a student because of their disability, the majority in all grades (82%) responded “no”. The data in Table 6 reveals that 11% of all students responded “yes” and 7% of all students responded “I don’t know.”

Table 6

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	4 (6%)	61 (92%)	1 (2%)
Male n=42 (39%)	0 (0%)	40 (95%)	2 (5%)
All n=108	4 (4%)	101 (94%)	3 (3%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: “Not in front of them.” 6 th grade female: “It’s rude and I know what it feels like.”			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	3 (7%)	37 (83%)	5 (11%)
Male n=23 (34%)	5 (22%)	18 (78%)	0 (0%)
All n=68	8 (12%)	55 (81%)	5 (7%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: “I shouldn’t have.”			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	9 (18%)	39 (76%)	3 (6%)
Male n=39 (43%)	8 (21%)	23 (59%)	8 (21%)
All n=90	17 (19%)	62 (69%)	11 (12%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “I feel very strongly about standing up for people in need.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	16 (10%)	137 (85%)	9 (6%)
Male n=104 (39%)	13 (13%)	81 (78%)	10 (10%)
All n=266	29 (11%)	218 (82%)	19 (7%)

Question 7: *Do you feel it is fair that some students have their assignments and tests changed by a special teacher to help them to complete their work?*

More than half (58%) of all students in grades six through eight feel that it is fair for some students to have their assignments and test changed by a special teacher to help them complete their work. Twenty-seven percent (27%) do not believe it is fair and 15% were unsure, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	41 (62%)	17 (26%)	8 (12%)
Male n=42 (39%)	27 (64%)	11 (26%)	4 (10%)
All n=108	68 (63%)	28 (26%)	12 (11%)
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	27 (60%)	10 (22%)	8 (18%)
Male n=23 (34%)	11 (48%)	10 (43%)	2 (9%)
All n=68	38 (56%)	20 (29%)	10 (15%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: "If they need it, it's okay." 7 th grade female: "Only extreme cases should be changed."			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	29 (57%)	13 (25%)	9 (18%)
Male n=39 (43%)	19 (49%)	10 (26%)	10 (26%)
All n=90	48 (53%)	23 (26%)	19 (21%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: "Depends on the extent of their disability." 8 th grade female: "I think they should have to work just as hard as others, but if they need some changes, it is fair." 8 th grade male: "They need special help to become normal, why not start with changing their tests?" 8 th grade male: "No, everyone says they should be treated like everyone else."			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	97 (60%)	40 (25%)	25 (15%)
Male n=104 (39%)	57 (55%)	31 (30%)	16 (15%)
All n=266	154 (58%)	71 (27%)	41 (15%)

Question 8: *Do you feel that students who receive special help cause more problems and get into more trouble than other students in your classroom?*

A review of Table 8 indicates that of the 266 students surveyed in sixth through eighth grades, over half (55%) do not feel that students who receive special help cause more problems and get into trouble more than other students. Twenty percent (20%) of the students feel that students who receive special help in their classroom do cause more problems and get into more trouble than students who do not receive special help, while 25% were unsure and responded “I don’t know.”

Table 8

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	9 (14%)	38 (58%)	19 (29%)
Male n=42 (39%)	10 (24%)	26 (62%)	6 (14%)
All n=108	19 (18%)	64 (59%)	25 (23%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: "They get into about as much trouble as normal kids." 6 th grade male: "They're just like us."			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	8 (18%)	22 (49%)	15 (33%)
Male n=23 (34%)	4 (17%)	12 (52%)	7 (30%)
All n=68	12 (18%)	34 (50%)	22 (32%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: "But they can't help it." 7 th grade male: "Because people tease them."			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	13 (25%)	28 (55%)	10 (20%)
Male n=39 (43%)	10 (26%)	20 (51%)	9 (23%)
All n=90	23 (26%)	48 (53%)	19 (21%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: "Some do, some don't." 8 th grade male: "I think it's inevitable- it's usually the reason they're getting help anyway."			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	30 (19%)	88 (54%)	44 (27%)
Male n=104 (39%)	24 (23%)	58 (56%)	22 (21%)
All n=266	54 (20%)	146 (55%)	66 (25%)

Question 9: *Do you feel students who see special teachers for help are just as capable as doing the same work as you?*

According to the data in Table 9, over half (55%) of 6th grade students feel that students who see special teachers are just as capable as doing the same work as themselves. Of the 266 students in grades six through eight, 45% feel that students are just as capable of doing the same work, 24% do not feel that students are just as capable, and 31% responded “I don’t know.”

Table 9

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	35 (53%)	11 (17%)	20 (30%)
Male n=42 (39%)	24 (57%)	7 (17%)	11 (26%)
All n=108	59 (55%)	18 (17%)	31 (29%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: "It depends on if the student is seeing the special teacher because of their disability, or because they are good at something." 6 th grade female: "They are definitely capable – they just need a little help and work a little harder. I don't see anything wrong with it."			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	20 (44%)	10 (22%)	15 (33%)
Male n=23 (34%)	8 (35%)	10 (43%)	5 (22%)
All n=68	28 (41%)	20 (29%)	20 (29%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: "If they work hard with their teachers, they may be able to." 7 th grade female: "Depends on their disability."			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	16 (31%)	13 (25%)	22 (43%)
Male n=39 (43%)	17 (44%)	12 (31%)	10 (26%)
All n=90	33 (37%)	25 (28%)	32 (36%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: "They should be tested often to see if they improve." 8 th grade female: "They should learn things they are capable of understanding."			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	71 (44%)	34 (21%)	57 (35%)
Male n=104 (39%)	49 (47%)	29 (28%)	26 (25%)
All n=266	120 (45%)	63 (24%)	83 (31%)

Question 10: *Do you feel that students who see special teachers for help are just as capable of having the same rules as you?*

A review of Table 10 indicates that the majority of students (73%) surveyed feel that students who see special teachers are just as capable of having the same rules as themselves. Eleven percent (11%) feel that students who see special teachers are not capable of having the same rules as themselves, and 17% responded “I don’t know.”

Table 10

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	49 (74%)	6 (9%)	11 (17%)
Male n=42 (39%)	35 (83%)	3 (7%)	4 (10%)
All n=108	84 (78%)	9 (8%)	15 (14%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: "Some rules should stay the same, some shouldn't." 6 th grade female: "It depends on the person and their disability."			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	30 (67%)	2 (4%)	13 (29%)
Male n=23 (34%)	19 (83%)	3 (13%)	1 (4%)
All n=68	49 (72%)	5 (7%)	14 (21%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: "They are still students at this school, so they should get the same treatment we do." 7 th grade female: "Most of them, like being respectful and the basics."			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	33 (65%)	11 (22%)	7 (14%)
Male n=39 (43%)	27 (69%)	4 (10%)	8 (21%)
All n=90	60 (67%)	15 (17%)	15 (17%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: "It wouldn't be fair for them to have fewer or no rules." 8 th grade male: "Eventually."			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	112 (69%)	19 (12%)	31 (19%)
Male n=104 (39%)	81 (78%)	10 (10%)	13 (13%)
All n=266	193 (73%)	29 (11%)	44 (17%)

Question 11: *Do you feel that students who see special teachers are getting more of an advantage than you?*

The data in Table 11 reveals that the majority of students surveyed (71%) do not feel that students who see special teachers are getting more of an advantage than themselves. Seventeen percent (17%) feel that students who are seeing special teachers are getting more of an advantage, while 12% responded “I don’t know.”

Table 11

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	6 (9%)	58 (88%)	2 (3%)
Male n=42 (39%)	5 (12%)	28 (67%)	9 (21%)
All n=108	11 (10%)	86 (80%)	11 (10%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: “They get deeper into the subject and more detailed.”			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	9 (20%)	30 (67%)	6 (13%)
Male n=23 (34%)	3 (13%)	15 (65%)	5 (22%)
All n=68	12 (18%)	45 (66%)	11 (16%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: “A little unfairness, but I also know they need the help.” 7 th grade male: “They need it, I don’t.”			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	12 (24%)	35 (69%)	4 (8%)
Male n=39 (43%)	11 (28%)	22 (56%)	6 (15%)
All n=90	23 (26%)	57 (63%)	10 (11%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “They have more 1:1 relationships with teachers.” 8 th grade female: “Yes, but they are just trying to keep up with the rest of us.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	27 (17%)	123 (76%)	12 (7%)
Male n=104 (39%)	19 (18%)	65 (63%)	20 (19%)
All n=266	46 (17%)	188 (71%)	32 (12%)

Question 12: *Do you feel that it is disruptive or distracting when a special teacher comes into your room to help specific students?*

Table 12 shows the majority of all students (65%) do not feel that it is disruptive or distracting when a special teacher comes to their room to help specific students.

Table 12

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	11 (17%)	48 (73%)	7 (11%)
Male n=42 (39%)	7 (17%)	31 (74%)	4 (10%)
All n=108	18 (17%)	79 (73%)	11 (10%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: "They can be loud, especially if they are right next to you." 6 th grade female: "They should go to a different room." 6 th grade female: "Not at all."			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	9 (20%)	28 (62%)	8 (18%)
Male n=23 (34%)	8 (35%)	12 (52%)	3 (13%)
All n=68	17 (25%)	40 (59%)	11 (16%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: "Sometimes."			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	13 (25%)	30 (59%)	8 (16%)
Male n=39 (43%)	9 (23%)	25 (64%)	5 (13%)
All n=90	22 (24%)	55 (61%)	13 (14%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: "I respect that when it happens, it shows that people are trying to help those who need it." 8 th grade female: "Sometimes it can be when they talk too loud." 8 th grade male: "They are just helping others."			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	33 (20%)	106 (65%)	23 (14%)
Male n=104 (39%)	24 (23%)	68 (65%)	12 (12%)
All n=266	57 (21%)	174 (65%)	35 (13%)

Question 13: *Has anyone ever made fun of you?*

More students in 7th and 8th grades, 72% and 71%, respectively, than in 6th grade, 56% admitted that anyone has ever made fun of them. Of the 266 students surveyed in sixth through eighth grades, Table 13 indicates that 65% responded “yes”, 24% responded “no”, and 11% responded “I don’t know” when answering Question 13.

Table 13

6th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=66 (61%)	33 (50%)	26 (39%)	7 (11%)
Male n=42 (39%)	27 (64%)	13 (31%)	2 (5%)
All n=108	60 (56%)	39 (36%)	9 (8%)
Additional Comments: 6 th grade female: “There have always been people who make fun of me or other people.” 6 th grade male: “Not everyone, but most of them do.”			
7th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=45 (66%)	29 (64%)	8 (18%)	8 (18%)
Male n=23 (34%)	20 (87%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)
All n=68	49 (72%)	9 (13%)	10 (15%)
Additional Comments: 7 th grade female: “Lots of times.” 7 th grade male: “Yes, but I don’t have a disability.”			
8th Grade	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=51 (57%)	32 (63%)	12 (24%)	7 (14%)
Male n=39 (43%)	32 (82%)	5 (13%)	2 (5%)
All n=90	64 (71%)	17 (19%)	9 (10%)
Additional Comments: 8 th grade female: “People make fun of everyone, disability or not.”			
6th-8th Grades	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
Female n=162 (61%)	94 (58%)	46 (28%)	22 (14%)
Male n=104 (39%)	79 (76%)	19 (18%)	6 (6%)
All n=266	173 (65%)	65 (24%)	28 (11%)

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate, determine, and analyze the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of sixth through eighth grade students receiving regular education services toward the students receiving special education services in inclusive classrooms. Students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services in grades 6-8 from a south Twin Cities suburb participated in the study by completing a group administered 13-question, 3-point Likert response scale survey. The instrument analyzed each student's ability to: a) identify those in their classes with special needs, (b) classify their actions toward and friendships with students receiving special education services, and (c) identify their attitudes about students receiving special education services in regards to rules and disruptive behavior, special education teachers in their classes and special help received, and academic fairness.

Limitations

Two limitations of the survey were identified by the researcher. These were:

1. The subjects in the study may have answered the survey questions the way in which they believed the researcher wanted them to answer.
2. Since there were no measures of validity or reliability with this study, there was no way to verify that the survey truly measured the attitudes and perceptions of students receiving general education services regarding students receiving special education services.

Conclusions

A generation ago, few classrooms in the United States educated students with disabilities. Today, inclusion is a common practice among public schools that has evolved into a widely accepted form of educating students receiving special education services and students receiving general education services together.

This researcher hypothesized neutral or positive perceptions and attitudes held by the majority of students receiving general education services toward students receiving special education services. For the most part, the results of this study concur with this researcher's hypothesis, as well as the literature regarding inclusion.

In response to Question One, *Do you receive any special help in or outside of the regular classroom?*, the majority of all grades responded that they do not receive special education services in or outside of the regular education classroom. Some may not have identified themselves as receiving special education services, as a small percentage responded that they were unsure. Several of the students who responded that they do receive special education services in or outside of the regular education classroom further clarified their responses by specifying that they that are in advanced classes.

Research has shown that some students receiving general education services can identify students who receive special education services (Fisher, 1999), while other research has shown that older students are the ones who are most knowledgeable about which students receive special education services (Vaughn, Schumm, & Kouzekanani, 1993). This research revealed that both are true in response to Question Two, *Do you know of any students in your school who receive special help?*. Although most students knew of students in their classes who receive special help, one 6th grade female student

commented that she does not know if someone receives special help. This response reiterates that students receiving special help are not always easy to identify. An 8th grade male student admitted to knowing of some students who receive special help, but did not acknowledge any relationships with them. This holds true with responses to Question Three, *Are you friends with any students who receive special help?*, as under half of the respondents admitted to being friends with students who receive special help. Several students explained in their comments that their friends who receive special help are the ones who are in advanced classes.

In response to Question Five, *Have you ever made fun of a student because he or she received special help?*, and Question Six, *Have you ever made fun of a student because of his or her disability?*, the majority of students in both questions responded that they have not. One 6th grade female admitted to making fun of a student because of their disability, but emphasized in her comments that it was not in front of the person(s). An 8th grade female disclosed that she sometimes feels uncomfortable around people with disabilities. A couple of students justified making fun of students receiving special education services because “everybody does it”, while others adamantly opposed the action.

Klingner and Vaughn (1999) found that students receiving general education services recognize that not all students are able to learn the same or at the same speed, which this research proved true as well. In response to Question Four, *Do you feel it is fair for a student in your classroom to get special help?*, and Question Eleven, *Do you feel that students who see special teachers are getting more of an advantage than you?*, most students accepted that the students receiving special education services need the

help, as long as they try their hardest and do their own work. Some remarked that they feel the unfairness in relation to teacher relationships and subject detail , but most acknowledged the need for some students to receive special help.

In response to Question Seven, *Do you feel it is fair that some students have their assignments and test changed by a special teacher to help them complete their work?*, more than half of the students feel it is fair, whereas in response to Question Nine, *Do you feel students who see special teachers for help are just as capable as doing the same work as you?*, more than half feel that students who receive special help are just as capable of doing the same work. Williams and Downing (1998) revealed that students felt more positive about students who completed the same work as they did, as appeared in this study. While some said that changes to coursework and student capabilities depend on the disability, others agreed with some modifications.

Studies cited in Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Smith (2004) indicated that students receiving general education services did not like it when students receiving special education services were not consequence in the same way, noting a need for more consistency in regard to rules. This study concurred with the research with Question Ten, *Do you feel that students who see special teachers are just as capable as having the same rules as you?*, as almost three-fourths of the respondents agreed that students who see special teachers are just as capable as having the same rules. Comments to this question were varied; some specified that no rules should be changed, a few said that only some rules should be changed, and others said that they should be held to most of the same standards and rules as the others in the school. In response to Question Eight, *Do you feel that students who receive special help cause more problems and get into more trouble*

than other students in your classroom?, over half do not feel that students who receive special help have more behavioral issues than themselves. Some commented that students receiving special help are no different from themselves, while others noted that the root of their behavioral challenges was their disability, almost excusing the behaviors.

Although studies have shown that both students receiving special education services and students receiving general education services like the co-teaching model because of the extra help, the subjects in this study did not comment on that aspect in relation to Question Twelve, *Do you feel that it is disruptive or distracting when a special teacher comes into your room to help specific students?* The majority of students do not feel it is disruptive or distracting, remarking about the need for some students to receive the special help. Others commented about that the special teachers can be too loud, and one student suggested moving to a different room to give special help.

When asked Question Thirteen, *Has anyone ever made fun of you?*, most responded that they have been made fun of. Almost one-quarter of the respondents answered that they have not been made fun of. While some commented that they have been made fun of, others clarified that they were made fun of, but not because of a disability.

An interesting discovery revealed by this research indicates that some students receiving general education services have the assumption that students receiving special education services are receiving the special help to be cured. An 8th grade male justified modifying assignments and tests because “They need special help to become normal.” Another student felt that although students may not be capable of having the same rules and expectations as themselves at this time, “eventually” they should have the same rules.

An 8th grade female showed insight when she commented that students receiving special education services should be tested often to see if they improve.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations this researcher determined as a result of this study.

1. This researcher recommends disability information and education to all students about disabilities and what receiving special education services means.
2. This researcher recommends that after students have received adequate disability information, direct, structured contact with and exposure to students with varying degrees of disabilities be encouraged.
3. This researcher recommends that this survey be administered to students both before and after disability awareness training to examine if views, attitudes, and perceptions held by students receiving general education services and students receiving special education services change.
4. This researcher recommends that this study be repeated with elementary, middle school, and secondary school levels to see if age reflects their responses to questions in the survey.
5. This researcher recommends that questions in the survey be added to discover aspects about inclusion that general education students believe is positive.

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APPENDIX A

Dakota Hills Middle School

“Developing Excellence Through Knowledge”

March 24, 2004

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a CID (Communication Interaction Disorders) teacher at Dakota Hills Middle School. I am in the process of completing my research project for my Master of Science degree in Education. Your son/daughter has an opportunity to participate in a study about their attitudes and perceptions of the students who receive special education services in their classes at DHMS.

With your permission, they will be asked to complete a 13-question survey that should take about 10 minutes. Their participation is strictly confidential, with surveys only identifying grade level and gender. It is not anticipated that this study will present any medical or social risks to your child. Participation is voluntary, and you and/or your child have the right to withdraw at any time. Student involvement will contribute to strengthening student relationships at DHMS, as results will be shared with counselors and administration at DHMS.

I am available further to discuss this research study with you if you have any questions. You can reach me at (651) 683-8566 Ext. 6419, or Dr. Amy Schlieve, my research advisor, at (715) 232-1332. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be directed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 152 Vocational Rehabilitation Building, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI, 54751, at (715) 232-1126. At your request, a survey will be faxed or e-mailed to you to view. A report of the findings will be available in May 2004 at Dakota Hills Middle School for anyone interested in the results.

Please fill out the bottom portion of this form and have your child return it to their Channel One Teacher by Friday, March 26.

Thank you for your time and support!

Sincerely,

Sarah Johnson
Student Researcher

[] []

Child's Name (please print)_____

- Yes, my son/daughter has my permission to participate in this survey.
- No, my son/daughter does not have my permission to participate in this survey.

Parent's Signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX B

TEACHERS: HAND OUT WEDNESDAY OR FRIDAY

Only hand out surveys to the students listed below!

Please read this BEFORE students begin filling out surveys.

“There are students at DHMS who receive special education services. Think about the term “special education” and what it means to you. The term “special education” or to receive “special help” means many things. It can be:

1. Someone who is gifted and talented. This is a “special” education service.
2. Someone with a cognitive disability. This can be someone with Down Syndrome or Autism.
3. Someone who has difficulties expressing and understanding emotions. This may be someone who yells and becomes aggressive when angry.
4. Someone with physical limitations. This may be someone with vision problems, hearing problems, Cerebral Palsy, or someone in a wheelchair.
5. Someone who has a learning disability and receives help with just one subject, like math or reading.
6. Someone who has difficulties in many subjects, and only spends part of the day in regular education classes.
7. Someone with dyslexia and possibly sees letters or numbers backwards.
8. Someone in ESL who is learning English as his/her second language.

The purpose of this survey is for you to identify your feelings and attitudes by answering the following questions. Please take your time and answer the questions truthfully. Your answers are anonymous, which means no one will be able to identify you and your answers. Do not put your name on your survey. The questions may be read aloud to you. Ask me if you have any questions. This survey is voluntary. You may decide to quit at any time.”

Students with permission to complete the survey:

- | | |
|-----|-----|
| 1. | 11. |
| 2. | 12. |
| 3. | 13. |
| 4. | 14. |
| 5. | 15. |
| 6. | 16. |
| 7. | 17. |
| 8. | 18. |
| 9. | 19. |
| 10. | 20. |

APPENDIX C

Circle your grade

6 7 8

Circle your gender

Male Female

Do not write your name on this sheet. Read each question carefully. Circle only one answer for each question. If you are unsure how to answer a question, circle "I don't know".

1. Do you receive any special help in or outside of the regular classroom?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

2. Do you know of any students in your school who receive special help?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

3. Are you friends with any students who receive special help?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

4. Do you feel it is fair for a student in your classroom to get special help?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

5. Have you ever made fun of a student because he or she received special help?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

6. Have you ever made fun of a student because of his or her disability?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

7. Do you feel that it is fair that some students have their assignments and tests changed by a special teacher to help them complete their work?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

8. Do you feel that students who receive special help cause more problems and get into trouble more than other students in your classrooms?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

9. Do you feel students who see special teachers for help are just as capable of doing the same work as you?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

10. Do you feel students who see special teachers for help are just as capable of having the same rules as you?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

11. Do you feel that students who see special teachers are getting more of an advantage than you?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

12. Do you feel that it is disruptive or distracting when a special teacher comes into your room to help specific students?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments:

13. Has anyone ever made fun of you?

Yes / No / I don't know

Comments: