

Regular Education and Special Education Teacher

Attitudes Toward Inclusion

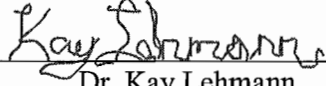
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ABSTRACT

Inclusion of special education students in the regular education setting is a very complex and interesting topic in education. Often times it is at the center of debate amongst administrators, teachers, and parents. Each person has their own ideas and attitudes about what is best for all children. Multiple research studies have revealed that there are many different factors for positive and negative teacher attitudes and opinions toward inclusion. The purpose of this study was to examine and analyze middle school regular education and special education teacher attitudes and opinions on inclusion. The three part survey used for this study was developed by the researchers specifically for this study. The survey consisted of demographic information, 26 Likert scale items and one comment section. The surveys were distributed to all special education and regular education teachers in one middle school in the south central Wisconsin during the Spring of 2008. Results of the survey were tabulated with frequencies and percentages for each response reported.

The results of this study indicated the positive and negative attitudes and opinions of special education teachers and regular education teachers about inclusion. The results revealed some significant difference in attitudes and opinions reported by regular education and special education teachers. This study also looked at differences in attitudes and opinions of teachers in regards to the student's specific disability. The results of this study also identified possible factors behind the teacher attitudes on inclusion.

After this study was completed and the data was analyzed the following recommendations were made: First, complete future research studies with a larger sample size such one entire school district or multiple middle schools in the surrounding areas. Second, additional collaboration and planning time should be provided for teachers to develop strategies and curriculum to meet student needs. Third, the administration needs to increase support and provide ongoing staff development. Fourth, the administration should also provide additional resources such as materials and staffing to help build successful inclusion classrooms. Fifth, additional research studies should focus on specific disabilities and the effects of the different disabilities on inclusive classrooms. Lastly, in order to determine the factors behind teacher attitudes, perception questions should be added to the survey and teacher interviews should be conducted.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

The history of special education and inclusion dates back to as early as 1893. In 1893, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts upheld the expulsion from a public school a child who was thought to be “weak in mind.” In 1919, the Supreme Court of Wisconsin affirmed a lower court decision authorized the exclusion from a public school district of a child who had the academic and physical ability to benefit from school but who drooled, had speech problems, and exhibited facial contortion. Trends of this nature continued into the 1960s.

According to Alpers, (2002):

The rights to education for children with disabilities stem from the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 and to the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968. Public pressure on elected officials and school administrators to change policies escalated as special needs students were assigned to “dummy” classes and became targets of prejudice and discrimination by peers and teachers. (p.2)

In the 1970’s, two court decisions established the disabled child’s right to free appropriate public education (FAPE). In 1971, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) sued the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on behalf of retarded children who were excluded from public schools. A second case was *Mills V. Board of Education*. The decision from this case extended the right of free public education to all disabled children included mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, physically disabled, and other children with behavior problems. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted by Congress as a response to the PARC and Mills decision (Daniel, 1997).

The legal debate about inclusion began with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act passed in 1975. That law is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA states:

Each state must establish procedures to assure that to the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities... are educated with children who are not disabled and that special education separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular class with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Alpers, 2002).

This law was also amended in 1997 to help define some of the terms in the first law. Things like aids and services were defined. Related services were added and it also made the general education teacher a part of the individualized education plan (IEP) team.

According to Kavale, (2000) special education within the public school system developed as a specialized program separated from general education and was embodied in the categorical "special class." "The special class was seen as the best means for avoided conflicts while providing universal education" (p.280). In 1968, a famous article entitled "Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable" written by Dunn began to question whether special classes were justifiable" (p.280). The Dunn article initiated an attitude in favor of change in special education.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is another important part of special education and inclusion. According to Alpers (2002), "Section 504 is important in the legal mandate of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and the use of supplementary aids and services for student with disabilities because it was used to ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of

disability” (p.1). The Least Restrictive Environment or LRE is the educational setting closest to the regular classroom in which a free appropriate education (FAPE) can be delivered to a special education student (Alpers, 2002). Determination of the LRE has evolved through various court actions.

Judicial standard of review for the LRE were established because of the legal case of Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education (1989). Daniel was a six-year-old child with Down syndrome. He was placed in a general education pre-K class for half a day and an early childhood special education class for half a day. After a few months the pre-K class teacher informed the school placement committee that Daniel was not participating and failing to master any of the skills being taught. He was removed from the class and put into the early childhood class for the full day. The court ruled that the school district had properly provided a continuum of educational services and had experimented with a variety of alternative placements, and properly provided supplementary aids and services in an attempt to maintain Daniel in a general education classroom and mainstreamed him to the maximum extent possible (Alpers, 2002). Based on this ruling the court came up with a test referred to as the Daniel Standard. This test is to guide courts in determining whether schools have complied with the mainstreaming requirement of IDEA (Alpers, 2002).

The Daniel Standard states:

1. Whether education in the regular classroom with the use of supplementary aids and services can be achieved satisfactorily for a given child.
2. If it cannot and the school intends to... remove the child from the regular education classroom... whether the school has mainstreamed the child to the maximum extent appropriate (Alpers, 2002)

3. . The Least Restrictive Environment mandate also brought chance to special education by making the resource model the primary placement option. “This option was defined by the resource room and special education teachers who provided academic instruction for specified time period to a special education student whose placement was the general education room” (Kavale, 2000). “Along with a continued call for inclusive placement these efforts were being termed the Regular Education Initiative (REI)” (p281). The goal of this initiative was to merge general and special education to create a more unified system of education (Kavale, 2000)

A review of the literature shows that both positive and negative teacher attitudes toward inclusion can be found. Several studies (Biddle, 2006; Downing 1997; Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001) found that both teacher attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion can significantly influence the learning environment of students with and without disabilities. Biddle (2006) reported that negative attitudes toward inclusion can be directly linked to less frequent use of effective classroom accommodations for students with disabilities in the inclusive setting. With positive teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusion students with disabilities will be given greater educational opportunities with their peers and will be more successful within the inclusive setting. Without positive attitudes, inclusion may become just a physical placement of students with disabilities and it will not improve their growth and development as learners. Peers of students with disabilities may also lose out on the opportunity to work productively with students with disabilities when a negative attitude exists.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Inclusion of special education students in the regular education setting is a very complex and interesting topic in the field of education. Often times it is at the center of debate amongst

administrators, teachers, and parents. Each person has their own ideas and attitudes about what is best for all children. The researcher feels that it is important to examine both regular education and special education teacher attitudes and concerns about inclusion. The findings from such a study will help identify the professional development opportunities and resources teachers need in order to commit to inclusion. Also, knowing teacher attitudes and concerns about inclusion will help administrators in developing a strong inclusive setting for all students and staff in their building.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze middle school regular education and special education teacher attitudes and opinions on inclusion. This study will attempt to document whether there is a difference in attitudes between general education and special education teachers. This study will also attempt to identify possible factors for these attitudes and opinions. The information about attitudes and opinions on inclusion gathered in this study will be used to develop in-services workshops for general and special education teachers. The results will also be used to provide additional information and literature about inclusion to the staff and administration.

### *Research Questions:*

Multiple research studies have indicated that there are many reasons for both positive and negative teacher attitudes and opinions toward inclusion. This study will document whether different attitudes exist between regular and special education teachers. The following questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What attitudes and opinions do middle school regular education teachers hold about inclusion?

2. What attitudes and opinions do middle school special education teachers hold about inclusion?
3. Are there any differences in attitudes of special education and regular education teachers when a student's disability (LD, CD, EBD), is taken into account?
4. What are the factors behind positive and negative teacher attitudes?

### *Definition of Terms*

*Cognitive Disability (CD):* According to Berndt and Burmaster (2002), a cognitive disability is defined as "Significant sub average intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and that adversely affects educational performance" (p.12).

*Emotional and/or Behavioral Disability(EB/D):* According to Boreson and Burmaster (2002), an emotional behavioral disability is defined as social, emotional or behavioral functioning that so departs from generally accepted, age appropriate ethnic or cultural norms that it adversely affects a child's academic progress, social relationships, personal adjustment, classroom adjustment, self-care or vocational skills (p.12).

*Full Inclusion:* Students with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom full time. Special education services and supports are provided to the student in the general education classroom. There is no special education resource room. Supports may also be provided to the regular education teacher and the student with disabilities.

*General Education:* A classroom where students without disabilities are taught.

*Inclusion:* Students with disabilities participate in their general education classroom with their non-disabled peers. They are taught by a regular education teacher and participate in class activities and lessons that may be adapted for their individual needs. Students with disabilities

may also spend part of their day in a special education classroom to meet their academic, social, and behavioral needs.

*Learning Disability (LD):* According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004) A specific learning disability is “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.”

*Partial Inclusion:* Students with disabilities spend part of their day in general education classrooms and part of their day in the special education classroom. Supportive services are provided in both classrooms.

*Paraprofessional:* A person who works under the supervision of a regular or special education teacher to support the teacher in teaching lessons, and support students with disabilities individually in the regular or special education classroom.

*Special Education:* According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004), Special Education is “Specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings, and instruction in physical education.”

#### *Assumptions of the Study*

It is assumed that all middle school regular education and special education teachers at Lodi Middle School will receive the survey in their school mail box, complete it, and return it into a drop box provided by the researcher within two full school weeks of its distribution. It is also assumed that special education teachers will have more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students regardless of their disability.

*Limitations of the Study*

One limitation of this study is that it focuses on one small Wisconsin middle school. The second limitation is that there are significantly more regular education teachers than special education teachers. This will most likely lead to an unequal amount of surveys completed.



## Chapter II: Literature Review

Over the past two decades there has been a strong movement within schools around the United States to include students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. This movement has been met with varying degrees of support from administrators, teachers, and parents. While there are many advantages to inclusion, there are also many challenges. Many school districts have, and continue, to work toward the development of inclusive programs. For example, the U.S. Department of Education's 27<sup>th</sup> annual report to Congress on the implementation of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2005) indicates that the number of students with disabilities being educated with their general education peers has risen to 49.9 percent. This is approximately a 17 percent increase from the 1997 U.S. Department of Education's 19<sup>th</sup> annual report to Congress on the implementation of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This increase shows that schools continue to make progress in improving the educational opportunities for all students. Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education (2005) also show increasing graduation rates among students with disabilities. In 2002-2003, 51.9 percent of students with disabilities graduated with a regular diploma. The 27<sup>th</sup> report to Congress also indicates that the overall school drop-out rate for students with disabilities has decreased.

According to Hammond and Ingalls (2003), many gains have been made with regard to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms, yet there is still more improvement and progress to be made. Today, many schools implement inclusion in different capacities. Some schools practice full inclusion, while others are opting for partial inclusion; where students spend time in both the special education classroom and the general education classroom with their peers. Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen and Brent (2001),

conducted a national study to look at the participation in schools by students with disabilities and how the level of participation affects the students and the school environment as a whole.

Research reports reviewed indicate that most districts do not practice full inclusion because of the resources and costs involved. One study (Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, & Wilde, 2002), indicated that the decision for placement should be made by the IEP team including the parents, student, and teachers. Bowers (2004), also found that teachers need to think about the individual student when deciding on a placement. The decision should be made based on the student's individual needs. When students with disabilities are placed in their general education classroom without accommodations and support services, they will not do as well academically or socially. Their needs would, therefore, be better met in a more restrictive setting such as the special education classroom.

This chapter provides a literature review and analysis on the history of inclusion, an analysis of different general and special education teacher attitudes toward inclusion, and the factors that make inclusion successful. Finally, this chapter will conclude with the benefits and barriers of inclusion.

### *History of Inclusion*

The history of special education and inclusion began early as 1893. In 1893, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts upheld the expulsion, from a public school, a child who was thought to be "weak in mind". The Supreme Court of Wisconsin affirmed a lower court decision that also authorized the exclusion, from a public school district, a child who had the academic and physical ability to benefit from school, but who had physical disabilities and difficulties with speech in 1919. Trends of this nature would continue well into the 1960s. According to Alpers (2002), the rights to education for children with disabilities stem from the landmark case of

Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968. These legal actions led to significant public pressure of elected political officials and school administrators, to change policies. This pressure escalated because special needs students became the targets of prejudice and discrimination by peers and teachers.

Two court decisions in the 1970's established the disabled child's rights to a free and appropriate education (FAPE). In 1971, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) sued the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on behalf of retarded children who were excluded from public schools. In 1972, a second case, *Mills v. Board of Education* led to an extended right of free public education to all disabled children, including mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, physically disabled, and other children with behavior problems. As a response to the PARC and *Mills* decision, congress enacted the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Daniel, 1997):

According to Kavale (2000), special education within the public school system began as a specialized program separated from general education and was embodied in the categorical "special class." It was believed that this "special class" was the best way to provide universal education for all and to avoid conflicts. In 1968, a famous article entitled "Special education for the mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable?" written by Dunn, began to question whether special classes were justifiable (Kavale, 2000). As a result of this article attitudes started to favor a change in special education.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 began a wide spread legal debate about inclusion. That law is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA was amended in 1997 and again in 2004 to help define some of the terms and

provisions written in the first law. Related services were added, and it also made the general education teacher a part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team.

Another important part of special education and inclusion is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. According to Alpers (2002), Section 504 provided an important legal mandate of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). It also helped mandate the use of supplementary aids and services for students with disabilities. It helped to ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of disability. The LRE is an educational setting, closest to the regular classroom, in which a free appropriate education can be delivered to a special education student (Alpers, 2002).

The legal case of Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education (1989) helped establish a judicial standard of review for the LRE. Daniel was a six-year-old child with Down Syndrome who was placed in a general education pre-kindergarten class for half a day and an early childhood special education classroom for half a day. A few months into the year, Daniel's pre-kindergarten teacher informed the school placement committee that Daniel was not making progress and was not participating in the classroom. Based on this, Daniel was removed from the pre-kindergarten class and put into the early childhood classroom full-time. The court ruled that the school district had properly provided a continuum of educational services, had experimented with a variety of alternative placements, properly provided supplementary aids and services in an attempt to maintain Daniel in a general education classroom, and mainstreamed him to the maximum extent possible (Alpers, 2002). Based on this ruling the court, designed a test referred to as the Daniel Standard. This test is to guide courts in determining whether schools have complied with the mainstreaming requirement of IDEA (Alpers, 2002).

The LRE mandate also helped bring change to special education by designating the resource room model as the primary placement option for students with disabilities. According to Kavale (2002), the resource room model is defined as: academic instruction provided by special education teachers within a resource room setting, for a specified period of time, to a special education student whose primary placement is in the general education classroom. Another initiative that called for inclusive placements is the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The premise behind this initiative was to merge general and special education to create a more unified system of education (Kavale, 2000).

#### *Attitudes about Inclusion*

A review of the literature and various research studies indicate that there are a wide range of both positive and negative teacher attitudes about inclusion. Hammond and Ingalls (2003), found that general education teacher attitudes toward inclusion are one of the most important factors in determining the success of inclusive programs. Biddle (2006), reported that both teacher attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion can significantly influence the learning environment and the use of appropriate supports and accommodations for students with disabilities. Negative teacher attitudes toward inclusion are also directly linked to less frequent use of effective classroom accommodations for students with disabilities in the inclusive setting.

Attitudes and beliefs about inclusion vary widely. Much of the debate surrounding inclusion is in regards to full inclusion vs. partial inclusion. Full inclusion means that students with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom full time. Special education services and supports are provided to the student in the general education classroom. There is no special education resource room. Supports may also be provided to the regular education teacher and the student with disabilities. A partial inclusion model is when students with disabilities

spend part of their day in general education classrooms and part of their day in the special education classroom. Supportive services are provided in both classrooms. Bowers (2004), found that for some students with disabilities, the full inclusion model was able to meet their academic, social, and physical needs through various accommodations and supports. She also found that some students' needs may be better met in a partial inclusion model. An example of this would be a sixth-grade student identified with a learning disability that participates in the regular language arts class, but is only reading at a third-grade level. This particular student may not be able to fully participate with peers and may benefit from more one-on-one instruction in the resource classroom. More severe students with disabilities may also have other needs which are best met in a one-on-one or small-group setting. An example of this may be a student with a severe cognitive delay or significantly lower than average intellectual functioning as needing to learn daily living skills rather than the general education curriculum. The majority of research indicates most educators are not completely in support of full inclusion, but would rather make placement decisions on an individual case-by-case basis (Bowers, 2004, Hammond & Ingalls, 2003, Bricker, 2000, Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, & Wilde, 2002, & Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen, and Brent, 2001).

One attitude held by teachers regarding inclusion is that it will create more responsibility and work for them, and it will also take away time from all students within the classroom (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003). When teachers feel this way, they become frustrated and negative feelings toward inclusive programs develop. Teachers today already feel overwhelmed with the day-to-day demands of a busy classroom. They feel including students with disabilities will increase their work responsibilities. General education teachers often feel, by making additional accommodations for students with disabilities, they will be taking time away from other students

in their classroom. However, Bricker (2000), found that not only can special education students benefit from the increased accommodations, but many regular education students can benefit as well.

A lack of collaboration between general and special education teachers has also been indicated as a reason leading to negative attitudes toward inclusion. The study done by Hammond and Ingalls (2003), found that 82% of teachers believe that special and general education teachers do not collaborate enough to provide services for students with disabilities. Much of this has to do with a lack of common planning time. Teachers feel they do not have the resources or time to get together and plan appropriate programs and accommodations for students with disabilities.

Hammond and Ingalls (2003), surveyed general education elementary school teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. Their study found that many teachers hold negative attitudes toward inclusion because of: (a) a lack of commitment of school personnel and administration, (b) disagreement with the benefits of inclusion, (c) inadequate levels of collaboration and support from fellow teachers, (d) insufficient training for providing accommodations and services to students with disabilities, and (e) teachers feeling unprepared to handle students with disabilities in their classrooms. The survey results of this study show the majority of general education elementary teachers are in agreement that there are some benefits to inclusion, and they try to consider the general education placement first by providing individualized instruction to all students. However, the teachers also agree that the inclusion programs within their schools were not fully implemented and not all students' needs were being met.

### *Factors of Successful Inclusion*

Many different factors affect the success of inclusion in today's classrooms. The literature reviewed indicates negative attitudes can be changed to more positive attitudes if these different factors were looked into with more depth.

Hammond and Ingalls (2003), found that many teachers feel unprepared and lack sufficient training to fully support successful inclusion programs. Biddle (2006), also found that in order for teachers to provide a variety of accommodations, they need ongoing professional development opportunities to continue to develop their skills. Such opportunities could include attending workshops, observing in other classrooms, reviewing research on inclusion, and collaboration with colleagues to develop a successful inclusion program. A study by Leyser and Tappendorf (2001), also supports Biddle's findings that teachers need to attend various workshops and in-services to learn more about students with disabilities and inclusion. If teachers are provided with adequate training, they will begin to feel more comfortable working with students with disabilities and implementing various accommodations within their classrooms.

According to Jones et al. (2002), the success of inclusion is determined by the attitudes of both teachers and administrators. The entire school must be in support of inclusion if it is going to be successful. McLeskey and Waldron (2002), found that administrative support is essential to helping build a successful inclusive school. School administrators must provide the staff with the support and resources needed to develop an inclusive setting within the school. They also found that school administrators should provide support for program development, provide relevant staff development opportunities, and promote the need for positive changes toward inclusion among building staff.



As mentioned earlier, collaboration between special education and general education teachers is another important factor that impacts the success of inclusion and teacher attitudes about inclusion. Biddle (2006), found that general and special education teachers need the time to work together to develop appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Together they can develop various learning strategies and accommodations that will help foster success for all students in the general education classroom. Hammond and Ingalls (2003), supports the finding that successful inclusion requires a lot of planning and coordination between general and special education teachers in order for inclusion to be successful in the classroom. Leysner and Tappendorf (2001), also found it helpful if general education and special education teachers could attend in-services together in order to share ideas and learn how to effectively work together in order to teach all students within the general education classroom.

### *Benefits of Inclusion*

Many research studies have been done on how inclusive education impacts students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. A review of this research indicated there are many benefits with inclusive education. Full inclusion may not be appropriate for all students, but it does offer a variety of benefits to students, teachers, parents, and society.

One of the major benefits of inclusion involves the academic progress of all students in the classroom. According to Rudd (2002), students with disabilities make significant academic, behavioral, and social gains when participating in their general education classroom. Students with disabilities spend more time engaged in learning and feel more comfortable interacting with their peers when they are included in their regular classroom. Bricker (2000), also found that students with disabilities have more positive role models to learn from when they are involved with their non-disabled peers. However, one concern of teachers and some parents of general

education students, regarding the benefits of inclusion as reported in McLeskey and Waldron (2002), is that inclusion may hinder the academic progress of the general education students. A study done by Cole, Waldron, and Maljd (cited in Peck, Staub, Gallucci & Schwartz, 2004, para.4) reported "...non-disabled children enrolled in inclusive classrooms made greater academic gains on curriculum-based assessment measures than those enrolled in traditional classes." (p. 135). As addressed earlier, there are many different perspectives on the success of inclusive education. Various factors such as teacher attitudes, a lack of teacher training, or difficulties with collaboration may contribute to these perspectives.

Another benefit of inclusion reported in a number of research studies is more social acceptance and peer interaction between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Rudd (2002), reported that students with disabilities form stronger friendships with their non-disabled peers when they participate and learn together in their general education classroom. They also become more comfortable and accepting of each others' differences. This may also lead to less teasing and bullying of students with special needs. In the study completed by Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, and Wilde (2002), they found that when students with disabilities are included in their general education classrooms they learn to socialize with their peers. This social interaction is much more valuable when it takes place in the general education classroom rather than a segregated setting. For example, they stated that "special needs students receive about 340% more social interaction in inclusion classrooms" (p. 626). Another study conducted by Cawley, Hayden, Cade, and Baker-Kroczyński (2002), found that inclusive classrooms allow for greater social acceptance among all students. Friendships are formed and more interaction is encouraged. The inclusive classroom provides a great opportunity for all students to learn, work, and live together.

### *Barriers to Inclusion*

Although there are many benefits to inclusive education, there are also some barriers or problems. The most common barrier with of inclusive education is a lack of appropriate support for both teachers and students. If the proper support is not present, direct instructional time could be taken from students who are non-labeled (Hobbs & Westling, 1998). Placing special education students in the regular classroom has the potential to consume too much of an already overworked teachers attention (Kavale, 2000). Children with severe cognitive disabilities and those with severe behavioral disorders are more likely to be harmed than helped because teachers do not have highly specialized training to deal with their needs (Hobbs & Westling, 1998).

According to a study done by Hobbs and Westling, (1998) general education teachers identified three other major problems associated with inclusion. Social and behavioral problems in which the student was perceived as disruptive or distracting to other non-labeled students is one of the problems of inclusion the teachers in the study identified. A second problem teachers identified is situations in which specialized assistance or adaptations were unavailable in the general education classroom. General education teachers feel unprepared and uninformed of student's special instructional needs (Hobbs & Westling, 1998). A study conducted by Hines, (2001) supports this finding in that many general education teachers feel they have not received enough training and lack the knowledge to effectively teach students with special needs.

Finally, a third barrier to inclusion is its financial costs. According to Downing, (1997) many administrators and teachers are skeptical of the amount of services and instruction that can be provided, given many schools current financial situations. Things like additional educational assistants, additional teachers, instructional supplies, transportation, and staff development for teachers all have a huge financial impact on school budgets.

Throughout the past two decades there has been a strong movement to include students with disabilities in the regular education classrooms. This movement has been met with both support and concern from teachers, administrators, and parents. While there are many benefits of inclusion, it also has its challenges. One of the biggest challenges seems to be the varied attitudes held by teachers. Currently, it appears that the most popular attitude held by teachers is that inclusion is positive for students but there is a need to provide a continuum of resources for students with disabilities that may sometimes include a more restrictive setting. Research studies indicate that in order for inclusion to be successful all parties involved must be supportive. For example, Bricker (2000), found that the attitudes of teachers, parents, and administrators play an important role in how the inclusion process works. Teachers need to be informed and knowledgeable about the inclusion process and must have the skills to work with students from a variety of backgrounds. Finally, the benefits of inclusion seem to continue to grow. Although there is still a lot of progress and work to do to ensure that all students receive the benefits of inclusion, as a whole school districts around the country have made great gains in providing appropriate and necessary education for all students.

### Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes about inclusion of both regular and special education teachers. This study will also attempt to identify if there are factors that contribute to these attitudes and opinions. The information in this chapter will describe the subject selection, instrument used, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. This chapter will conclude with a discussion on the limitations relevant to the methodology used in this study.

#### *Subject Selection and Description*

The subjects in this study consist of regular education teachers and special education teachers from a middle school from one school district. The school district chosen for this study is located in south central Wisconsin. An attempt to contact all regular and special education teachers, both male and female, with direct involvement in inclusion was made.

The sample size for this study is estimated to be approximately 35 teachers. A vast majority of the participants are projected to be female and Caucasian based on the demographics of the middle school staff. All participants will hold a valid Wisconsin teacher license in regular education or special education. The age range of subject in this study will be from 23 to 70 years of age. The range of teaching experience is approximately 1 to 48 years.

#### *Instrumentation*

A cover letter (Appendix A) will briefly explain the study being conducted. A consent form (Appendix B) will also be distributed to participants. The letter, consent form, and survey will be distributed to all regular education teachers and special education teachers at the middle school. These documents will only be distributed after permission is granted from the building administration.

A three part survey (Appendix C) consisting of demographic information, a series of 26 Likert scale items and one comment section for subjects to enter any additional information regarding their attitudes toward inclusion will be used in this study. The Likert scale items are separated into three different sections and are general in nature. However, all items relate to both positive and negative attitudes and options of inclusion. The items included in the survey were developed from literature reviewed that identified some attitudes of inclusion and factors behind those attitudes. The survey instrument was designed by the researcher specifically for this study. Tests for reliability and validity will be done using a split half reliability test.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

A 30 item survey consisting of three different sections will be administered as the data collection tool in this study. This method was selected in an effort to gather demographic data, identify positive and negative attitudes and opinions about inclusion, and to obtain knowledge of the possible factors behind these attitudes. The first part of the survey collects demographic data through checkbox items and one open ended question for demographic data. Section two consists of 26 statements with a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree for responses. The final section of the survey consists of one open ended comments question.

After approval is granted from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Wisconsin-Stout and the middle school administration, a cover letter (Appendix A), consent form (Appendix B), and survey (Appendix C) will be distributed to all special education and regular education teachers in the middle school who have direct involvement with inclusion. The survey will be distributed in each subject's school mailbox. The subjects will be asked to return the survey to the researcher within two weeks of its distribution. Upon retrieval of the completed

surveys, the answers to each question will be tabulated. All surveys returned will then be kept in a secure, locked file cabinet after the information is recorded.

### *Data Analysis*

Data from the returned surveys was tabulated and recorded using a spreadsheet program. Data from the Likert rating scale statements is organized using frequency distribution. Percentages will be calculated and reported using tables. Additional information recorded in the comments section will also be recorded and analyzed. Cross tabulation will be completed to compare the differences between the regular education teacher and special education teacher responses.

### *Limitations*

The methodology of this study includes a few limitations. One limitation is that the sample size is very small. The subjects will be limited to one middle school in one Wisconsin school district. Because of the small sample size, the results of this study cannot be effectively generalized to larger populations. A second limitation is the ratio of special education teachers to regular education teachers. There are a total of 31 regular education teachers to 5 special education teachers.

## Chapter IV: Results

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes about inclusion of both regular and special education teachers. This chapter will include demographic information, the results of the study, and item analysis. The chapter will conclude with the research questions under investigation.

### *Demographic Information*

In the participating middle school all 35 teachers were given a survey in their school mailbox. A total of 4 (11%) out of the 35 teachers are special education teachers and 31 (89%) out of the 35 teachers are regular education teachers. Of those, 23 completed and returned the surveys, representing 66% of the total possible participants.

Of the 23 participants who responded to the survey, 4 (17.4%) were special education teachers and 19 (82.6%) were regular education teachers. Out of the subjects who completed and returned the survey 4 indicated that they were special education teachers and all 4 indicated that they taught all special education areas (CD, LD, EB/D).

### *Item Analysis*

The survey asked regular and special education teachers to rate a total of 26 statements that indicated their attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students. The statements related to positive and negative attitudes and beliefs toward the inclusion of special education students. Item 27 on the survey asked the subjects to include any additional comments about the inclusion of special education students in general education classrooms. One subject did not complete items 2, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 24 therefore, the total number of subjects completing these items was 22. Two subjects did not complete items 5 and 18. Therefore, the



total number of subjects completing these items was 21. Four subjects did not complete item 10, therefore, the total number of subjects completing this item was 19. The following tables include the responses of the teachers for each of the 26 statements. The number of subjects that responded to each statement (n) and the percent is included.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to look at whether different attitudes exist between general education and special education teachers, and to identify possible factors for the negative and positive attitudes. The following research questions are addressed.

1. Research Question 1: What attitudes and opinions do middle school regular education teachers hold about inclusion?

The regular education teachers agreed most with survey items 3, 12, and 15 with a mean of 3.25 or higher out of a 4.0 scale. The regular education teachers agree that collaboration between special education and regular education teachers is extremely important for inclusion to be successful. Regular education teachers also agree that a continuum of services such as the resource room, paraprofessionals, and team teacher need to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The regular education teachers also indicated that students with disabilities benefit from being included with their peers in the general education classroom.

Regular education teacher disagree the most with survey items 1,7, 11, 13,17 and 18 with a mean of 2.25 or lower out of a 4.0 scale. Regular education teachers disagreed that they are provide with training and in-services in order to help prepare them for teaching students with disabilities. Regular education teachers also disagreed that the special education staff only provides assistance to students with special needs in the general education classroom. They felt

that the special education teachers provide assistance to all students who need it when supporting in the general education classroom. The regular education teachers indicated that students with disabilities are accepted by their peers. Regular education teachers indicated that students with disabilities do not demonstrated more behavioral problems then students without disabilities. Lastly, the regular education teachers indicated that they do not prefer to send students to the special education classroom to receive services and instruction.

2. Research Question 2: What attitudes and opinions do middle school special education teachers hold about inclusion?

Special education teachers agreed the most with survey items 3, 9, 12, 21, and 26 with a mean of 3.5 or higher out of a 4.0 scale. Special education teachers agreed with the regular education teachers on the importance of collaboration between staff members and that a continuum of services is necessary to ensure inclusion is successful. The special education teachers also agree that inclusion improves social skills of students with disabilities. Special education teachers agreed that students with learning disabilities are able to actively participate in the general education classroom activities. Lastly, the special education teachers indicated that general education students benefit from having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom.

Special education teachers disagreed the most with survey items 7, 13, 17, 18, and 22 with a mean of 2.25 or lower out of a 4.0 scale. Special education teachers disagree that they only provide assistance to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. They indicated that they attempt to help all students when they are supporting or team teaching in the general education classroom. The special education teachers also reported that students with disabilities do not demonstrate more behavioral problems than those students without disabilities.

Finally, the special education teachers indicated that inclusion is important and the middle school does currently have the resources available to make inclusion successful.

3. Research Question 3: Are there any differences in attitudes of special education and regular education teachers when a student's disability is taken into account?

Survey items 19,20, and 21 address this question. The results of survey item 19 indicated that 68.4% of the regular education teachers and 100% of the special education teachers agreed that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities. On survey item 20, 57.95 of the regular education teachers and 75% of the special education teachers agreed that students with cognitive disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities. The results of survey item 21 indicate that 100% of both regular and special education teachers agreed that students with learning disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.

4. Research Question 4: What are the factors behind positive and negative teacher attitudes?

The specific factors behind positive and negative teacher attitudes were unable to be determined because of the nature of the survey items. However, several survey items indicated higher percentages of agreement or disagreement, which indicate what items the participants agree or disagree with and in some cases are the most important to them. The additional comments written on survey item 27 also indicate some of the participant's opinions about inclusion. The results of items 3,8,9,12,15,16,21,25, and 26 yielded the highest percentage of agreement by the survey participants. 100% of the participants agreed that collaboration between special education and regular education teachers and a continuum of services is necessary for inclusion to be successful. Of the participants 95.7% agreed that students with learning

disabilities are able to actively participate in the general education classroom learning activities and 95.6% of the participants agree that general education students benefit from having students with disabilities in their classrooms. A total of 91.3% of the participants agree that students with disabilities benefit from being included in their general education classroom and have observed inclusion promoting friendships among students with and without disabilities. Lastly, 82.6% of the participants agreed that students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with their peers but also require more attention and assistance than the general education teacher can provide.

The four survey items that yielded the highest percentage of disagreement among participants were items 1,7,11, and 18. Of the participants 82.6% disagreed that regular education and staff members are provided with ongoing training and in-services to help prepare them for teaching students with disabilities. 82.6% of the participants also disagreed that the special education teachers only provide assistance to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Of the participants 69.5% disagreed that regular education teachers prefer to send students with disabilities to the special education classroom to receive instruction.

### *Summary*

The results of this study have identified middle school regular education and special education teacher attitudes and opinions on inclusion in one school district. The results indicated that some significant differences exist between regular and special education teacher attitudes. The special education teachers agreed significantly more than regular education teachers that; the special education room should only be used as a resource when student needs cannot be met in the general education classroom. They also agreed that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities and cognitive disabilities can actively participate in classroom learning

activities. The special education teachers indicated that they thought the regular education teachers would be concerned that students with disabilities would disrupt and lower the overall achievement of the general education classroom. The regular education teachers agreed significantly more than the special education teachers that; students with disabilities have more behavior problems and need more assistance than can be provided in the general education classroom. Although the factors behind positive and negative teacher attitudes were not able to be determined in this study, the results indicate that the majority of participants agree that collaboration between all staff members is extremely important for inclusion to be successful. The majority of participants also concluded that staff development and a continuum of resources and services are needed to meet student needs and for inclusion to be successful.

Statement 1: General education teachers and other staff are provided with ongoing training and in-services in order to prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with disabilities.

As shown in Table 1, 26% of the teachers in the participating middle school strongly agree or agree that general education teachers and other staff are provided with training in order to prepare them for teaching students with disabilities.

Table 1

Statement 1: General Education Teachers Are Provided With Training

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	4.3%	1
Agree	21.7%	5
Disagree	60.9%	14
Strongly Disagree	13.0%	3

Statement 2: General education teachers have the instructional skills and educational background to effectively teach students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Table 2 indicates that 60.9% of the teachers agreed that general education teachers have the instructional skills and background to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. However, 34.8% of the teacher surveyed felt that they did not have the skills or background to teach students with disabilities.

Table 2

Statement 2: General Education Teachers Have Skills and Background

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	60.9%	14
Disagree	34.8%	8
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 3: General education teachers and special education teachers need to collaborate in order for inclusion to be successful.

Indicated in Table 3, 100% of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that collaboration between general education and special education teachers is needed for inclusion to be successful.

Table 3

Statement 3: General Education and Special Education Teacher Need to Collaborate

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	91.3%	21
Agree	8.7%	2
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0



Statement 4: Teachers and staff do not have administrative support in planning and preparation time, to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Table 4 shows that 56.5% of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they do not have administrative support in planning and preparation time to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. However, 39.1% of the teachers surveyed felt that they do have administrative support and planning time to meet the needs of the students with disabilities. Two study participants included the following comments: “not at the building level; our administrator does the best with what he has been give” and “more time is needed”.

Table 4

Statement 4: Teachers and Staff Do Not Have Administrative Support

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	21.7%	5
Agree	34.8%	8
Disagree	39.1%	9
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 5: General education teachers are comfortable team teaching content areas with special education teachers.

As shown in Table 5, 60.9% of the middle school teachers strongly agreed or agreed that they are comfortable team teaching together. However, 30.4% disagreed and are uncomfortable team teaching together in the general education classroom.

Table 5

Statement 5: General Education Teachers Are Comfortable Team Teaching

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	8.7%	2
Agree	52.2%	12
Disagree	30.4%	7
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 6: Special education teachers provide educational support for all students in the general education classroom.

As demonstrated in Table 6, 69.6% of the middle school teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that special education teachers provide educational support for all students in the general education classroom.

Table 6

Statement 6: Special Education Teachers Provide Support For All Students

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	8.7%	2
Agree	60.9%	14
Disagree	30.4%	7
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 7: Special Education teachers only provide assistance to students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Table 7 shows that only 17.4% of the middle school teachers' surveyed indicated they agreed that special education teachers only provide assistance and support to the students with disabilities in the general education classroom. A total of 82.6% of the teachers surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that special education teachers provide assistance to only students with disabilities. One participant wrote "if the special education students have very high needs this is true".

Table 7

Statement 7: Special Education Teachers Provide Support For Students With Disabilities

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	17.4%	4
Disagree	65.2%	15
Strongly Disagree	17.4%	4

Statement 8: Students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with all their peers.

As shown in Table 8, 82.6% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with their peers. A total of 17.4% disagreed with this statement.

Table 8

Statement 8: Students With Disabilities Participate In Classroom Activities With Peers

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	26.1%	6
Agree	56.5%	13
Disagree	17.4%	4
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 9: Inclusion improves social skills of students with disabilities.

The majority of teachers surveyed indicated that inclusion improves the social skills of students with disabilities. Table 9 shows that 91.3% of the teachers reported they strongly agree or agree that inclusion improves social skills.

Table 9

Statement 9: Inclusion Improves Social Skills

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	30.4%	7
Agree	60.9%	14
Disagree	4.3%	1
Strongly Disagree	4.3%	1

Statement 10: Students with disabilities who spend half of their school day or more in the resource room get their academic needs met adequately.

Indicated in Table 10, 65.2% of the teachers surveyed strongly agree or agree that students with disabilities who are instructed in the resource room for more than a half a day get their academic needs met. A total of 17.4% of the teachers surveyed disagree with this statement.

Table 10

Statement 10: Students With Disabilities Get Their Needs Met In The Resource Room

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	4.3%	1
Agree	60.9%	14
Disagree	17.4%	4
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 11: Students with disabilities are not accepted by their peers.

Of the teachers surveyed only 13% agreed that students with disabilities are not accepted by their peers. As shown in Table 11, 82.6% strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement and feel that students with disabilities are accepted by their peers.

Table 11

Statement 11: Students With Disabilities Are Not Accepted By Peers

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	13.0%	3
Disagree	65.2%	15
Strongly Disagree	17.4%	4



Statement 12: A continuum of services (resource room, EA's team teaching, etc.) needs to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Table 12 shows that 100% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that a continuum of services are needed in order to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Table 12

Statement 12: Many Services Need To Be Provided For Students With Disabilities

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	78.3%	18
Agree	21.7%	5
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 13: Special education teachers do not provide educational support for all students in the general education classroom, they only support those with special needs.

Indicated in Table 13, 26.1% of the teachers surveyed agree that special education teachers only provide support for students with disabilities. A total of 73.9% of teachers surveyed indicated that they strongly disagree or disagree with this statement.

Table 13

Statement 13: Special Education Teachers Do Not Provide Support For All Students

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	26.1%	6
Disagree	56.5%	13
Strongly Disagree	17.4%	4

Statement 14: The special education classroom should only be used as a resource room when the general education teacher cannot adequately meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

As shown in Table 14, 47.8% of teachers strongly agree or agree that the special education classroom should only be used as a resource room when the general education teacher cannot adequately meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Table 14

Statement 14: The Special Education Classroom Should Be A Resource Room

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	4.3%	1
Agree	43.5%	10
Disagree	43.5%	10
Strongly Disagree	8.7%	2

Statement 15: Students with disabilities benefit from being included in their general education classroom.

The majority of teachers surveyed believe that students with disabilities benefit from being included in their general education classrooms. As shown in Table 15, 91.3% of teachers strongly agree or agree that students with disabilities benefit from inclusion.

Table 15

Statement 15: Students With Disabilities Benefit From Being Included In The Classroom

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	30.4%	7
Agree	60.9%	14
Disagree	4.3%	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 16: Students with disabilities require more attention and assistance than the general education teacher can provide.

Of the teachers surveyed, 82.6% strongly agree or agree that students with disabilities require more attention and assistance than the general education teacher can provide.

Table 16

Statement 16: Students With Disabilities Require More Attention and Assistance

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	21.7%	5
Agree	60.9%	14
Disagree	13.0%	3
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 17: Students with disabilities demonstrate more behavioral problems than students without disabilities.

Table 17 demonstrates that only 34.8% strongly agreed or agreed that students with disabilities demonstrate more behavioral problems than their peers without disabilities. A total of 60.9% of the teachers surveyed disagreed with this statement. Two participants indicated that this statement depends on the student's disability and that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities might have more behavior problems than students without disabilities.

Table 17

Statement 17: Students With Disabilities Demonstrate More Behavior Problems

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	8.7%	2
Agree	26.1%	6
Disagree	60.9%	14
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 18: General education teachers prefer to send students with disabilities to the special education classroom to receive services and instruction.

Indicated in Table 18, only 21.7% of the teachers surveyed agree that general education teachers prefer to send students with disabilities to the special education room to receive instruction. A total of 69.5% of the teachers surveyed strongly disagree or disagree with this statement.

Table 18

Statement 18: General Education Teachers Prefer To Send Students With Disabilities To The Resource Room For Instruction

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	21.7%	5
Disagree	65.2%	15
Strongly Disagree	4.3%	1

Statement 19: Students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.

According to Table 19, 73.9% of the teachers surveyed strongly agree or agree that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are able to participate in the general education classroom activities.

Table 19

Statement 19: Students With Emotional Behavioral Disabilities Are Able To Participate In The  
General Education Classroom

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	4.3%	1
Agree	69.6%	16
Disagree	13.0%	3
Strongly Disagree	8.7%	2



Statement 20: Students with cognitive disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.

As indicated in Table 20, 60.8% of the teachers surveyed strongly agree or agree that students with cognitive disabilities are able to actively participate in the general education classroom. One participant indicated that students with cognitive disabilities could participate with modifications. A second participant indicated that many students with cognitive disabilities do not have the academic skills to participate.

Table 20

Statement 20: Students With Cognitive Disabilities Are Able To Participate In The General Education Classroom

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	4.3%	1
Agree	56.5%	13
Disagree	26.1%	6
Strongly Disagree	8.7%	2

Statement 21: Students with learning disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.

Of the teachers surveyed, 95.7% strongly agreed or agreed that students with learning disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.

Table 21

Statement 21: Students With Learning Disabilities Are Able To Participate In The General Education Classroom

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	26.1%	6
Agree	69.6%	16
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 22: Although inclusion of students with disabilities is important, the necessary resources are not available in our school for it to succeed.

Table 22 shows that 64.8% of the teachers surveyed strongly agree or agree that there are not enough resources available for inclusion to succeed. A total of 65.2% of the teachers indicated disagree with this statement. One study participant indicated that the school surveyed should be doing more for students with severe disabilities.

Table 22

Statement 22: Resources Are Not Available To Support Inclusion

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	17.4%	4
Agree	17.4%	4
Disagree	65.2%	15
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 23: General education teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms may disrupt the education of students without disabilities.

As shown in Table 23, 69.5% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed or agreed that teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms will disrupt the education of students without disabilities.

Table 23

Statement 23: Students With Disabilities Disrupt The Education of Students Without Disabilities

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	4.3%	1
Agree	65.2%	15
Disagree	21.7%	5
Strongly Disagree	4.3%	1

Statement 24: General education teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms will lower their overall class academic performance.

Table 24 indicates that only 30.4% agree that teachers are concerned about having students with disabilities in their classroom and that it will lower the overall class academic performance. However, 65.2% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they strongly disagree or disagree with this statement. One participant indicated that students with disabilities could lower classroom performance if the disruptions prevent the teacher from teaching.

Table 24

Statement 24: Students With Disabilities Will Lower Classroom Academic Performance

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	30.4%	7
Disagree	47.8%	11
Strongly Disagree	17.4%	4

Statement 25: I have observed inclusion promoting true friendships among students with and without disabilities.

Indicated in Table 25, 91.3% of the teachers surveyed have observed inclusion promoting true friendships among students with and without disabilities.

Table 25

Statement 25: Inclusion Promotes True Friendships

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	26.1%	6
Agree	65.2%	15
Disagree	8.7%	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 26: General education students benefit from having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom.

As shown in Table 26, 95.6% of the middle school teachers surveyed strongly agree or agree that general education students benefit from having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom.

Table 26

Statement 26: General Education Students Benefit From Inclusion

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>
Strongly Agree	39.1%	9
Agree	56.5%	13
Disagree	4.3%	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0

Statement 27: Please write any additional comments you have about inclusion.

The subjects in this study were given an opportunity to share any additional comments or information they had about inclusion. Out of the 23 respondents, 14 added additional comments. Out of the 14 additional comments made, Two were made by special education teachers and twelve were made by general education teachers. The following were the additional comments and information shared by the special education teachers:

“When teachers use strategies to support students with disabilities, these strategies help the students without disabilities as well to have success academically. Sometimes regular education teachers give up on students or don’t know what to do and that’s when they are referred to special ed. We need a better “response to intervention” plan.”

“It is hard to answer some of these questions because sometimes the answer is so dependent on who the student is, the teacher is, or what disability they have.”

The following were additional comments and information shared by the regular education teachers:

“Many of the questions really depend on the situation. Overall I feel it is important to have students with special needs included in general classes, but much more support is needed. This could be accomplished through more training, common planning time with special education teachers, and funding to provide adequate support in the classroom.”

“Inclusion works if the students want to be in the classroom. If the curriculum becomes too difficult and modifications are not made, the frustration of the special education student(s) can destroy the classroom. We are fortunate to have a resource room available all day for students to go to when they become frustrated or they can no longer behave in the classroom.”



“I feel we really must look at least restrictive environment for ALL students. Many students with disabilities work wonderfully with others but some don't. It needs to be individual.”

“Many of the questions can be answered differently. It all depends on the number of students in a class, the mix, the time of day, their work load, etc... I strongly feel that many of my special ed students would be more successful with a lighter schedule in 7th grade. They are overwhelmed.”

“More time needed to plan/modify lessons needs to be given to general education teachers/special education teachers. Some special education teachers and programs are spread too thin to adequately meet the needs of students when using the inclusion model.”

“I think it is beneficial to have students included in the career and technical education classes. These classes are hands on and really help those students who learn by doing.”

“Inclusion is a wonderful program for special education students if the teachers (special ed and general ed) are agreeable and positive about this plan. Training certainly should be required and the special ed teachers should also feel free to help ALL students in the room. Inclusion as a team approach can be a wonderful experience for students and teachers.”

“I do believe that students with severe handicaps (mental) do not belong in regular classrooms, not because they are a problem but it is frustrating to know that they may not be teachable and are there just to have some social contacts. Then grades are another problem!”

“I truly believe that students with severe behavioral, emotional, and cognitive disabilities need one place for them to be where they can feel a sense of belonging and stability. The current system that we use having them bounce from one class and teacher to another, I feel sets them up for more confusion and frustration. This in my opinion is what leads to behavioral problems,

especially if they have to do it alone without assistance. Some of the special education students I have seem less confident in themselves when surrounded by others that don't have the struggles they do. Having special education students in with the general education students does not always benefit the general education students when their behaviors affect others around them. Some special education students can function in the regular educational setting and there is no need to have them not be included. Yet, for others just conquering basic social, mental, and physical skills should be their number one top priority. We need to look at the skills and/or information that they will each need to feel and be successful in the "real world". I understand the academic importance of every subject area, but I don't feel that all students need to learn everything in each content area. That's where having the time to meet with the special education teacher to help tailor what they need would help with their educational experience, or providing an alternative placement that would meet those personal needs."

"Generally inclusion works for all involved, however when a student has such a severe issue especially behavior and emotion, I don't think it is fair to the other 27 students in the class to have to listen/observe/be affected by a disruptive child, especially when concerned about safety. Sometimes so much attention and time is spent on 1 or 2 kids that it hurts the majority. For the majority of students with disabilities, I do think it is a good idea provided we get the support needed. I also think it is Very important to get information about students and their needs/issues to the general ed teachers-this does not always happen."

"Sometimes I think more pullout is needed-more help in modifying assignments. Some students with severe disabilities are purely in the room to be with peers and understanding of concepts is minimal"

“This is so difficult because of much depends on the individual. I tried to answer this as generally "classroom teachers" not specifically from myself. I enjoy the students who have been included in my class and their success rate is very high.”

## Chapter V: Discussion

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine middle school regular and special education teacher attitudes and opinions on inclusion. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the results and findings of this study compared with other studies discussed in Chapter Two. This chapter will also include conclusions of the results of the study. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with recommendations for further studies and for the participants of the study.

### *Discussion*

The results of this study agree with the general consensus of the literature reviewed that collaboration between regular education and special education teachers is needed to make inclusive classrooms successful. Studies such as Hammond and Ingalls (2003) and Biddle (2006) stressed the importance of collaboration among all school staff members as an important factor in making inclusion successful. Participants of this study agreed with studies such as McLeskey and Waldron (2002) and Hammond and Ingalls (2003) which conclude that regular and special education teachers need additional training, in-services, and resources in order to help them meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Bowers (2004) found that teachers need to think about the individual students when deciding on a placement. The participants from this study indicated in their additional comments that they also believe that placement decisions should be based on individual student needs. A study done by Cole, Waldron, and Majd (cited in Peck, Staub, Gallucci and Schwartz 2004, para. 4) reported that nondisabled children also made academic gains when enrolled in inclusive classrooms. Bricker (2000), found that both students with and without disabilities benefit from the increased support and accommodations provided in inclusive classrooms. The participants of

this study agree that inclusion can benefit all students and also promote increased social skills and friendships. McLeskey and Waldron (2002) found that a big concern among regular education teachers is that having students with disabilities in their classroom would bring down the overall academic performance of the class. Of the participants in this study the majority disagreed with this concern. The results did indicate a slight difference between regular education and special education teachers, with special education teachers agreeing more that this was a concern.

### *Conclusions*

Based on the results of this study, the majority of special education and regular education teachers have positive attitudes and opinions toward inclusion. Special education teachers stated more than regular education teachers that the special education room should only be used as a resource room when student needs cannot be met within the regular education classroom. Special education teachers also stated more than regular education teachers that the regular education teachers would be concerned about the overall classroom performance by including special education students in the classrooms.

The majority of teachers in this study agreed that students with disabilities actively participate in classroom learning activities. Both regular education and special education teachers agree that students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and learning disabilities all participate in learning activities within the general education classroom. However, the special education teachers agreed more than the regular education teachers that students with cognitive disabilities can actively participate in meaningful learning activities. Both regular education and special education teachers agreed that students with learning disabilities are the most involved in classroom learning activities. The regular education teachers

agreed significantly more than the special education teachers that students with disabilities have more behavior problems and need more assistance than the general education classroom can provide.

Overall, the majority of participants felt that students with and without disabilities can benefit from inclusive classrooms and increase their social skills and form friendships with each other. About half of the study participants report that they felt there is administrative support to meet the needs of students in inclusive classrooms. The majority of teachers agreed that they are not currently receiving enough ongoing training, in-services, or resources to feel comfortable teaching students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The majority of teachers in this study agreed that collaboration between special education teachers and regular education teachers is extremely important to help make inclusion successful. Many teachers also felt that more time is needed for staff to prepare and work together to plan curriculum and implement strategies to make inclusion successful. Finally, the participants in this study report that they do believe inclusion can be successful with collaboration, a continuum of services, and when placement decisions are made based on individual student needs.

### *Recommendations*

After reviewing the results and conclusions of the survey, the researcher developed the following recommendations:

1. In order to generalize the results of this study a larger sample size is needed. Conducting this study with surrounding area middle schools would give a larger sample size and allow the researcher to determine whether there are any differences in attitudes and opinions within the special education disciplines and regular educators.

2. This study could benefit from being conducted with an entire school district. This would allow the researcher to examine all levels, elementary, middle, and high school to determine if there are different attitudes and opinions within the different schools. In addition to surveying teachers, it may be of interest to survey administrators, parents and students.
3. This researcher recommends additional collaboration and planning time be provided for special education, regular education teachers and other school staff members. This would allow teachers to work together to develop strategies and curriculum to meet the needs of students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.
4. The administration needs to increase support and provide ongoing staff development and in-services to help staff feel competent in teaching students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.
5. The administration should provide additional resources and support (materials, staffing, etc...) to special education and regular education teachers to build successful inclusive classrooms.
6. Additional research studies should focus on specific disabilities (emotional and/or behavioral disabilities, cognitive disabilities, severe cognitive disabilities, autism, and learning disabilities ) and the effects of the different disabilities in inclusive classrooms.
7. In order to help determine factors behind positive and negative attitudes and opinions, this researcher recommends addition perception questions to the survey. Interviewing regular and special education teachers would also be of interest

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## APPENDIX A

Dear Respondent,

I am inviting you to participate in a research project to study teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusion. Along with this letter is a consent to participate form and a short survey that asks a variety of questions about inclusion. I am asking you to complete the survey and return it to the envelope marked "Inclusion Survey" located by the mailboxes. This survey should take you about fifteen to twenty minutes to complete.

The results of this survey will be included in my research paper. Through your participation I hope to examine and analyze middle school general education and special education teacher attitudes and opinions on inclusion. I hope the results will be useful in adding to the growing data on inclusion. The results of this survey will be available in the University of Wisconsin-Stout thesis catalog upon the completion of my research paper.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the survey or about being in this study, you may contact me by e-mail at [hatchelle@uwstout.edu](mailto:hatchelle@uwstout.edu). This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Wisconsin-Stout

Sincerely,

Eryn Hatchell

## APPENDIX B

**Consent Form**

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that only minimal identifiers are necessary. I understand that the results will be given in a manner that subjects will not be identified. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. The results will be given to the school administration and participants of this study and the information can be used to identify the needs of teachers, and other school staff. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

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**Statement of Consent:**

By signing this consent form you agree to participate in the project entitled, Regular Education and Special Education Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion

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 Signature

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 Date

## APPENDIX C

**Inclusion Survey**

**This is a survey of general and special education teacher attitudes, opinions, and concerns toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. The completed surveys will be collected and examined in anonymity. This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time to complete. Thank you for your time and participation in this study.**

**Demographic Data**

**Check the appropriate boxes for each category**

1. Your position in the school district  
 General education teacher     Special education teacher
  
2. Total years of teaching experience  
 0-5     6-10     11-15     16-20     21-25     > 25 years
  
3. Subject you teach (i.e. math, science, art, health, etc. or CD, LD, EBD, Cross-Categorical)

**Please select the response that best reflects your thoughts for each statement.**

**Teacher Training and Cooperation**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1. General education teachers and other staff are provided with ongoing training and in-services in order to prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with disabilities.				
2. General education teachers have the instructional skills and educational background to effectively teach students with disabilities in the general education classroom.				
3. General education teachers and special education teachers need to collaborate in order for inclusion to be successful.				
4. Teachers and staff do not have administrative support in planning and preparation time, to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms.				
5. General education teachers are comfortable team teaching content areas with special education teachers.				
6. Special education teachers provide educational support for all students in the general education classroom.				
7. Special education teachers only provide assistance to students with disabilities in the general education classroom.				

### Students with Disabilities and Special Education Services

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
8. Students with disabilities actively participate in classroom activities with all their peers.				
9. Inclusion improves social skills of students with disabilities.				
10. Students with disabilities who spend half of their school day or more in the resource room get their academic needs met adequately.				
11. Students with disabilities are not accepted by their peers.				
12. A continuum of services (resource room, EA's team teaching, etc.) needs to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities.				
13. Special education teachers do not provide educational support for all students in the general education classroom, they only support those with special needs.				
14. The special education classroom should only be used as a resource when the general education teacher cannot adequately meet the needs of the students with disabilities.				
15. Students with disabilities benefit from being included in their general education classroom.				
16. Students with disabilities require more attention and assistance than the general education teacher can provide.				
17. Students with disabilities demonstrate more behavioral problems than students without disabilities.				
18. General education teachers prefer to send students with disabilities to the special education classroom to receive services and instruction.				
19. Students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.				
20. Students with cognitive disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.				
21. Students with learning disabilities are able to actively participate in general education classroom learning activities.				
22. Although inclusion of students with disabilities is important, the necessary resources are not available in our school for it to succeed.				

**General Education**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
23. General education teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms may disrupt the education of students without disabilities.				
24. General education teachers are concerned that having students with disabilities in their classrooms will lower their overall class academic performance				
25. I have observed inclusion promoting true friendships among students with and without disabilities.				
26. General education students benefit from having students with disabilities included in the general education classroom.				

27. Please write any additional comments you have about inclusion.

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**Thank you for your time and participation in this study!**