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A Study of the Social and Emotional Growth and Development of Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Setting in an Inner-City Middle School

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A Study of the Social and Emotional Growth and Development of Students with
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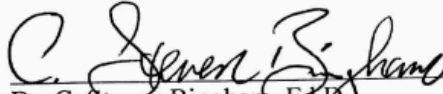
By
Heather Rachelle Lemmons

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education


Gardner-Webb University
2015

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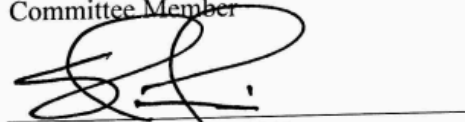
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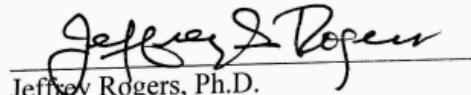
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First and foremost, I give thanks and praise to my God and Father who has given me the ability to complete this journey. I am nothing without Him. I can do all things through Him.

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Also, to my grandfathers in Heaven who are looking down and smiling, this is for you.

Abstract

A Study of the Social and Emotional Growth and Development of Students with Disabilities in an Inclusive Setting in an Inner-City Middle School. Lemmons, Heather Rachelle, 2015: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Inclusion/Social Development/Students with Exceptional Needs/Emotional Development

The purpose of this retrospective, explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to determine the impact of an inclusive educational setting on the behavioral, social, and emotional growth and development of students with various disabilities. Many aspects of a student's educational experiences can be affected by a proper placement in an inclusive setting with nondisabled peers including discipline rates and referrals, need for behavioral goals and plans, and perceptions concerning personal social growth and development.

The setting for this research study was an inner-city middle school serving Grades 7 and 8 in western North Carolina. Eighth-grade middle school students identified as students with disabilities who were currently being educated in the inclusive, regular setting but had previously been educated during intermediate school in a separate or resource setting excluded from their nondisabled peers created the cohort.

The methodology used in this research study included a complete document analysis comparing the rates of disciplinary infractions resulting in out-of-class or school suspensions from 2012-2015. Also, the SEARS-A survey and student interviews were administered to gain personal perspectives from the cohort members.

When reviewing the results, the research indicated a reduction in the number of office referrals of students with disabilities in the inclusive setting when compared to the separate setting as well as positive student perceptions relating to being instructed in the inclusive classroom with regard to advancing their social growth and development skills.

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Chapter I: Introduction

What educator would not want to have a classroom community of well-behaved regular education and special education students living happily together? Many times when the email comes through a teacher's inbox stating that he/she will have a mixture of regular and exceptional children, fear chills his/her very soul. The teacher runs down the hall asking fellow colleagues why this is happening to him/her or what has he/she done to deserve this. However, this should not be the case. Teaching students with special needs is not a punishment nor should it be considered an awful experience waiting to happen. Regular education students as well as students with special needs benefit both academically and behaviorally from being instructed in the same environment together. Instead of fearing this situation, a teacher should disregard any stereotypical fears related to special education students being problematic and embrace this opportunity as a means to teach and touch the lives of all students (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010).

On a yearly basis, one in every four students who qualify within the program of students with disabilities experience discipline issues that manifest in discipline referrals as well as ISSs and OSSs (Morris & Thompson, 2008). However, over 52% of these referrals occur in the special education setting or when the students are separated from their other peers (Vian, 2012). Students have been interviewed and reported as saying that they feel as if a "stigma" is associated with their name because they have difficulties learning and behaving in the school setting (Parker, 2009). This feeling is escalated when the students find themselves leaving the halls of the regular classroom settings in order to attend their "special" classes in another part of the school building (Miller, 2012). Could this be a leading cause of discipline problems? Could being taught in a regular classroom

with other students be the answer to the problem?

Statement of the Problem

With the federal legislature constantly making changes, state and local educational authorities amending policies, and individual schools implementing new procedures and initiatives, it is very difficult for teachers to keep abreast and on track of all the happenings within their own classroom, building, school district, and state. With budget cuts, reductions in funding, and changes in teacher-to-student ratios, teachers have to do more in their classroom with a larger number of students and fewer resources (Hurwitz, 2008). Therefore, when a teacher is then told that she has been selected as an inclusion teacher and will have a variety of exceptional students placed in her class with an exceptional children's co-teacher, panic strikes her heart (Friend & Cook, 2000). As North Carolina state law mandates, teachers must be highly qualified in the subject area they are teaching, and many special education teachers did not attend school to teach a subject matter but more to teach a special type of student (Taylor, 2011). Therefore, students have to move from a resource or self-contained setting to the regular education setting in order for their academic needs to be met. Herein lies the problem. Many teachers fear students with special needs being integrated into their classroom for many reasons (Friend & Cook, 2000). Exceptional children, regardless of their true eligibility area, are often associated with having more discipline problems as well as deficits in social skills and communication (Canges, 2010). Surprisingly, teachers are not as concerned with these students functioning cognitively at a lower level or not being able to perform academically on the same level as the other students. Miller (2012) stated that teachers feel as if they can handle the academic concerns or weaknesses by using methods such as differentiated teaching and lesson planning, cooperative group learning,

modified assignments and tests, and peer tutoring. However, teachers feel they are not prepared for the discipline problems and social deficits which they “assume” will also be apparent in these students who are being integrated into their classroom. In contrast, research dictates that students with exceptional needs would rather be educated in inclusive settings not only for academic purposes but also for social and emotional growth and development (Battista, 1999). Students also have a perspective that requires some additional research and study: How does participating in an inclusive educational setting impact the social and emotional growth and development of a student with disabilities (Friend, 2005)? Essentially, the problem is students who are educated in a resource or separate setting are experiencing more behavioral problems requiring more intensive intervention and are not developing socially and emotionally due to their restrictive environment (Abebe & Hailemariam, 2007).

This is an ongoing problem in counties and states all across the United States. In every school district and classroom in America, student discipline and classroom management are primary concerns (Morris & Thompson, 2008). For regular education teachers, these concerns are escalated once students with special needs or disabilities are added into the class setting. However, research has shown that students with disabilities who are included in regular class settings with their regular peers experience more positive emotional and social success (MacSuga-Gage, Simonsen, & Briere, 2012). The problem remains that when students are not educated in the inclusive setting, their discipline referrals increase while their social and emotional growth and develop skills decrease. In turn, the students are not receiving the academic education they require due to being removed from the class setting. Also, students are remaining stagnant with their social and emotional development due to a more restrictive environment that does not

yield to learning how to function and adapt to various situations and with different types of individuals.

Addressing the Problem

Deciding and implementing the appropriate placement for a student with a disability so that his/her social and emotional needs as well as behavioral needs can be addressed is a problem that is specific to each student and situation (Farrell, 2001). Many students are placed in a too restrictive environment that actually works as a detriment to the student (Dawes, 2011). The students with disabilities in these restrictive settings are experiencing increased behavioral concerns as well as limited social and emotional growth and development due to the restrictive nature of the setting (Dawes, 2011). However, this problem has garnered much attention in literature, research studies, and experimental designs as found through journal articles, readings, and case studies. The concept of educating students with special needs and disabilities within the regular classroom setting has been a constant source of debate and uncertainty (Abebe & Hailemariam, 2007). Research is now moving from reviewing not only the academic concerns associated with integrating this dynamic population but the social and emotional concerns as well (Mitchell-Kreuer, 1994).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this retrospective, explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to determine the impact of an inclusive educational setting on the behavioral, social, and emotional growth and development of students with various disabilities. This study sought to explore and better understand the role of the inclusion setting on the behavioral, social, and emotional growth of students with disabilities through both quantitative and qualitative measures. A group of inner-city middle-school students' demographic,

discipline, and Exceptional Children's data were reviewed and analyzed. Also, this study sought to discover each student's perspectives concerning their individual social and emotional growth and development from participating in the inclusive educational setting.

Exceptional Children and the Law

When educating students with special needs with either academic or behavioral concerns, many laws and policies become influential in the decision-making processes. Public Law 94-142 governs students with disabilities and provides the supports and services necessary to ensure these students' educational and behavioral rights are upheld and maintained within any school district they may attend. The federal law then leads to specific state laws as well as the local educational authority, school district, and specific school sites' laws and policies. Decisions cannot be made on a whim and must be decided using researched-based, legal grounding as the primary support (Taylor, 2011). Students with disabilities are governed both academically and behaviorally with strategies and supports put into place to ensure access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004). However, educators must be reminded and vigilant that education does not only consist of the academic goals and lessons learned but the behavior, emotional, functional, and social curricula as well (Canges, 2010).

Exceptional Children Settings: Inclusion

Students with special needs require more specific and direct documentation, strategy development, and researched-based interventions to meet their needs, both academic and behavioral (Matzen, Ryndak, & Nakao, 2010). Therefore, the setting the student is educated in is of utmost importance for learning to take place. Granted,

students with exceptional needs have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) written that specifically addresses the student's strengths and weaknesses in all academic and social areas (Alquraini, 2012). Students identified with special needs, academic or behavioral, may be served in a very restrictive setting such as a separate or self-contained setting in which all of their peers are considered students with special needs or in a less restrictive setting such as a regular classroom with a diverse group of peers within class support, also known as the inclusion setting (Taylor, 2011). Research has shown that students who are included in class settings with their nondisabled peers learn more appropriate social skills, can practice social strategies and interventions learned, and will adapt to the school environment in positive ways (Conroy, Dunlap, Clarke, & Alter, 2005).

Social Emotional Growth and Development

Students with special needs and disabilities have a wide range of settings in which they can be educated; however, in recent literature, a mounting concern has grown around the topic of discipline and the effects of students with special needs participating in the regular class setting. Research has shown that students with either academic or behavioral disabilities will often resort to using inappropriate behavior to avoid learning tasks, listening and respecting teachers, and accepting or relating to peers especially when they feel as if they are not involved or integrated in the class setting or lessons (Canges, 2010). Some students misbehave to avoid having to attend the special education classroom, while some use this strategy to avoid work they are being asked to do which seems too easy or juvenile simply because they are labeled as a student with a disability (Conroy et al., 2005). However, the one setting in which students feel less targeted and more accepted is in the inclusion setting. This setting allows students to be part of a diverse group of peers while not only learning grade-level curriculum but also how to

successfully function in a class setting (Kane, Head, & Cogan, 2004). Granted, this setting causes teachers more concern due to the unknown, but the students with disabilities see a new world outside of the special education classroom.

Deficiencies in Literature

Despite an increased interest in special education and serving students with disabilities under the proper guidelines and policies, it is surprising that very few studies focus on students with disabilities' social and emotional growth and development, regardless of their eligibility area. Unfortunately, there are some deficits within the literature when social and emotional growth and development of students with disabilities educated in the inclusion setting have been researched. Current literature and research tend to focus mainly on certain types of disabilities that are more prone to eliciting behavior problems (Vian, 2012). A plethora of information can be found on students with autism (AU) or seriously emotional and behavioral disabilities, but not very much research is geared toward other disability areas such as learning-disabled, other health impaired, or intellectually impaired. The eligibility areas that do not have a more pronounced behavioral component associated with the disability seem to be overlooked. Numerous studies have focused on integrating students with AU into regular class settings, teaching peer relationship building, and implementing specific social interventions and strategies to use across the total school setting (Wedell, 2008). Students with severe emotional disabilities have also been researched with assistance given to teaching behavioral interventions and strategies which can be used with adults and peers in the school setting (Vaughn, Kim, Sloan, Hughes, Elbaum, & Sridhar, 2003). The other eligibility areas are just not as researched.

Also, studies that have a main quantitative focus on discipline, referrals, or data

also tend to be focused around the disability areas in which behavior is the primary concern. It seems as if discipline is not a concern for any other eligibility areas in which students could be served or placed (Burton, 2005). However, this is not necessarily the case. All disabilities presented in the federal guidelines could have discipline as a secondary component or as a need, but the current research does not address this fact (Miller, 2012).

Aside from researching behavioral needs for students who qualify as students with disabilities in a behavior-related area, the primary topic or focus of concern for students with disabilities seems to coagulate around academics. Research has proven that students with special needs have cognitive, intellectual, and academic concerns (Hilliard, 1992). There are copious amounts of researched-based literature supporting proven academic techniques and strategies for students who have disabilities related to academic concerns but less concerning functional or behavioral skills.

Lastly, research does not give much credence to the qualitative data that support students' perceptions and opinions on their personal behavior and/or the setting in which they desire to be educated. Teachers, parents, and other professional personnel tend to believe they are the experts in knowing their own student's needs; however, many times discussion with the child could bring about a whole different focus (Farrell, 2001). Baker (1999) completed an extensive study focusing on the attitudes of regular and special education teachers in the inclusive classroom, but the students' perspectives or perceptions were not addressed. It seems unfortunate and unfair to decide the worth or merit of a program strictly from the perceptions of an adult without much regard for the student who is actually living the educational experience. Therefore, time and research need to put forth in relating documented data to student perceptions and opinions.

Significance of Study

This study has the potential to impact a large population of individuals concerned with educating the entire student who has special needs or a disability. From parents to teachers, students, and the school leaders, this study will provide detailed descriptions, documented data, and analysis of information that may explain the impact of being educated in an inclusive classroom concerning students who are labeled “special education” on social and emotional growth and development. This study could also reach as far as assisting students with disabilities who have a better social and emotional sense of self due to being instructed in a regular classroom setting to continue with school, therefore decreasing drop-out rates and increasing graduation rates. Academics are very important; but having sufficient self-esteem, social strategies, and emotional development contributes to the drive and motivation to remain in school especially during the more challenging situations (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008).

In general, this study will provide additional information that may help all individuals interested in the key concepts of special education, inclusion, and social or emotional growth and development. Comprehending the law governing special education students, realizing the various educational settings available to students with special needs, and analyzing the importance of educating disabled students with their nondisabled peers may allow educators, leaders, and other personnel a more thorough understanding of educating these students. Also, with the focus shifting from just academic to behavioral and social growth, educators and leaders may be able to begin making connections between the educational and functional learning that is occurring in many class settings.

Teachers, both regular and special, are one group of individuals who this study

may influence directly. Educators who are being more open to having students in their classrooms who are considered students with special needs may fear the unknown and seem to correlate special education students to discipline problems. However, this may not always be the case (Baker, 1999). Research currently shows a more negative perception concerning regular education teachers to the inclusive classroom as well as the special education student (Miller, 2012). The data in this study may explain the relationship between discipline and exceptional children data with students with disabilities. Also, this study aims to explore the impact of the inclusion setting on the social and emotional growth and development of students with disabilities allowing teachers to see the vital importance of having both disabled and nondisabled students learning in the same classroom setting. This study may prompt teachers to alter their practices to include more interactions between regular and special education students not just to aid in academic learning but in social development as well as start to diminish some of the stereotypical fears associated with special education students being considered the “bad” students.

In addition to teachers, administrators and school leaders find vital importance in making sure all students are educated in the best manner possible per the federal law and statutes. Students with special needs often have a few additional caveats that must be attended to as their education is planned and delivered (Hurwitz, 2008). This study may provide documentation which may assist district and school leaders in realizing the impact of the inclusion class setting on students with disabilities in hopes that sound, educational decisions and planning can occur. Data were reviewed concerning demographics, discipline, Individualized Behavior Plan progress, and behavioral referral information. This study may create a new method of developing and planning schools,

teams, and classrooms to ensure that both the regular and special education students' needs are met by using each other as tools for learning and growing.

Research Questions

The research involved in this study is centered on Bandura's social learning theory (Sashkin, 1977) and Tomlinson's (2012a) and Friend and Cook's (2000) theories of differentiation. Bandura's theory of social learning was founded on the premise that children are surrounded by models they continuously observe (Malone, 2002). Through this observation, children pay close attention and begin to model or encode the behavior they have observed. The children will tend to imitate those individuals similar to them first and will also imitate individuals of the same sex (Sashkin, 1977). Next, the adults around the children will then respond to the behavior either with reinforcement or punishment. This has significant bearing on the likelihood of the child continuing or terminating the behavior (Malone, 2002). Lastly, the children will then observe what occurs when another person decides to copy or not copy a typical behavior and will make cognitive decisions on if he/she wants to participate in the behavior (Malone, 2002). Therefore, social learning theory states that children/students tend to copy the behavior they observe while determining if the reinforcements are worth the actions. The reinforcements can be positive or negative (Sashkin, 1977). Each individual student or child makes the decision based on the observation and outcomes if the behavior warrants the outcome (Parke, 1979).

In addition to social learning theory, Friend and Cook (2000) and Tomlinson (2012a) compiled an abundant amount of information on differentiation of learning. Differentiation is a term used in current educational literature to suggest that all students do not learn the same and need various learning strategies and environments to meet their

academic and social potential. Differentiation can result in the forms of academic, functional, and behavior skills as well as teaching, learning, and environmental situations (Tomlinson, 2012b). Gone are the days in which all students can sit in straight rows, listening to the teacher, and gain all the knowledge needed through listening and assessment (Tomlinson et al., 2003). New methods and strategies need to be researched and employed within the context of the classrooms to ensure all students' modalities of learning are being met as well as performance outcomes are properly measured (Friend et al., 2010). However, it is noted that this needs to occur for all types of learners from the academically gifted student, regular education learner, as well as the student with a special need or disability (Friend, 2005). Differentiated learning skills and strategies are creating a better-rounded, 21st century learner (Friend & Cook, 2000).

Background

The students participating in this cohort have undergone unique circumstances. This cohort consists of 35 middle school students who have educationally traveled as a unit from sixth grade through eighth grade. These students were educated in the intermediate school environment for sixth grade. During the 2012-2013 school year, the students in this cohort who were served in the exceptional children's setting, participated in a resource or separate setting. This setting required students to be removed from their nondisabled peers. When the students transitioned to the seventh-grade middle-school environment, their educational setting changed from resource or separate to a regular setting. The students remained in the regular setting with the support of the special education teacher for the seventh- and eighth-grade years. Therefore, the data collected from the research questions were compared to the sixth-grade intermediate school year education in a separate or resource setting to the seventh- and eighth-grade middle school

year's education in a regular setting.

The following research questions are identified and explained through data collection and analysis.

1. To what extent are students with disabilities' discipline referrals, IEPs with behavioral goals, and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) impacted by participation in an inclusive educational setting over a 3-year period?
2. How does the inclusive educational setting impact students with disabilities' emotional growth and development as measured by student interviews and a valid and reliable survey instrument?
3. How does the inclusive educational setting impact students with disabilities' social growth and development as measured by student interviews and a valid and reliable survey instrument?

Delimitations

There were several delimitations to this study. First, the cohort consisted of a small group of students, 35, who were selected due to their consistency in moving from a more restrictive setting to a less restrictive setting. The students involved in this study also are not considered "severely" disabled nor do they possess the eligibility labels of intellectually disabled, moderate or severe. Second, the range of time purposed for this study spanned 3 consecutive school years beginning in the fall of 2012 and ending in the spring of 2015. The data collected and analyzed are limited to these 3 years. Lastly, the researcher of this study is also the teacher of record for this group of individuals. Having complete access and control over the students' documentation and paperwork allowed for continuity and ensured appropriate legality and confidential measures.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study as well. The students experienced a transition from intermediate to middle school during this time period of 3 years. With this transition came new teachers, routines, and schedules. However, the major limitation associated with this study is the maturation of the students. These students have matured emotionally, academically, behaviorally, and functionally over the course of the past 3 years. This maturation affected the outcome of this study.

Organization of the Study

The organization of the study follows a 5-chapter sequence. The first chapter explained and introduced the purpose for this study by providing the statement of the problem, summary of literature and deficiencies in the literature, and research questions to govern the study. The following chapter focuses on reviewing the literature related to the study. The literature review focuses on the different aspects related to a complete understanding of the components associated with the research as well as some opposition to the research's context. The third chapter explains the methodology that was employed to the research and the questions presented in the first chapter. This chapter explains the methodology, context, and participants of the study as well as the data collection procedure and analysis. The fourth chapter explains and interprets the results and outcomes of the research and questions through statistical tests and data collection procedures. This chapter discusses the findings associated with each research question and statistical measure or test used to obtain information for each question. Finally, the fifth chapter contains an overall discussion of the entire research project, design, implementation, and obtained results with suggestions for future studies. This chapter also incorporates explanations for unforeseen outcomes in this study as well as assistance

and ideas for educators in this field of study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the research and literature involving special education policies, procedures, and implementation models with an emphasis on social growth and development within an inclusive setting. The literature is organized by the inception, development, and implementation of special education settings and practices. History involving the creation of special programs via the law is supported by an in-depth review of special education law, definitions, areas of eligibility, placements and services including self-contained, resource and inclusion settings, academic and social needs, and application of social growth and development. This review will narrow its focus into a more intensive review of social growth, definitions, and applications in self-contained, regular, and resource settings. The literature review process began with searches for the most current and up-to-date research on special education, inclusive practices, and social growth and development.

For this literature review, multiple databases were used to explore and identify special education from the beginning of law and practices to the implementation of services and programs in a variety of settings. Education and electronic databases were used such as Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCOhost), Info Trac, Bulldog One Search, American Psychological Association (PsychINFO), ProQuest Dissertation database, as well as other peer-reviewed studies, journals, and books. Some of the beginning historical data are older due to the nature of the law and special education policies. Also, there is a plethora of different types of studies including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs used to analyze social and academic growth for students with varying disabilities in

special education settings.

History of Special Education: Law and Policies

Special education is an ever-changing, dynamic practice that has undergone scrutiny and evaluation since its inception. The Constitution of the United States was the first document and piece of legislature that provided permanent protection to all handicapped people. From the federal constitution came the various state constitutions that worded their documents with specific language to ensure the rights of all individuals to an appropriate education. Next, special education statutes were set into place in all states requiring the service of special education to all handicapped students (Citron, 1983). However, all states did not provide an adequate type of special education; therefore, the federal government had to create more substantial legislature that would require states to provide education and services to all individuals; hence, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This Rehabilitation Act stated that recipients of federal funds were not allowed to discriminate against people with disabilities. Therefore, federal funding must be distributed among varieties of individuals including those with disabilities, handicaps, or special needs (Keogh, 2007).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the preface to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act established in 1975 (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004). This policy streamlined the Rehabilitation Act to involving and specifically focusing on students with handicaps and special needs. From this piece of legislation was born the guiding principle that has shaped and reshaped special education since 1975. IDEA (PL 94-142) was created in 1975 and “established the right of children with disabilities to attend public schools, to receive services designed to meet their needs free of charge, at to the greatest extent possible, and to receive instruction in the regular classroom alongside

non-disabled children” (Aron & Loprest, 2012, p. 99).

Aron and Loprest (2012) continued to explain the subsequent components of IDEA and the effects these parts have on educating students with disabilities. Part B of IDEA involves federal grants used to cover some of the costs of special education for preschool age students as well as students ages 3 to 21, while Part C focuses on early intervention funding for children from birth to age 2. IDEA was in effect and governing students with special needs well, but as the educational pendulum started to swing so did the needs of special education students (Taylor, 2011). Students with special needs who were being educated in the public school setting were not receiving the opportunity of being instructed in a variety of settings. Many students who were labeled as students with disabilities were automatically pulled out of the class and educated separately from their nondisabled peers; therefore, these students were not integrated within the regular classroom setting (Farmer, 2000). IDEA was being followed; however, not always to the best interest of the student. Just because a student who was identified as having a disability needed services did not mean it had to be in a pullout, restrictive setting. Other settings were available but not being used effectively (Lembke & Stichter, 2006).

These pieces of legislature continued to prompt more and more rights and fights for equality for students as well as all individuals with special needs. From 1982 to 1990, many laws, policies, and procedures were being examined for individuals with special needs, yet two were life changing. In 1982, the court case of *Board of Education of Hudson Central School District v. Rowley* examined the right that all students with or without disabilities deserve to a FAPE and that “appropriate does not mean equal” (Citron, 1983, p. 4). This court case prompted a new law titled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) written in 1990. This law prohibited discrimination against

individuals with disabilities and banned segregation of these individuals. The ADA was a continuation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and continued to help individuals with disabilities have a sense of fairness and equality (Keogh, 2007).

IDEA was reauthorized in 1997 and provided many new experiences for students with special needs. The reauthorization stated that students with special needs should have access to the general education environment, curriculum, assessments, disciplinary procedures, alternative placements, and transition services in regards to their nondisabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012). This reauthorization stated, “inclusion equals legal equality for students with disabilities” (Taylor, 2011, p.48). A study conducted post IDEA reauthorization by Morris and Thompson (2008) also studied the disciplinary procedures of students with special needs. This study demonstrated an overrepresentation of students with disabilities in short- and long-term facilities due to lack of due process, negligence of disability areas and needs, and improper placement based on behavioral concerns. These students, mostly labeled as students with an emotional disability, have continued to be neglected due to the lack of qualified personnel, highly qualified teachers, specially trained teachers, and limited special education services they are entitled to receive based on their disability and subsequent needs (Morris & Thompson, 2008). All special education students, including those in alternative placements and facilities, deserve and still legally require a FAPE, rights to evaluations as needed, a student centered Individual Education Plan (IEP), and the right to due process if laws, policies, and procedures are not being adhered to (Samuels, 2004).

Students with special needs were governed under this doctrine until 2004 when a second reauthorization was passed through the legislature. This reauthorization of IDEA

to IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) focused more on parent involvement, accountability of results of assessments and evaluations, as well as researched-based and used proven practices and materials for students with varying disabilities based on their needs (Martin, 2005). This reauthorization allowed for parents to have more involvement in the process as well as held teachers more accountable for their students' learning and academic success (Hurwitz, 2008). IDEIA also focused more on improved collaboration among educators, related service providers, and other members of a child's instructional team (Hernandez, 2013).

More recently, the legislature has passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that affected students with special needs in a variety of ways. These students are held to the same standard as their nondisabled peers in the areas of curriculum and assessment. Also, the spectrum of special education services has changed due to the fact that all teachers must be highly qualified in their subject area in order to be the teacher of record for students in a given subject. Therefore, teachers who attended college to become special educators are not "allowed" to teach students reading, writing, or math unless they take the appropriate classes or tests that will allow their status to become highly qualified. To meet these new requirements, school districts and systems have had to think creatively to meet the needs of special education students (Samuels, 2004).

The Ins and Outs of Special Education

Special education has many facets and components that impact individuals in the educational/school setting. From the legislature and lawmakers to the superintendent, teacher, student, and parent, there is a wide variety of information needed to understand to the fullest extent possible the magnitude of special education. Special education is legally defined as

a federally funded program designed to provide access to a free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities up to age 21 in the public school systems. Schools must provide services according to the regulations set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act known as IDEA. All public schools in the U.S. are required by law to adhere to these regulations and provide direct and supportive services to assist children with disabilities. (IDEA, 2004, p. 1)

Research shows there is a distinct and legal process a student must adhere to in order to be placed in special programs. A multi-disciplinary team of individuals pertinent to a student's academic and behavioral success must meet, per federal law, to establish the strengths, weaknesses, and needs concerning a specific student. From this conversation and documentation, a student will then be assessed. For a student to be identified under one of the 14 qualifying disability areas, an evaluation process must occur. A student must undergo an extensive set of testing ranging from psychological, intellectual, medical, behavioral, adaptive, as well as motor and speech language. Since students can qualify in a variety of areas, assessments and tests must be conducted in all areas to make certain the correct eligibility identification is attained for each child (Samuels, 2004).

Once the assessments are concluded, the team associated with the student will reconvene and decide which eligibility area best meets the needs of the student as well as provide the most support academically, behaviorally, and functionally. From this data and documentation, an IEP is written addressing the students' strengths and weaknesses as well as frequency and location of services to address these needs. The team also uses the information presented in the cognitive and intellectual testing to determine if the student requires specific modifications and accommodations in the general classroom

setting in order to level the playing field with their nondisabled peers.

Upon completion of the major needs based on the assessments, the team then decides if any additional or related services are needed to assist the student. These services can range from speech to occupational therapy depending on the data collected during the assessments. The team compiles all of this information and proceeds to decide on the appropriate environment in which the student should be educated. Finally, the parent is presented with his/her rights such as his/her right of due process if he/she feels these decisions are not appropriate or if the student is being denied a FAPE. The parent finally decides to place the student in the program, and services can begin (North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities Handbook, 2014). This entire process is rooted and governed by federal law as well as the local state authority and laws of North Carolina. Policies, procedures, and guidelines are consistently and consciously followed with the student's best interest and academic need in mind.

In the course of the existence of special education, many statistics have been acquired and presented in various studies. For example, in 1975 one in five students was identified as a special education student. In 2004-2005, 6.7 million children were identified students with disabilities and received various levels of service (Aron & Loprest, 2012). With changes in federal and state laws, policies, and procedures, the magnitude of special education has increased reaching more students, providing more services, and allowing more opportunities for individual growth and development in an area of academic, functional, or behavioral need.

Eligibility Areas for Identification

A student can qualify under eligibility areas other than learning disabled. Many

states have around 14 qualifying eligibility areas including but not limited to AU; Orthopedically Impaired; Other Health Impaired; Speech Impaired; Multiple Disabilities; Specific Learning Disabled; Intellectually Disabled – mild, moderate, severe; Severely Emotionally Disabled; Developmentally Delayed (only for students ages three to seven); Traumatic Brain Injury; Visual Impairment; Hearing Impairment; and Deaf Blind Impairment. Students can also qualify with a primary disability as well as a secondary disability (North Carolina Policies for Governing Services for Students with Disabilities Handbook-Addendum, 2014). The following definitions and areas of eligibility were researched and reviewed through the North Carolina Policies for Governing Services for Students with Disabilities Handbook-Addendum (2014).

In North Carolina, a student with AU is defined as having a developmentally significant disability affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction. This condition adversely affects a child's academic and social performance. Traits associated with AU can include repetitive actions, stereotypical movements, restricted interests, resistance to environmental change or changes in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory stimuli.

In North Carolina, a student with Orthopedic Impairment (OI) is defined as having a severe physical impairment that adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term OI encompasses a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease, poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures.

In North Carolina, a student with Other Health Impairment (OHI) is defined as a student who has limited strength, vitality, or alertness including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli. This label can also be used for the following impairments:

chronic or acute health problems, asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette's Syndrome. These conditions adversely affect a student's educational performance.

In North Carolina, a student with Speech Impairment is defined as a student who has a communication disorder including impairment in fluency, articulation, and language or voice/resonance that adversely affects a student's educational performance. These language disorders can include the pragmatic function of language; semantic content of language; and the phonological, morphological, and syntactic form of language.

In North Carolina, a student with Multiple Disabilities is defined as a student who experiences difficulties and impairments in two or more of the eligibility areas. The combination of these disabilities negatively impacts a student's educational performance.

In North Carolina, a student with a Specific Learning Disability (LD) is defined as a student who has a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involving understanding or using spoken or written language that manifests itself in the student's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or complete mathematical calculations. These conditions can include perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. A student must demonstrate a 15-point discrepancy between his cognitive and educational performance or can qualify under the alternate to discrepancy if current and relevant data can be documented explaining the disability as related to the student's educational performance.

In North Carolina, a student with an Intellectual Disability (ID) is defined as having significantly below average (below 70) general intellectual functioning that

adversely affects a student's educational performance. This disability can occur concurrently with deficits in adaptive and developmentally delayed behaviors.

In North Carolina, a student with a Severely Emotional Disability (SED) is defined as exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long time and to a marked degree that adversely impacts a student's educational performance. These areas include an inability to make educational progress that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationship with others; inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances; a general mood of unhappiness or depression; and a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with school problems. A student with schizophrenia also is served under this category.

In North Carolina, a student with a Traumatic Brain Injury is defined as a student who has acquired an injury to the brain that was caused by an external physical force. This type of injury can also be caused by an internal occurrence resulting from a functional disability or psychosocial impairment that adversely affects a student's performance. This can occur with or without a loss of consciousness. Traumatic brain injured students experience impairments in cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual, motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech.

In North Carolina, a student with Visual Impairment is defined as a student who has an impairment in vision even after correction that adversely affects a student's academic performance. Visual impairment can include both partial sight and blindness and is the result of a diagnoses ocular or cortical pathology.

In North Carolina, a student with Hearing Impairment is defined as having a

hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired with attempting to process linguistic information through hearing. This hearing impairment adversely affects the student's educational learning even with an amplification device.

In North Carolina, a student with Deaf Blind Impairment is defined as having a combination of both deafness and blindness. The combination causes severe communication and other development and educational needs that cannot be met in the special education program solely under one or the other category.

Qualification and placement in these areas are addressed by reviewing data collected by health screenings, observations, motor screenings, behavioral rating scales, adaptive rating scales, speech screening, psychological testing, educational testing, and social developmental documentation as well as physical, hearing, vision, and occupational screening and evaluations (Taylor, 2011). Based on the three prongs of placement – meets an eligibility area, adversely affects the student's educational performance, and requires specially designed instruction – a student then qualifies for services under the given definition for the special education program (Martin, 2005).

Least Restrictive Environment

Once the decisions have been made as to what category the student's disability falls under, the team then decides what environment is considered the least restrictive that the student can be served through. IDEA defined Least Restrictive Environment as

to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in

regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA, 2004, p. 61)

Research has shown that it is imperative to look at each student in his/her entirety when deciding in what placement and environment his/her learning should occur. The LRE can range from totally exclusive and restrictive to less isolated and restrictive. The hierarchy of the least restrictive environment starts with the regular placement. The regular placement is defined as a student with a disability spending more than 80% of the day with nondisabled peers (Alquraini, 2013). The resource setting consists of a student spending 40%-79% of the day with nondisabled peers. The separate setting is one of the most restrictive within the educational setting. This setting only allows students to spend 39% or less of their academic school day with nondisabled peers (Alquraini, 2013). The most restrictive settings are those that are outside of the school building. These include home/hospitalization, separate school, or residential facility. These environments are for students with severe emotional or behavioral needs, medical concerns, or cognitive disabilities in which the public school along with special education support, and accommodations are still not adequate enough for students to receive the services they need to be successful (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). The question is then posed – where are the students when they are not being educated with their nondisabled peers? The answer to this question lies in the amount of direct service a student needs based on the goals and objectives set forth in her IEP. Some students need direct instruction in reading, math, and/or writing; while some need social skills, functional training, and adaptive skills development. The time provided through the direct interaction of a special education teacher in a special education classroom is driven by the data and documentation collected during formal and informal assessments, team input,

and observations conducted by all the members of the student's multi-disciplinary team. The less direct service the student requires, the more time the student will spend in the general curriculum with her nondisabled peers (Alquraini, 2013).

The Inclusion Model: Regular Setting

Many researchers, schools, and academic professionals in a variety of ways have defined the term inclusion. However, inclusion has not always been an option or method for delivering special education services. Early proponents of special education demanded students be isolated or excluded from nondisabled peers in an effort to assure these students were educated based on their own needs while not interfering with the learning and development of other students. A research study presented by McCarty (2006) stated, "a year after the Controller General (of Education) reported to Congress that 60 percent of the nation's disabled children were not receiving appropriate schooling" (p. 4). As IDEA has changed and been updated, so has the concept of inclusive education, teaching, learning, and practices.

The idea of the inclusive setting has been in existence, on a grand scale, as early as the 1960-1970s. In 1972, the United States District Court ruled in *Mills vs. Board of Education* that the District of Columbia could not exclude students with disabilities from attending public school (Samuels, 2004). In 1975, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, otherwise known as PL 94-142, was passed requiring all students with disabilities receive a FAPE in the least restrictive environment (Keogh, 2007). This act was later renamed as IDEA (Keogh, 2007). In 1990, the ADA was signed which added another layer of protection for individuals with disabilities in making certain their civil rights were protected as well as ensuring access to all areas of public life (Citron, 1983). This law also mandated that individuals, including students, with disabilities had access

to local, state, and federal programs; required that businesses provided reasonable accommodations as needed for disabled workers; as well as reasonable modifications as needed in order to ensure access to all public arenas (Citron, 1983). When this act became known as IDEA, these same rights and privileges then transferred to students in the educational setting. IDEA mandated that students be educationally served in the least restrictive environment regardless of their disability and that appropriate accommodations and modifications should be put in place to ensure student access the general curriculum to the highest extent possible (Keogh, 2007). The idea of inclusion was solidified in 2001 with NCLB that mandated all students be proficient in reading and math by the conclusion of 2014 (Citron, 1983). Throughout time, inclusion has been addressed and advocated on behalf of individuals and students with special needs and disabilities.

Inclusion is defined as “when students with disabilities receive their entire academic curriculum in the general education program” (Idol, 2006, p.78). Dickson (2000) explained inclusion as a learning environment that focuses on “construction of knowledge, confident, self-identity of students with comfortable, emphatic interactions with people with diverse backgrounds” (p. 252). However, the most complete and explicit definition that encompasses these different ideas and is the definition in which this research is focused around is, “Inclusive education is based on the principle that local schools should provide for all children, regardless of perceived difference, disability, or other social, emotional, cultural, or linguistic difference” (Florian, 2008, p. 203).

In special education, inclusion involves the collaboration of two teachers, one general education and one special education. The general education teacher has the dominant skills and knowledge in the areas of the curriculum, teaching practices, and

assessment quality (Beattie, Jordan, & Algozzine, 2006). The special education teacher has the expertise in dissecting the curriculum, scaffolding lessons, modifying assessments, using teachable moments to enhance social skill development, and bridging the gap between students moving from the more restrictive resource and separate settings to the regular settings (Agarwal, 2003). Inclusion, when done correctly, parallels a marriage of sorts in which two teachers bring all their talents and expertise to the table in hopes of enhancing and enriching the lives of all students in the classroom (Friend, 2005).

Inclusion Models

Friend (2005) has helped to develop many different ways inclusion can “look” in a classroom as well as methods and strategies in implementing this model. Inclusion, just like the least restrictive environment, supports involvement from a minimal level to a maximum level. There are six methods and practices built within the inclusion model. The first method in the inclusion model hierarchy involves one teacher teaching and one teacher observing. This method is used for newer teachers to the profession or is used in the first couple of days when a newly established inclusive classroom is just getting started. Sometimes the teachers need some time to experience this setting by watching one another teach so each one can discover his/her personal strengths and weaknesses he/she brings to the classroom (Friend et al., 2010). The second less interactive method is one teach and one assist. This method has been described as the special education teacher taking a more assistive role usually due to his/her lack of knowledge of the curriculum or reduced experience in the classroom (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012).

Parallel teaching is another strategy used in inclusive classrooms. The teachers

divide the students up into two groups. The room is also divided so each group has their own learning space. Both teachers have a lesson they will be presenting to their group of students. The two teachers teach the same lesson to the group they are in charge of; but the perk lies in the reduction of number of students, higher comfort level of students who are intimidated by large groups or peers, and the individualized support that can be provided by the teacher with a smaller group of learners (Obiakor et al., 2012).

Some inclusive classrooms thrive with the use of alternative teaching. This approach is considered two for the price of one (Friend, 2005). The class is divided into two sections. The teachers also have allotted specific learning environments for their instruction. One teacher will teach one lesson or mini-skill while the second teacher teaches a different lesson or mini-skill. The students rotate to both groups to learn the varying skills within the course of their instructional time. The teachers are teaching two related but different lessons. The students receive quality instruction from a teacher in a smaller group where questions can be asked and misconceptions can be erased prior to moving on to the next concept (Hernandez, 2013).

Many inclusive classrooms have students motivated and driven enough to implement station teaching. This method involves stations or centers placed around the learning environment (Friend & Cook, 2000). Each teacher is in charge of a station that will involve direct teaching and interaction with students. However, a student or peer can also be in charge of a station. Independent workstations are also a favorite center in this model of inclusion (Friend, 2005). The students are divided into groups depending on the number of stations available and travel to these stations throughout the duration of the learning session. Depending on the types of centers, the students may receive two lessons, one from each teacher, and attend an independent center to practice skills. Some

stations may be peer tutoring centers or peer reading areas to develop reading skills and fluency. This engaging method keeps students involved and active but must be used with children who can handle this type of learning environment (Obiakor et al., 2012).

The last inclusion model mentioned in research is deemed the most used and most effective. This model is termed team teaching. Team teaching is the true epitome of inclusive teaching. Both teachers have an active role in the delivering of the instruction and implementation of the curriculum on a daily basis within the classroom. The students see these two professionals as teachers and cannot delineate one being a special education teacher and one being a general education teacher. The pace of the lesson is fluid, expectations are enforced, and both teachers hold the students to high standards. Team teaching at its finest has often been described as teaching so fluid that one teacher can finish the other teacher's sentence while keeping the lesson rolling (Hernandez, 2013).

Inclusion Equals Collaboration

In order to make inclusion an effective and productive practice, the two professionals in the room must collaborate with one another. Collaboration is the key and is vital for the success of the students and individuals in the learning environment (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Hernandez (2013) stated that collaboration should demonstrate interdependence, shared perspectives, and goals by working together. "Working together means that positive interdependence exists among team members who agree to pool and partition resources and rewards and to operation from a firm foundation of shared values" (Hernandez, 2013, pp. 482-483). Inclusion is not only meant for the students to be included with one another but for the teachers to be involved and vested in student learning as well as social growth and development.

School Mindset: Inclusion

There have been massive amounts of research conducted as to what makes a functional and effective inclusive classroom. Unfortunately, there is not one answer, strategy, method, or policy that will guarantee student success and teacher excellence in the inclusive classroom. Research shows a great deal of preparation needs to be invested into establishing a school climate that supports and accepts an inclusive setting. Ashby (2012) best described the decision to incorporate inclusion into a school setting as “The following shared values (of the school climate) served as guiding principles in the program development process (a) inclusion and equity, (b) teacher as a decision makers, (c) multiculturalism, (d) innovations in education, and (e) field based experiences” (pp. 89-90).

A study conducted by the Canadian Council on Learning (2009) stated that inclusion was most effective for students with the eligibility areas of learning disabled, intellectually disabled, language impaired, and mixed disability groups. Of course, all disabilities can be included in the inclusive class; however, these disabilities proved to benefit the most from this special education setting. Once a school has decided to pursue developing an inclusive climate and classroom, the principal must then decide how to pair the teachers. Each classroom has one highly qualified general education teacher and one highly qualified special education teacher each with his/her own expertise of methods and strategies to teach the curriculum to all students (Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012). Next, a schedule must be designed which will meet the students with disabilities’ IEP goals and objectives as well as their service delivery time (Friend et al., 2010). The principal must spend time and energy in choosing the correct pair of teachers to provide this dynamic and engaging service to the students who will enter their classroom.

Principals must consider teaching styles, curriculum knowledge, personality traits, and classroom management styles when pairing teachers to ensure as successful a match as one can attain (Hansen & Morrow, 2012). Of course, no match will be perfect but using a little forethought up front could help reduce or diminish obstacles that could arise.

The Inclusive Classroom

Literature explains many different types of strategies, ways, methods, and ideas in establishing an inclusive classroom. Dickson (2000) explained that an inclusive classroom should provide students a variety of opportunities to develop skills, initiate social situations, increase self-help skills, assist with language development, improve cognitive and motor skills, and allow all students to participate in the classroom setting more effectively. Another suggestion documented by researchers includes promoting a climate within the classroom that is conducive to acceptance as well as appreciation of all individuals and their abilities (Friend, 2005). Some researchers even suggest a variety of teaching practices including clinical teaching, diagnostic teaching, and response contingent instruction to help all students find a place and a voice in the classroom (Volonino & Zigmond, 2007). Others feel that differentiation of curriculum and instruction, paying attention to student readiness, controlling the flow and fluidity of information, involving instruction in a contextual setting, and applying motivational strategies will assist all students, both general and special education, into an educational environment that is engaging and interactive (Tomlinson et al., 2003). These researchers also noted that an effective classroom has identified learning styles, intelligence preferences, gender, and culture of all their students so that appropriate instructional measures can be put into place for their education (Tomlinson et al., 2003). An inclusive classroom should also be proactive with education and not reactive to an instructional

emergency; have varied materials, variable pacing, and flexible use of small teaching and learning groups (Friend, 2005). The curriculum should be knowledge- and learner-centered while aligning academic diversity with classroom practice (Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy, & Wearmouth, 2009). It is a complex initiative that takes time, practice, and flexibility.

The Inclusive Teacher

Unfortunately, not all teachers are excited about being a teacher in the inclusion classroom, but many researchers and scholars have researched a variety of strategies that can assist both the special and general education teacher in being an exceptional inclusive teacher. The inclusion teacher, whether general or special, must feel a distinct social responsibility for all students (Friend et al., 2010). Inclusion means two teachers working together. A classroom should never be divided into the special students and the normal students (Hansen & Morrow, 2012). Both teachers should have a vested interest in all the students they reach throughout the class. Both teachers in the classroom should practice regular collaboration with all individuals both in and out of the school setting. The most effective inclusion teachers develop and share a teaching philosophy and agree on the skills, methods, and strategies that must be taught in the setting (Hausstatter & Connolley, 2012). Recognizing social interactions and opportunities, scaffolding social events and knowledge, working on skills in a holistic way, using students to help one another, carefully planning cooperative learning groups, and reaching all modalities of student learners are other areas the two teachers in the classroom need to develop and implement in their planning and teaching practices (Silva, Goncalves, Alvarenga Kde, 2012). Hernandez (2013) described an effective pair of inclusion teachers as having four ingredients: shared perspectives, attitudes, and preparation; professional efficacy;

interpersonal skill capacity; and shared contextual setting ideas and organizational capacity methods. However, the ultimate goal of the two professionals in the classroom should center on creating an inviting learning environment for all students to be academically and socially successful (Kilanowski-Press, Foote & Rinaldo, 2010).

The Inclusive Student

Without a doubt, the most important component in any classroom is the student. Everything an educator plans, creates, assess, and implements is focused on the student and the learning that can be attained from the practice put forth. Literature demonstrates that “one size does not fit all” (Holahan & Costenbader, 2000, p. 234). Students with special needs often require different elements in their instruction, as do students in the general education class setting. Students with learning disabilities need help with the reading and writing processes through decoding strategies, comprehension approaches, writing processes, and fluency development (Smith, 2011). Students with OHI need assistance learning focusing skills and strategies, organizational skills, or time management methods. Students classified as severely emotionally disabled require the teaching of anger management strategies, coping methods, de-escalation techniques, and appropriate communication methods (Stoutjesdijk, Scholte, & Swaab, 2012). Other disability areas require specific instruction in areas that are pertinent to their needs and goals. Students with AU require intensive social skills training as well as sensory stimulation therapy (Underwood Young, 2005). Language impaired students show a need to develop a better comprehension language and its many uses or basic speech and articulation strategies (Smith, 2011). It is evident that all disability areas require extensive development in their subsequent areas, but everything is centered on what the student with the disability requires to be successful and maintain consistency and learning

in the regular classroom.

Through a comprehensive study, Florian (2008) created a triangular diagram explaining how a student in an inclusive setting attains and retains knowledge. There is an interactive relationship among knowing, believing, and doing that constantly permeates the entire learning process for all students. Students can always discover themselves in one of these settings. However, the students will navigate around these different areas as they are introduced to new curriculum and develop the comfort level needed to feel successful with these new concepts (Florian, 2008). The inclusive student not only works on academic goals but many of the students in the inclusion classroom need substantial support with social goals (Vaughn et al., 2003). For many students, this may be the primary reason these students are being served in this setting.

Evidence shows that students with disabilities have often had challenging times adapting to the inclusive classroom. Some literature suggests that students have a difficult time making the transition from the support and environment in the resource or self-contained classes to the regular or general educational setting. Students in the resource or self-contained setting seem to be more comfortable due to the smaller class sizes, more individualized support, and comfort level of being able to make mistakes and not be judged or openly criticized (Underwood Young, 2005). Therefore, transitioning into a setting in which the dynamics and structure are substantially different will many times adversely affect a student with a disability until strategies and skills can be put into place to assist with the needs (Parker, 2009).

Pros and Cons of the Inclusion Model

Obviously within the world of research and study, there are many attitudes and opinions concerning best practices, new methodology, upcoming policy, and changes in

educational learning environments. In the special education arena, inclusion has been the target of much conversation and even some disagreement. Some professionals are convinced that inclusion is the death of special education. Students need to be in the special education setting to truly receive their direct instruction and then take this acquired skill into the regular setting. Some think it is preposterous to try to teach special skills in a regular class setting (McLauchlin, 2001). One con purposed by Kane et al. (2004) explained that the inclusion model was a catalyst for more students with behavioral problems to not be successful due to the environment in which they are being placed. These researchers explained that in some countries, more than 10% of the students disciplined with either suspension or expulsions are labeled as students with special needs (Kane et al., 2004). The idea that students with these substantial disabilities are being placed in an environment that is not conducive to their abilities or disabilities is an injustice. Therefore, they are not being successful from the start.

Another con of the inclusion model can encompass the pairing of the teachers. Many teachers are not flexible and will refuse to share their rooms, ideas, materials, and control of the classroom (Savich, 2008). Teachers are constantly worried about testing, scores, and their effectiveness responsibility with another person (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). Also, regular education teachers worry about having students with special needs in their classroom settings and how this will affect their education and the education of other students (Wendell, 2008).

Hernandez (2013) spoke to obstacles concerning collaboration with pairs of teachers. Teachers who are forced to work together do not make a happy inclusion class. The relationship begins in a competitive, tense atmosphere, often never reaching harmony. Many teachers desire to work independently; refuse to collaborate with others;

and also lack skills, tools, and support structures to effectively conduct an inclusion classroom (Hernandez, 2013).

Some research studies have questioned if inclusion is a policy, ideology, or lived experience. Many administrators and teachers believe this idea will be here 1 day and change the next as the educational pendulum swings. Also, these individuals see barriers in the schools that will inhibit inclusion from being successful. These barriers include school culture, differentiation, time limitations, teacher knowledge, and conceptualization (Paliokasta & Blandford, 2010).

Finally, literature shows the most recurrent con involving the inclusion classroom is fear. General education teachers feel as if they are not ready to be responsible for a student with special needs education. These teachers feel untrained, unsupported, or thrown into a situation for the sake of scheduling or time constraints. Regular education teachers explain they do not understand all the disabilities and do not possess the classroom management skills and strategies to handle such a diverse group of students in one class environment (Melekoglu, 2013). Some teachers would rather stay with what is comfortable and known than to branch out on new ground, try new experiences, and work with a variety of students to see how many students they can reach. One researcher stated, “There are many obstacles to overcome before the day of inclusion for all students with disabilities can arrive” (Alquraini, 2013. p. 157).

Fortunately, there are two sides to every opinion. More research and studies than not find the concept and implementation of inclusion practices and policies to be highly successful for students and effective as a special education practice. Volonino and Zigmond (2007) stated that school wide reform movements such as inclusion have had a significant impact upon the practice of special education. Inclusion allows students from

all facets of educational abilities to be included and educated in a setting that is appropriate for their needs as well as for the needs of their nondisabled peers (Hilliard, 1992).

Studies have also shown that students with special needs who were included in a regular education setting for their academic curriculum did not drop out of school, experienced establishing friendships, learned valuable social skills, continued on to postsecondary education or job training, experienced increased self-esteem, and learned lifelong skills allowing them to be functioning citizens in their respective environments and communities (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). These benefits, in many researchers' opinions, outweigh any con.

Students who have participated in an inclusive setting or classroom have also seen benefits in learning how to advocate for their needs, disclose information about their disabilities, and discuss what is necessary for successful learning to occur during their classroom session. As the students start to feel more accepted and involved in the class setting, these skills will emerge and start to take shape, therefore positively effecting a student's life forever (Klinzing, 2005).

Academic versus Social

Prior to placing a special education student into a regular education, inclusion placement, the special education teacher needs to fully assess the student to determine what will be needed to make this transition as successful as possible. The current literature has recently begun to differentiate between academic versus social needs in the inclusion setting. For many years, the main focus on all schooling decisions was based around the idea of how can the student benefit academically from this program, method, or strategy (Jones, 2010). However, the disability itself may stem from a more social

nature and will need direct support in that specific area. Studies have shown that students who were moved from the more restrictive special education setting to a less restrictive setting struggled the most with the social aspects of the class than the academic expectations (Miller, 2012).

The special education teacher usually focuses primarily on the academic – reading, writing, and math – skills needed to make a smooth educational transition from one setting to another but do not adhere to any social strategies or assistance the student may need (McCarty, 2006). Many teachers often apply a misconception by assuming if a student does not qualify in an area specific for social deficits or weaknesses, that student is ready to transition to a more regular setting. However, studies have shown this is not the case (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

Statistically, students who have a LD, cognitive impairment, or language impairment, not only have concerns related to their academic deficits but have intensive social needs that correspond with their academic needs (Rix et al., 2009). It is imperative that not only are academics addressed for students with special needs, but social skills and strategies are also enhanced through curriculum development, methods, and new strategies (Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 1996). Students are not likely to be academically successful in an inclusive setting if they have not learned and experienced appropriate social skills and methodologies (Beattie et al., 2006).

Social Growth and Development

All humans and individuals are social creatures and much of the way our personality is shaped occurs during our formative years. Educators often witness students changing, developing personalities, shaping their attitudes, and growing into the adults they will become (DiGennaro, McIntyre, Dusek, & Quintero, 2011). Teachers

play an integral part in working with students to develop appropriate social skills and strategies that will help them build and maintain lasting relationships and allow them to function in society, as well as discover ways to handle adversity and conflict in an appropriate way (Smoot, 2011). Many of these skills are learned during teachable moments and interactions with students throughout the learning environment (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004).

It is important to understand some of the definitions presented in the literature and research review concerning social competence and social skills in order to truly understand the nature of this problem. Social competence is a general term referring to the quality or adequacy of a person's overall performance on a particular or given task. Social skills are specific abilities required to perform competently at a task (Vaughn et al., 2003). Students with disabilities have a difficult time with both of these concepts and need direct instruction and training to assist them in comprehending what these terms look like and how to appropriately implement them (Battista, 1999).

Much of the research, statistical studies, and literature pertaining to social growth and development begin with a description of sociometric surveys, studies, research, and literature reviews. Sociometry is often described as asking questions relating to social situations (Smoot, 2011), whereas sociometric assigns a numeric value to each situation in an effort to calculate statistical data related to social growth and development (Farmer et al., 1996). Many of the studies have taken these sociometric results to develop conclusions, draw inferences, and establish social skills trainings, methodologies, and practices that are researched and evidence-based.

Students with disabilities often suffer from more severe deficits and weaknesses in the area of social acceptance and integration than their nondisabled peers (Farmer,

2000). The students with the disabilities of emotional impairments, IDs, LDs, and AU are the ones research has shown experience more difficulty with social skills and integration than other disability related areas (Dessementent et al., 2012). A research study conducted by Smoot (2011) reveled that 61 students with disabilities, resulting if 43% of the class, were most likely rejected and not selected by their nondisabled peers for group work, friendships, or social interactions. When general education students were asked (sample size of 286) about their acceptance and integration with students with disabilities, 57% stated they normally do not select those students to be in their peer circle. Conversely, 85% of general education students stated they feel more comfortable selecting another regular education student as a peer than a disabled student (Smoot, 2011). The following pieces of information will explain why these numbers are as varied as they are.

Social Acceptance

Social acceptance can be defined as portraying appropriate mannerisms and actions that coincide with the social contextual situation (Holahan & Costenbader, 2000). In many situations, nondisabled students will accept and integrate with students with disabilities (Tomlinson, 2012a). However, this is not always the norm.

Students with disabilities possess a perpetual desire to be included, accepted, and respected among their peers, both regular and disabled. Unfortunately, social acceptance is not always positive. Social acceptance can fall within two areas, homophily and propinquity. Homophily explains that students tend to associate with students who have characteristics of their own, whereas propinquity suggest that students adopt the same characteristics as those close in proximity (Farmer et al., 1996). The issue with these two ideas centers on the fact that if the students in the vicinity are not acting appropriately or

if students are constantly around students displaying inappropriate behaviors, then students with disabilities will be more apt to emulate these behaviors (DiGennaro et al., 2011). For example, one study focused on students with social emotional disabilities examined that students classified as antisocial youth were more likely to hang out with the same peers from year to year due to their comfort and acceptance by these peers (Farmer, 2000).

Frederickson and Furnham (2004) explained there are four socialization areas in which every student fits into due to their feeling of acceptance. These include popular, average, neglected, and rejected. Research concludes that over half of the students with disabilities place themselves in the rejected category with around one-fourth in the neglected category (Frederickson & Furnham, 2004). Apparently, based on these statistics, many barriers are causing students with special needs to not feel included within the social context of their nondisabled peers.

Social Rejection and Barriers

Students with disabilities seem to run into walls in every turn of their lives. Academic, behavioral, functional, and social issues arise constantly within the confines of a student's school day. However, there are many social barriers that are catalysts for the feelings of rejection experienced by students with special needs. Some of these barriers are within means of being controlled while others are not.

Characteristics out of a student's control include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, gender, intelligence quotient, and placement in various restrictive special education environments (Stoutjeskijk et al., 2012). Additional barriers include differences in the developmental level of the students, etiology of the child's disability, and the classroom context (DiGennaro et al., 2011). Unfortunately, students must learn how to overcome

these stereotypes or prejudices causing conflict in social situations to the best of their ability.

On the other hand, there are many characteristics of students with disabilities that cause social rejection that can be changed or improved. Difficulty making eye contact, maintaining appropriate conversations, respecting personal space, responding correctly to various individuals, and understanding social innuendos and clues are all areas in which students can receive instruction as well as direct social skills trainings and development (Rotheram-Fuller, 2005). Also, students who have difficulty establishing friendships, maintaining friendships, initiating new relationships, and integrating into various social situations can also learn skills to adapt and transition to these situations and relationships more effectively (DiGennaro et al., 2011).

Fortunately, students with disabilities have the resources and settings put into place that will allow them to learn the skills necessary to successfully participate in their social environments (Canges, 2010). From making friends, communicating effectively with others, and understanding social cues and contexts, students with exceptional needs will have the opportunities through training and practice to acquire the skills necessary to become functioning, social citizens within their environments (Rotheram-Fuller, 2005). Some have a longer road to travel than others; but through supportive professionals, skill building, and training, these students will reach social success (Smoot, 2011).

Social Skills Training and Strategies

A newer dimension in education has evolved with the realization that social skills need to be taught to students, especially students with disabilities. For a long time, it was just assumed students would grow up and mature. Therefore, if they did not possess the

social cues or skills necessary for their age, it was accepted because eventually things would work out. Special education research and design discovered quickly that behavior difficulties were often associated with social skills deficits (Duran, Zhou, Frew, Kwok, & Benz, 2013). Not educating students in the areas of behavioral and social skills was now considered a disservice to the student, especially if the student qualified under a category related specifically to emotional, behavior, and social skill deficits (Girli, 2013).

Additional research then was completed explaining that students with severe cognitive disabilities also need direct instruction in social skills in conjunction with their academic skills trainings and teachings (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). These research studies introduced the strong need for direct social skills training and interventions to be taught to students as well as included into their IEPs.

A comprehensive study conducted by Vaughn et al. (2003) explained in detail the social skills interventions that need to be taught to young children with disabilities. Once the school has adopted a school-wide culture of social acceptance, integration, and implementation of social skills, training can be introduced. Vaughn et al. proposed that students need to learn how to solve school problems, resolve conflict, develop friendships, work cooperatively, and enhance self-esteem. These skills will be developed through three levels. Level one focuses on creating an accepting classroom environment; allowing each student to have a voice; and building opportunities for social interaction, security, open communication, mutual linking, shared goals, connectedness, and trust. Level two focuses on learning specific strategies and curriculum for promoting social competence as well as identifying appropriate social skills programs. Level three focuses on targeting individual interventions focused on acquisition deficits, performance deficits, and fluency deficits (Vaughn et al., 2003).

Another research study concluded that social skills also could be categorized in five dimensions: peer relational, self-management, academic skills, compliance skills, and assertion skills (Duran et al., 2013). The concept behind this model is that better social skill development in these five dimensions will equal more peer acceptance, lasting friendships, stronger parent relationships, better grades, and increased problem-solving skills (Duran et al., 2013).

Many students with disabilities are provided specific, targeted interventions that will assist them in learning the needed social skills to be successful in their academic and functional environments. Literature studies have shown that intervention packets that contain direct skills are more effective for students than general topics and concepts (Fitch, 1999). The most successful intervention strategies include prompting and rehearsal of targeted behaviors, role playing, reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, modeling of specific social skills, storytelling, direct instruction, and imitation of appropriate behaviors (Vaughn et al., 2003). All of these interventions were successful along with prompting, rehearsal practice, and time out included. The most intriguing part of this study focused on the fact that these interventions were practiced not in isolation but in an inclusive setting where students with special needs could interact with nondisabled students. Even though the teachers may have been skeptical and the students with special needs may have been a little uncomfortable, having these students learn these strategies and then have an opportunity to practice these skills with other peers in real-time contextual situations was not only educational empowering but also emotionally uplifting and life changing. Students had a direct correlation of what strategies or skills to employ in various situations and with various individuals by participating in the inclusive classroom (DiGennaro et al., 2011). Not only is the student with special needs

learning and using new skills and strategies, but teachers are building instructional skills and confidence and regular education students are learning social skills that will allow for increased self-esteem on a personal level.

The Bridge of Inclusion and Social/Behavioral Change

There are documented research studies, peer reviewed articles, books, and journals all written for and against inclusion and its effects on students' academic and behavioral needs (Vaughn et al., 2003). However, one research study encompasses all elements and demonstrates the significant impact social skills instruction can have on students with disabilities when implemented in the inclusive setting (Volonino & Zigmond, 2007). A special educational longitudinal study was conducted with elementary school students. The research showed that with social skills training there was a 21% decrease in social skills related to gender and students with emotional impairments, a 23% decrease in all disciplines with students with special needs, and a 30% decrease in students with special needs who come from low-income families (Duran et al., 2013). Also, students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder were two times less likely to have a discipline infraction post social skills training, and females were 2.44 times more likely to be socially accepted post social skills training (Duran et al., 2013).

Students were interviewed and documented as saying that the social skills they learned really did not mean anything to them until they had a chance to practice them in real-life settings with nondisabled peers. It takes the students out of their comfort zones and places them into an environment where they must implement what they have learned to be successful (Battista, 1999). The inclusive setting is the optimal place for students with disabilities to take their social skills to a new level.

Reaching the Pinnacle: Self-Monitoring and Regulation

As students in the exceptional children's program learn social and emotional skills, the final advancement concerning complete comprehension and use comes with students being able to monitor their own behaviors while in the general education setting. When students reach the highest phases of generalization and maintenance, it is then decided that these students "own" these social and emotional skills they have learned and utilized. The ideal situation is presented when a student is able to successfully perform these behaviors independently.

Self-monitoring is defined as a student being able to observe and record a target behavior he/she has been explicitly taught and has practiced to mastery (Boswell, Knight, & Spriggs, 2013). Self-monitoring has proven effective for teaching social skills, on-task behavior, and following directions, as well as comprehension of topics presented in academic classes (Lembke & Stichter, 2006). Gilberts (2000) conducted a study concerning the impact and effectiveness on student monitoring when considering the following actions. Students and teachers listed 11 target behaviors that students who were labeled as students with exceptional needs would benefit from learning and demonstrating independently. Next, the students and teacher decided on five target behaviors that would be explicitly taught by teachers and other peers. The direct instruction of these behaviors was then followed by constant reinforcement in the areas of praise and tangible tokens. Both teachers and peers were responsible for teaching and rewarding these accomplished target behaviors. The support was provided until the students could correctly monitor their own social and emotional target behaviors via a checklist in which inter-rater reliability was 80% concurrent on three consecutive trials (Gilberts, 2000). This research concluded that students with special needs who were able

to self-monitor their own social behaviors were 91% more likely to attend and participate in the general education classroom setting (Gilberts, 2000).

Boswell et al. (2013) found in their research of students with IDs and students with AU that learning to self-monitor using visual and auditory cues not only assisted the students in learning appropriate social and emotional skills but also reduced the amount of support these students needed from teachers, support staff, and paraprofessionals. Students who were once considered unable to grow socially and emotionally are now experiencing personal success without the aid of others (Boswell et al., 2013).

Additional research has shown that students with special needs who participate in identifying target behaviors as well as learning self-monitoring techniques increase both their academic skills as well as their social and emotional skills (Lembke & Stichter, 2006). The by-product of monitoring these skills has not only improved students with special needs' performance in their academic settings but also their behavioral and functional growth and development (Harris, Friedlander, Saddler, Frizzelle, & Graham, 2005). Self-monitoring skills and strategies taught to students with special needs can turn into a life-changing event.

Empathy

Empathy is defined as having the ability to understand the feelings of others (Apache, 2004). Research shows that students who collaborate with nondisabled peers have developed more sympathetic feelings for other students (Apache, 2004). Empathy is a type of feeling that manifests through social growth and development. Students who work with both disabled and nondisabled students tend to develop a more empathic nature by tuning into others' feelings, needs, strengths, and weaknesses (Apache, 2004).

To attain the ability to have empathy for others is not easily acquired. Additional

research has demonstrated that students who work with others collaboratively both academically and behaviorally tend to start to develop feelings associated with empathy. In the collaborative settings, with a diverse group of students over a time of 6 weeks, some students with and without disabilities were able to talk to other students about problems or concerns, participate in active listening, help other peers reason through problems and dilemmas, and establish stronger relationships and friendships (Regan & Martin, 2014).

A research study conducted by Barford, Pope, Harlow, and Hudson (2014) identified factors associated with establishing feelings of empathy. These factors include prosocialness, motivation, and personality traits. Students who were motivated to exhibit more positive social traits such as sensitivity caring and active listening developed more empathic traits at a faster rate than those who lacked these specific traits (Barford et al., 2014). This research also concluded that students of the same sex tended to develop empathy for their same gender before transference to the opposite gender (Barford et al., 2014). When students are able to work with each other in a collaborative setting and grow academically as well as socially, a well-rounded learner is being created who can positively affect all those around them.

Social Competence

Meadan and Monda-Amaya (2008) described social competence as “a general evaluative term referring to the quality or adequacy of a person’s overall performance in a particular task” (p. 159). The particular tasks demonstrated for social competence include social skills. Social skills are defined as “specific abilities required to perform competently at a task” (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008, p. 159). Social skills and social competence are both required for a student with a disability to grow both socially and

emotionally within their academic setting (Brown, 2012).

Research shows that students with disabilities who participated in a classroom with a combination of both disabled and nondisabled peers tended to imitate the appropriate behaviors presented in their environments, in turn leading to appropriate social skills and social competency (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Including students with disabilities into the regular class setting allows these students opportunities to develop friendships, relationships, and appropriate peer interactions with their nondisabled peers (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). However, for this to occur, a social support structure should be put in place to ensure appropriate development and success. Students cannot learn distinct social skills unless explicitly taught, and an appropriate structure will allow this learning to occur.

For social skills to lead to social competence, scaffolding of social skills must occur (Apache, 2004). First, students must be explicitly taught skills in a structured classroom community. This classroom community should consist of a diverse group of peers yielding itself to an environment accepting of all differences and unique qualities (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Students should also feel as if they have a voice in the classroom. Students with or without disabilities should always feel as if their opinion, ideas, or suggestions matter, not only to their peers but also to the adults within the classroom setting (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Next, students should then participate in opportunities for social interaction within the context of the class setting. Social interaction can come in the form of group work, collaborative learning situations, partner work, study buddy, or daily class participation (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Each of these experiences allows a student to use his/her voice and interact with all peers in his/her academic environment.

Many times, social skills development and social competency do not come easily to a student, especially one with a specific disability. Therefore, a more intensive method must be employed (Brown, 2012). Some students will require more specific strategies and direct instruction curriculum to assist in promoting social competence as well as targeted individual interventions (Martinek, Schilling, & Johnson, 2001). Research shows that students who are taught problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, character education, self-determination strategies, and self-advocacy strategies develop appropriate social skills leading to being socially competent in educational settings with all peers (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Students who identify and utilize these relevant social skills are well on their way to becoming socially competent in all academic and educational environments.

Responsibility/Self-Regulation

As students with disabilities continue their quest for social and emotional growth and development, one of the highest social achievements to be reached would be accepting responsibility for actions (Martinek et al., 2001). Many students, especially students with disabilities, are infamous for placing blame and not being honest when negative behaviors or actions are executed. Students seem to always have a reason or excuse as to why a behavior was used that usually includes an action prompted by another student or situation within the context of the environment (Brown, 2012). Students are just unable to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Research shows that when plans or models are implemented, students can learn to become more responsible for their social and emotional growth and development. A Personal and Responsibility Model was implemented with a group of students with disabilities in order to teach the following behaviors: self-control, respect of others,

effort, participation, self-direction, and helping others (Martinek et al., 2001). Through the use of teacher direct instruction, mentors, journaling of daily events and feelings, and exit interviews of student experiences and perceptions, it was noted that students met these goals and behaviors in the classroom in which they learned the skills but had more difficulty transferring the skills to other educational contexts and situations (Martinek et al., 2001). This seems to be the ultimate barrier for most students attempting to attain and utilize responsibility.

Brown (2012) conducted a research study stating that responsibility of students with disabilities and anti-social youth was best attained through direct and explicit instruction of specific social skills, goal setting, mentoring, and contracting. Students were taught targeted and individualized social skills commensurate to their individual needs. Next, through a process of interventions, teaching, role-playing, and mentoring, the students implemented, practiced, and utilized these learned social behaviors (Brown, 2012). The one component of the research study that gleaned the most information fell on the premise of behavioral contracting. Both the students and teachers/adult authorities observed, described, and charted the growth and development of a student's individualized, target social goals (Brown, 2012). The adults conferenced with the students on their growth while the students were able to visually see through charts, graphs, and documentation their strengths and weaknesses as well as improvement or decline in their subsequent social skill areas (Brown, 2012). Allowing the students to have direct interaction with the learning, implementation, and documentation of their own social development enlisted a more lasting impression that carried over into various academic settings and contexts (Brown, 2012). The students reached the pinnacle of being socially responsible by learning the social skills necessary to behave correctly yet

effectively in all social contexts.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of the current research and literature on the impact of inclusion on students' social growth and development. The literature suggests that for students to successfully learn and retain new social skills and strategies, one must be in an inclusive setting with nondisabled peers in order to implement the skills learned. Vaughn et al. (2003) said it best: "foster(ing) environments in which diversity is valued and individuals are taught to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world" (p. 3) is the best way to allow students with special needs to experience social success. With the impact of the law, policies, and procedures in special education constantly changing, it is imperative that educators and professionals not only work on students' academic deficits but also their behavioral and social weaknesses. Students with disabilities are constantly being challenged to learn new and innovative ways to adapt to their society and social situations they are placed in. Learning appropriate social skills will reduce the problematic behavior that results in discipline referrals, behavior plans, and other problematic behaviors. In the following chapter, the researcher introduces the study design and methodology for evaluating the impact of the inclusion setting on developing social skills that will lead to the reduction of discipline and problematic behaviors.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Tomlinson (2012b) stated, “We don’t get to decide whether we have challenging students in our classes, but we can certainly decide how we respond to them” (p. 88). Likewise, other research has indicated that students with special needs yearn to be included and desire to have an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to perform academically and behaviorally in a regular classroom setting with their nondisabled peers (Friend & Cook, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the inclusion setting on students with disabilities in regards to discipline rates and referrals as well as social and emotional growth and development.

General Methodology

The research design that was implemented in this retrospective case study included an explanatory sequential, mixed-methods design. An explanatory sequential design is defined as a research method in which quantitative research is conducted, results are analyzed, and then qualitative methods are employed to assist in the explanation of the results for the research findings (Creswell, 2013). A mixed-methods design is defined as a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2013). This research focused more heavily on the quantitative data collection with some qualitative data analysis to assist in explaining the “why” presented by the numerical data and other statistical information (Creswell, 2013). This research also followed an explanatory sequential design in that the data explained the impact of the least restrictive environment of the inclusion setting on students with disabilities’ social growth and development over the years ranging from 2012-2015 (Butin, 2009). The combination of document analysis, researched documentation, survey/scale data, and

student interviews allowed for a solidified explanation of the impact that an inclusion setting had on students with disabilities' discipline referrals and rates as well as their perceptions of their own social and emotional growth as compared to being served in a resource or separate setting. Therefore, the general methodology for this research included a retrospective case study in conjunction with an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design.

Research Context and Site

This research occurred in an inner-city middle school in the southeast. Inner-city is defined in this research as a population with 60% minority and over 65% free and reduced lunch. This middle school serves both seventh and eighth grades. The population of this middle school included 458 students. Of the entire population, 19% of these students were identified under the category of students with disabilities. A breakdown of this percentage includes 9% served in seventh grade and 10% served in eighth grade.

Of this population, 9% of the 10% of these students with disabilities were served in an inclusion setting during their eighth-grade school year. The inclusion setting consists of students with special needs being integrated into a regular classroom setting with their nondisabled peers. These students were served in the language arts classroom on Monday and Wednesday (twice a week) as well as in the math classroom on Tuesday and Thursday (twice a week). Friday was used as testing day in which these students received the modifications allotted to them by their IEPs. These were administered both in the regular classroom and in a pullout situation depending on the individuality of each student. The classes were 60 minutes each throughout the week. Therefore, the students received services 2 days a week in math and 2 days a week in language arts, resulting in

60 minutes per class.

These inclusion classes were cotaught based on the practices described by Friend and Cook (2010). Each class session had one regular education teacher highly qualified in the given subject area. Also, a highly qualified, special education teacher taught along with the regular education teacher. These teachers had prescribed planning times in which engaging lessons were designed, differentiated assessments were created, grading practices were revised and utilized, and the needs of all the students were reviewed and analyzed. The students, both regular and special, understood that they had two qualified teachers teaching their subjects.

Participants

The participants for this study included 9% of eighth-grade students who had been served in a resource/separate setting as sixth graders during the 2012-2013 school year. However, for the 2013-2014 school year, these seventh graders were served in the inclusion setting that was continued during their eighth grade school year, 2014-2015. The inclusion setting continued to be held consistent as far as time, frequency, and location of the service as well as the educators in the classroom. The cohort that this retrospective case study examined consisted of 35 students who received a separate setting in 2012 and 2013, but then were served in a regular, inclusive setting for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school year. Of these students, 11 (31%) were identified as students with an OHI. All 11 of these students have Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or the combined type of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Of these students, 19 (51%) were identified as having a specific LD in the area(s) of basic reading, reading comprehension, reading fluency, math calculation, math reasoning, written expression, oral expression, listening comprehension, or a combination

of these areas. Two of these students (6%) were identified as a student with mild IDs (ID Mild). These students had cognitive intelligence quotients below 70 with the average score being 100. Of these students, one (3%) was identified as a student with an SED. One student (3%) was identified as a student with AU, and one student (3%) was identified as a student with an OI of Spinal Bifida.

Two regular education teachers highly qualified in math, two regular education teachers highly qualified in language arts, and one highly qualified special education teacher remained in charge of instruction for these students for both the Common Core Standards as well as IEP goals and objectives.

Instruments Used

Based on the general methodology described, both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used in this research. For the quantitative measures, a combination of the following methods were consistently used: demographic data, discipline data, and Exceptional Children data. These types of data were collected and analyzed based on the cohort described before and over the years ranging from 2012-2015.

Demographic Data

According to Butin (2009), quantitative measures can take place in many forms. This research remained interested in collecting information based on demographics available on each student participant in the cohort. Information was collected from a database purchased and used by the county in which these students were educated. This school district used PowerSchool, a student management and accountability database software system that allowed all information concerning student demographics to be made accessible to parties who are privy to this information. The information that was collected from this system included the sex, race, and age of the students followed within

this cohort. These data were used for disaggregating the information for the research questions.

Discipline Data

Another source of quantitative data collected and analyzed to determine the impact of the inclusion setting on students with disabilities' discipline rates and referrals were all the sources containing discipline information. Discipline data were collected and stored for each student within the PowerSchool accountability system. Also, data were requested and collected on each student by the PowerSchool manager for this middle school setting. These data included the student's name, race, grade, birthday, date and time of discipline infraction, setting in which infraction occurred, short description of infraction, consequence imposed, general categorical code based on code of conduct for the district, and notes prepared by an administrator or authority figure. The consequences imposed consisted of Redirect/Chill Out for one class period, In-school Suspension (ISS) or Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). These consequences that were focused on included the consequences that removed the students from their class or school settings and their instruction. Analysis of this information resulted in how many students received Redirect for a class period, ISS, or OSS; a breakdown of girls versus boys; the disabilities areas; and settings in which these infractions occurred.

Data were also collected via the middle school's created Redirect Tracker. This tracker was maintained by the assistant principal and was used to cross reference the data collected in PowerSchool. These data included the students who were removed from the room due to discipline issues that were resolved within the Redirect setting and did not result in any additional consequences. These data were broken down into the student's name, day and time of infraction, teacher who requested Redirect for the student, and

teacher explanation of the issue. This document allowed the researcher to analyze the infraction as well as the setting in which the student was educated at the time of the removal being in either an inclusive or restrictive setting. Whereas the PowerSchool documentation happened to be more administration driven, the Redirect tracker involved more teacher input and explanation. Redirect could only be used for one class period as a means of allowing the student to process through the behavior and inappropriate action in hopes of returning to the classroom with no further consequences. This setting was considered as a means to be more of a proactive measure for combatting behavior than a reactive one.

Lastly, data were collected through the Positive Behavior Intervention Support analysis system as another cross-reference to further explain data. These data were considered to be more of a school-wide collection and comparison of discipline referrals and problematic areas. However, the setting of events consisted of a primary parameter reviewed by the committee resulting in information on which classrooms or parts of the school seemed to have experienced the most discipline problems. By taking the cohort of participants and analyzing their discipline needs in regards to the settings in which these issues took place, data were then collected on how the settings impacted the behavior of the students. Data were then reviewed and analyzed in regards to if the settings where the discipline occurred were a more restrictive setting versus a more inclusive environment. These data reflected findings related to the question of to what extent are students with disabilities' discipline referrals impacted by participation in an inclusion educational setting over a 3-year period.

Exceptional Children Data

Each of the participants in the study was classified as a student with a disability;

therefore, these students were legally required to have documents, plans, modifications, and accommodations which meet their individual needs (Taylor, 2011). A review of the Exceptional Children's data on each of these participants happened to be regarded as instrumental in establishing a total picture of each participant. The data that were continuously reviewed and analyzed under the category of Exceptional Children's data included IEPs which had inclusion as the regular setting as well as frequency and location of services noted in their service delivery of instruction, students who had behavioral goals included in their plans, and students who had separate BIPs constructed to target and teach replacement behaviors on an identified problematic behavior. Also, students who were in the process of acquiring a BIP or were involved in a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) to determine which problematic behavior needs to be addressed immediately through a BIP were also collected and analyzed. These types of Exceptional Children's data focused specifically on social emotional growth and development (Alquraini, 2013). The data collected via these documents allowed the researcher to determine which sex and disability of students required more behavioral documentation and assistance through the Exceptional Children's program through goals, plans, and settings. The information collected attributed to the students being served in the inclusion setting as compared to the discipline and referrals acquired when being served in the separate setting. This research determined if the inclusive setting had an impact on the reduction of behavioral goals and BIPs needed for the students studied in the cohort.

Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scale for Adolescents (SEARS-A)

An additional method that was used to collect additional quantitative data included the SEARS-A. Nese et al. (2012) defined the SEARS-A instrument as "The SEARS is a multi-informant, strength-based, social-emotional assessment system that

assesses positive social-emotional attributes of children and adolescents” (p. 124). Nese, Doerner, Romer, Kaye, and Merrell (2011) described strength-based assessment as an important type of assessment as it serves several purposes. These purposes include finding children’s strengths, focusing on these strengths as opposed to their weaknesses, developing strategies to teach the skills the children do not possess, and helping develop plans that will involve children and other stakeholders.

The SEARS-A, as described by Nese et al. (2012) is an adolescent self-report administered to students in Grades 7-12. The questionnaire comes in both a long and short form. The long form contains 35 items, whereas the short form contains 12 items. The subscales that are evaluated within the scales include responsibility/monitoring, social competence, empathy, and responsibility (Nese et al., 2012). The participants in this study completed this scale in the winter of 2015.

As addressed in Creswell (2013), validity and reliability were key components in choosing and implementing various scales and surveys. According to Nese et al. (2011), test-retest reliability were calculated using Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients attained over a period of time. These interval coefficients were collected at 2, 4, and 6 weeks. The scores for the SEARS-A were .84, .81, and .80 (Nese et al., 2012, p. 1). According to Nese et al. (2012), Cronbach’s alpha analysis for internal consistency reliability for the short form yielded a coefficient of 0.85. Pearson product-moment correlations between the SEARS-A and other strength-based rating scales resulted in convergent validity. With $p < 0.1$, the convergent validity score for the SEARS-A ranged from .67-.72. Independent t scores were conducted comparing SEARS-A short form ratings of female and male students by parents, teachers, and the students themselves. Female student mean scores were higher than male scores ($p < 0.1$). Cohen’s d was also

calculated to determine effect sizes for the mean differences of the sample. SEARS-A scored in the medium range with a .31. This survey, as compared to other strength-based rating scales analyzing social growth and development was deemed both reliable and valid (Nese et al., 2011, pp. 1-2).

The quantitative data collected from this scale were analyzed to determine student perceptions of his or her own social growth and development in conjunction to the regular education setting versus the resource or separate setting. The questions were worded in regards to social and emotional concepts while participating in the settings with their nondisabled peers. The participants answered the questions within the context of their experiences in the inclusion or regular education setting. These responses were then analyzed using statistical measures and thematic coding with references to the document analysis presented within the quantitative section. Both sets of data were used to reach conclusions and interpret statistical information and outcomes.

In order to gain permission for the students to participate in this survey, a letter was sent home to the students' parents or guardians asking for consent. The consent form was signed by the students' parents or guardians agreeing for the student to participate in taking the survey as well as allowing the researcher to use the scores calculated from the survey in this research study. The confidentiality of the student was honored and maintained, and the researcher did not use any identifying information for the outcomes or results of this study.

Student Interviews

This mixed-methods design also required a collection and analysis of qualitative data. Research explains qualitative data as taking the information and numbers and putting meaning and understanding behind them (Butin, 2009). The researcher

developed a protocol of open-ended questions that was administered to the students in a private setting. The students selected for these interviews consisted of 10 students who had the most discipline referrals as well as behavioral plans and goals associated with their sixth-grade educational setting. This subselection of students, based on data analyzed, had a reduction in discipline referrals and plans. Therefore, the researcher interviewed these students individually and gained student insight and perceptions. The students met individually with the researcher. Upon permission granted by parent/guardian and student, the researcher explained that the interview would be recorded for accuracy and clarity. The researcher then asked the students the various questions presented in the protocol and recorded responses both electronically and in written format.

Procedures

For the purpose of this study, one cohort of students who were identified as students with special needs was selected and researched. The students have met the following criteria: (1) placed in the Exceptional Children's Program, (2) remained in the cohort beginning from 2012 until 2015, and (3) were served in the regular setting through the inclusion program. The student's IEPs were updated and checked for legal compliance to ensure the frequency, location, and setting were appropriate and up-to-date.

In order to keep track of the plethora of information gained via both the qualitative and quantitative measures elicited through the research, a spreadsheet document was created to allow for collection and organization of the information. This spreadsheet was altered or reconstructed as necessary as more information needed to be attained or used in the analysis of the outcomes. For confidentiality purposes, this

information was kept on a Google spreadsheet with rights for access, review, and informational input locked and granted solely to the researcher. This ensured the rights of the students were protected by not allowing their personal information to be disclosed.

Quantitative Data Procedures

First, the data collected from the PowerSchool coordinator were reviewed and inputted into a Google spreadsheet that was used in determining various subgroups for statistical measurement purposes. This information allowed for subgroups and correlations to be made using statistical programs based on boys versus girls as well as disability areas. This allowed for deeper analysis of the impact the inclusion setting has on various subgroups of students with special needs. This information was labeled and coded into a statistical program.

Next, the data collected from the discipline rates and referrals were matched to the subsequent student. This information was collected from PowerSchool, discipline trackers created by administration, and PBIS data software. There were no baselines or ceilings for this data but mainly just a pairing of students to their discipline information. The discipline information from PowerSchool was compiled from the years ranging from 2012 to 2015. The discipline data from PBIS and other discipline trackers ranged from 2013 to 2015. This allowed for associations to be formed as to which students seemed to experience more difficulty with discipline, in which settings this discipline occurred, and how the discipline has changed over the past 3 years.

Thirdly, the Exceptional Children's documentation and files pertaining to each student were reviewed and analyzed. Each student had his/her disability area addressed and checked against data collected from PowerSchool. Next, the student's IEP was reviewed and noted documentation made if a student was working on a behavior goal(s).

Finally, this goal was coded as to the type of behavioral goal (functional, aggressive, academic, etc.) and then added to the documentation spreadsheet. Essentially, a running record was continuously used in the collection, organization, facilitation, and analysis of each student's various demographic, discipline, and Exceptional Children's data and documentation.

With the use of the basic demographics spreadsheet, analysis of the rate of discipline from 2012-2013 as compared to 2013-2015, and review of individual student's needs for behavioral goals and plans, the researcher analyzed the impact of these elements with the settings in which the students were placed. The primary purpose of the analysis of this documentation was to determine if the students in the cohort who were being served in the separate setting had a reduction in the amount of discipline referrals as well as behavior goals and specific behavioral plans needed while being served in the inclusive setting.

The SEARS-A was then administered to the students belonging to this cohort in the winter of 2015. The long form of the SEARS-A was given to all students in the cohort (n=35). The instrument was administered in small group settings and was read aloud to students who required the read aloud all words/upon request accommodation as noted on their IEPs. The instrument consists of 35 questions that addressed four subset areas. A score was attained for each subset as well as a total score. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to administer (Nese et al., 2012).

Since this data instrument has been proven to be valid and reliable, there were no additional modifications or changes made to the content or delivery of this survey. There was also a scoring protocol that will be addressed in the analysis section.

Qualitative Data Procedures

Qualitative procedures serve to answer the “why” in research practices and studies. The researcher involved in this study gained the perceptions and experiences of students who have experienced both the educational settings of inclusion/regular and resource/separate as well as obtain their personal opinions on these environments as discussed through interview questions (Creswell, 2013). Once again, the researcher obtained permission from appropriate adults to proceed with the student interview process. Based on an analysis of the previous sets of data concerning behavioral strengths and weaknesses, 10 students from the 35-member cohort were interviewed. An interview protocol was formulated and reviewed for appropriateness of questions. The researcher secured a private area in which the student and the researcher could conduct the interview. The interview protocol, electronic recorder, table, two chairs, and writing utensil were provided in the room. The researcher asked the student to have a seat while she explained the purpose of the interview/discussion as well as the fact that the interview would be recorded. Also, the researcher explained that questions would be asked and recorded that pertained to the student’s educational experiences from intermediate school to middle school. If necessary, clarifying questions could be asked while the interview was being conducted. The students were asked to answer the questions openly and honestly, as nothing they said would be held against them in any manner.

Data Analysis

Once all of the data were collected and organized, various statistical analysis, tests, and procedures were conducted using information in order to determine both the how and the why concerning the data (Huck, 2011). The primary intent of this statistical research was to determine the impact of the inclusion setting on the social and emotional

growth and development of student with disabilities. However, the data collected were then dissected into more analytical subgroups and subsets.

Combinations of both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the dissemination of this research, and the outcomes were reported concerning the data. The intention of the research was to determine associations between the inclusion setting and students with disabilities' discipline referrals and rates as well as the inclusion setting and students with disabilities' perceptions of their social and emotional growth and development. To determine the correlation of the means between students participating in the inclusion setting to their discipline referrals and rates, a paired sample t test was conducted to determine this statistical outcome (Huck, 2011, p. 208). ANOVA and MANOVA statistical measures were administered on the data. Different areas or categories such as gender and various disability areas were statistically tested to determine correlations and mean calculations in an effort to disaggregate the data. Various forms of the independent t test and paired sample t test were also used to address the frequencies of discipline referrals in regards to the students with special needs participating in the inclusion setting (Huck, 2011, p. 411).

The SEARS-A statistical analysis was based on the student perceptions of their social and emotional growth and development. The statistical analysis was completed via the scoring procedures, guide, and implementation that ensure the validity and reliability of the information gained from this survey. The mean scores for the entire cohort were calculated with additional subgroups addressed. Once the mean for the cohort was measured, the next step was to determine the mean for the four subsections including social responsibility/monitoring, social competence, empathy, and social responsibility for the cohort as a whole and each individual student. Statistical means were then broken

into subgroups and the statistical tests including sample and paired *t* tests and MANOVAs were determined for gender and individual disabilities. The results are analyzed, integrated, and explained in the following chapter.

The student interviews were validated for accuracy through a distinct process involving reading, listening, reviewing, coding, and formulating descriptions and themes (Creswell, 2013). During the interview, the students verbally answered the questions while being recorded. After the students had answered the questions presented in the protocol, the researcher then privately listened to the recordings and raw data and transcribed the information presented during the interviews. All 10 interviews were reviewed and transcribed. Next, the researcher read through the interviews searching for common themes and threads. The researcher coded the transcribed information looking for common words, word repetitions, and key words in context. A conceptual schema was then developed for the researcher to start categorizing the data based on repetitive and frequent themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations

The limitations associated with this study dealt mainly with the maturation of the individuals in the cohort. The study used information and research acquired over 3 years. The maturation of the subjects from sixth to eighth grade as well as a 3-year age growth cannot be excluded in the impact of this study. The cohort also transitioned from one school (intermediate) to a new school (middle) that maintained a varying schedule, new students, and different adults in authority. These factors affected the outcome of this study.

The generalizability of this study focused mainly on students with special needs and those who serve this population. Although the research focused on the appropriate

inclusive setting for these students in regards to their behavioral, social, and emotional development, the impact would be on those who read the study and engage in using the inclusive setting as an avenue for instructing students with special needs. Other general education teachers, administrators, and school personnel could be influenced and educated by this study, but the generalization will remain with the students with special needs and disabilities. However, this generalization could be limited based on the sample size of the students as well as the smaller number of students within the subgroups.

Delimitations

For the qualitative analysis procedure with the use of student interviews, the researcher administering the survey was also the teacher of record for this cohort of students. This could seem to be a conflict of interest in that these students may have answered the questions in a certain way due to the person asking the questions currently being their teacher. However, this type of population required an interviewer with whom the students felt comfortable answering questions and holding discussions. Students with special needs require relationship building and established rapport for growth and development to manifest. If a stranger administered the interview, the students would not answer as openly or honestly due to the lack of familiarity or respect for the interviewer. For a more valid and reliable set of responses, the teacher of record acted as the interviewee for this protocol.

Summary

Friend and Cook (2000) stated that having students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting is both academically as well as behaviorally beneficial to student growth and development. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to continuously question and research the impact the regular education setting or inclusion model has on

students with disabilities' discipline rates as well as their social and emotional growth and development. This methodology sought to answer these questions as well as provide avenues to gather statistically relevant data. In the following chapter, the researcher explains the statistical outcomes and explains and interprets the results within the context and findings of this methodology.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this retrospective, explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to determine the impact of an inclusive educational setting on students with various disabilities' behavioral, social, and emotional growth and development. Research has indicated that an inclusive environment yields opportunities for more social interactions with peers, development of social skills, and opportunities to learn and practice appropriate behaviors (Canges, 2010). When students are separated from their peers, the opportunities to make appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral connections are diminished (Fitch, 1999). These students are confined to a setting that does not allow for interactions or experiences that promote the learning or use of social, emotional, or behavioral skills and strategies (Idol, 2006). In this research study, the data were collected and analyzed to determine if the inclusive environment had an impact on the social, emotional, and behavioral growth and development of students with a disability. The data and findings are presented for each individual research question.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent are students with disabilities' discipline referrals, IEPs with behavioral goals, and BIPs impacted by participation in an inclusive educational setting over a 3-year period?

Table 1

Disciplinary Referrals for the Separate and Inclusive Setting

	Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Separate	6.11	35	8.474	1.432
Regular	3.29	35	5.222	.883

The results presented by the t test displays a mean of 6.11 disciplinary office referrals for students served in the separate setting as compared to 3.29 disciplinary office referrals for students served in the inclusive setting. This is a reduction of 53.8% for students with disabilities being served in an inclusive setting versus a restrictive setting.

Table 2

Comparison of Disciplinary Referrals for the Separate and Inclusive Setting

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval		t	df
				Lower	Upper		
Separate- Regular	2.89	4.896	.828	1.147	4.510	3.418	34

The results presented by the paired samples t test determine a mean of a 2.89 difference in disciplinary referrals received by students with disabilities in the inclusive setting.

Table 3

Comparison of Disciplinary Referrals for the Separate and Inclusive Setting by Gender

Setting	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Separate	Male	6.739	1.784	3.110	10.368
	Female	4.917	2.470	-.108	9.941
Inclusive	Male	3.565	1.102	1.323	5.807
	Female	2.750	1.526	-.354	5.854

The results of this MANOVA statistical analysis show the mean scores by gender for students with disabilities served in the separate and inclusive setting. Males in the separate setting obtained a mean of 6.739 disciplinary infractions as compared to 3.565, a reduction of 53%, in the inclusive setting. Females in the separate setting acquired a mean of 4.917 disciplinary infractions as compared to 2.750 in the regular setting, resulting in a reduction of 56%. Therefore, both genders displayed less behavioral incidents or infractions that lead to any type of classroom removal such as Redirect, ISS, or OSS in the regular/inclusive educational setting as opposed to the separate setting.

Table 4

Comparison of Disciplinary Referrals for the Separate and Inclusive Setting by Eligibility Area

Setting	Label	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Separate	OHI	8.455	2.676	2.982	13.927
	LD	5.632	2.036	1.468	9.795
	SED	8.000	8.874	-10.149	26.149
	ID Mild	1.500	6.275	-11.333	14.333
	AU	4.441	8.874	-18.149	18.149
	OI	3.000	8.874	-15.149	21.149
Inclusive	OHI	4.909	1.635	1.565	8.253
	LD	3.000	1.244	.455	5.545
	SED	4.000	5.423	-7.092	15.092
	ID Mild	.000	3.835	-7.843	7.843
	AU	.000	5.423	-11.092	11.092
	OI	.000	5.423	-11.092	11.092

Note. (Post Hoc not calculated due to the small amount of numbers in some of the subsets).

The results from a MANOVA statistical analysis of disciplinary infractions per setting and per eligibility label display a reduction in means of infractions from the separate setting to the inclusive setting. Every eligibility category experienced a reduction in numbers. However, due to the lower numbers of students in the AU and OI categories, a post hoc analysis could not be completed. By categories, OHI decreased 58%, LD decreased by 53%, and SED decreased by 50%. Students with AU, ID Mild, and OIs did not receive any discipline referrals in the inclusive setting resulting in a mean of .000.

Table 5

ANOVA of Disciplinary Infractions per Setting

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F.	Sig.
Between Groups	5.241	1	5.241	.188	.668
Within Groups	921.902	33	27.936		
Total	927.143	34			

The results of this ANOVA statistical test do not show a significant difference in the amount of disciplinary referrals received by students with special needs per setting when $\alpha=.05$: $F_{(1, .33)}=.188$, $p=0.668$. The lack of statistical significance can be attributed to the small sample size as well as the limited amount of students in various subgroups.

The inclusive setting has also impacted the quantity of IEPs written for students with disabilities that address specific goals and behavioral domains per student need. In the separate setting, five students needed a behavioral domain goal related to learning communication skills and strategy development incorporated into their IEPs. Two of these students were students with an LD, along with one student with AU, one student with an SED, and one student with the OHI of ADHD. Four of the students were male and one student was female. Also in the separate setting, four students required a behavioral domain goal involving anger management and coping strategies addressed in their IEPs. Two of these students were students with the OHI of ADHD, one student with an SED, and one student with an LD. All four students were male. Lastly, in the separate setting, six students needed a behavioral domain goal of focusing incorporated into their IEPs. Three of those students were students identified with the OHI of ADHD and three students identified as students with an LD. Four students were male and two

students were female.

Comparatively, these numbers decreased in the inclusive setting. Only two students, both males, in this setting required a continuation of the goal concerning communication with one student having AU and one student identified with an SED. In the goal domain concentrating on anger, only two students, both males, required additional assistance in this area including one student with an SED and one student with the OHI of ADHD. Lastly, the regular setting yielded only three students, two male and one female, requiring the continuation of a focusing goal in the behavioral domain to ensure success. Two of these students qualified as having the OHI of ADHD and one student with the classification of an LD.

Numerically, the need for various behavioral goals included in individual student's IEPs decreased from the separate setting to the regular setting. The students who require the assistance of a communication goal decreased 40%. Anger management goals included in IEPs decreased 50%. Lastly, the students who required additional assistance in learning focusing skills and strategies also reduced 50%.

In addition to the behavioral goals written into student IEPs, students who demonstrate more intensive behavioral needs often require Behavioral Intervention Plans. In the separate setting, four students, all males, required a BIP to assist with more aggressive and intensive behaviors. Two of these students were identified as students with the OHI of ADHD, one student with an SED, and one student with an LD. In the regular setting, one of the students with an LD's BIP was dismissed due to not having any offenses that required ISS or OSS as well as no intensive administrative action. Therefore, students requiring a BIP for more intensive social and emotional behaviors decreased 25% from the separate to the inclusive setting.

Research Question 2: How does the inclusive educational setting impact students with disabilities' emotional growth and development as measured by student interviews and a valid and reliable survey instrument? Students with disabilities involved in the cohort used in this research study were also administered a survey that measured their emotional and social growth and development. Given a list of 35 questions, the students ranked how often they felt or experienced a particular emotion or social experience using the scale of never, sometimes, often, or always. The survey information was broken down into four distinct sections with two sections focused on emotional growth and two sections on social growth. The two sections examined and analyzed for this research question included questions related to self-regulation and empathy. The ultimate goal of the SEARS-A is placement in a tier that best meets the emotional needs of a student based on the statistical averages of the appropriate questions related to a certain category. A Tier 1 student is considered average to high functioning in relation to having appropriate social and emotional skills and strategies. A student placed in Tier 2 is considered at risk with the need for minimal supports in acquiring and using social and emotional skills and strategies. Lastly, a student involved with Tier 3 is considered a high risk and requires intensive and direct social and emotional interventions. Students were asked to base their responses on their educational placement of an inclusive setting. The following tables display information determined from *t* tests and MANOVAS. Gender and eligibility areas disaggregate the information.

Table 6

Self-Regulation and Empathy MANOVA Scores for Tier Placement by Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Self-Regulation	Male	1.13	.344	23
	Female	1.25	.452	12
	Total	1.17	.382	35
Empathy	Male	1.39	.583	23
	Female	1.42	.669	12
	Total	1.40	.604	35

The results of this MANOVA display that both males and females scored means correlating to the appropriate use of social and emotional skills related to Tier 1. All of these students are considered average to high functioning in the use of emotional skills related to the questions correlated for these two areas. Males scored lower than females in both areas, thereby demonstrating a more secure placement in Tier 1. Females scored higher than males; and even though their placement remains in Tier 1, there seems to be a trend of moving to a possible Tier 2 placement. Both genders experienced higher means in the area of empathy as compared to self-regulation. Therefore, students believe they have more control over their own actions than having the ability to help and work through emotional situations concerning other individuals.

Table 7

Social Regulation and Empathy MANOVA Scores for Tier Placement by Eligibility Area

	Label	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Self-Regulation	OHI	1.27	.467	11
	LD	1.11	.315	19
	SED	1.00	.	1
	ID Mild	1.50	.707	2
	AU	1.00	.	1
	OI	1.00	.	1
	Total	1.17	.382	35
Empathy	OHI	1.36	.674	11
	LD	1.47	.612	19
	SED	2.00	.	1
	ID Mild	1.00	.000	2
	AU	1.00	.	1
	OI	1.00	.	1
	Total	1.40	.604	35

The results of the MANOVA display that per disability area, the majority of students with varying disabilities placed in the Tier 1 category, with the exception of the student with an SED, obtaining a mean score of 2. The average of this student's scores places him in the at-risk category of Tier 2 for empathy. Also, in the area of empathy, students identified as OHI and LD are demonstrating an upward trend towards Tier 2 supports based on their higher means of 1.36 and 1.47. Students with a classification of ID Mild show a trend toward Tier 2 supports with the mean 1.50.

Of the cohort sample size of 35 students, 10 students were selected to voluntarily participate, with parent permission, in an interview. These 10 students were selected based upon having the highest number of disciplinary incidents while being served in the separate or resource setting. Consequently, these students' discipline incidents decreased

from being served in the separate setting as opposed to the inclusive setting. The researcher developed an interview protocol with six questions that were asked to these students. The researcher interviewed each student, audio recorded the responses, and transcribed the responses in written form. The researcher applied the method of frequency coding to the transcriptions to identify common threads and themes within the collective student responses. The questions were then categorized into two sections. Questions 1 and 3 related specifically to the students' perceptions concerning their personal emotional growth and development. The results related to the questions concerning social growth and development are further explained.

Interview Question 1: Describe your experiences with being pulled out of your classes for educational assistance in sixth grade-intermediate school. Frequency coding was used to evaluate the responses.

Table 8

Interview Question 1: Common Themes

Student Interviewees	Percentage	Comment/Statements
7 of 10	70%	Felt embarrassed when being pulled from their class settings for additional help or instruction.
2 of 10	20%	Reacted in negative ways including insubordination or disrespectful infractions.
2 of 10	20%	Cried when asked to leave their regular class to receive their pull out educational instruction in their separate class.
5 of 10	50%	Admitted to being picked on by their nondisabled peers throughout the day upon returning from their separate class setting.
3 of 10	30%	Revealed that the students learned little to nothing in the separate setting due to being upset at having to be placed and instructed in that particular environmental setting.

Therefore, the underlying theme associated with Question 1 included being embarrassed and experiencing negative emotions when being required to leave the regular class setting to attend special education instructional classes. Three example quotes shown below illustrate this theme.

Student 1 stated, “I hated having to leave the room. I felt like all these eyes were staring at the back of me. When I left I could hear laughing and giggling.” Student 2 noted, “When the other teacher came to get me everyone knew where I was going. I felt stupid and like I wasn’t smart enough to stay in the regular classroom and get the same information all my friends were getting.” Student 3, with tears in her eyes, stated, “When

I had to leave the room all the students would start yelling ‘Where are you going?’ even though they knew where I was going, they just wanted to hear me say it but I never did.”

These statements demonstrated the negative effects on a student’s emotional well-being and progression due to isolation and seclusion.

Interview Question 3: Do you prefer staying in class or being pulled out of class for additional educational assistance? Can you explain why? Frequency coding was used to evaluate the responses.

Table 9

Interview Question 3: Common Themes

Student Interviewees	Percentage	Comment/Statements
10 of 10	100%	Preferred to remain in class as opposed to being pulled out of class for additional educational assistance.
4 of 10	40%	Not picked on for being “EC” since no teacher is coming to retrieve them from class.
2 of 10	20%	Behavior has improved since they remain with their peers and are not asked removed.
3 of 10	30%	Academically learning more and can concentrate better since they are not worried about when their EC teacher will appear as well as having to leave the room.
2 of 10	20%	Less worried what their peers think of them.

The underlying theme connected to Question 3 revealed that students felt more emotionally comfortable staying in the inclusive classroom setting resulting in a reduction of anxiety, worry, and fear. This theme is illustrated by additional remarks made during the interview process with the researcher.

Student 1 remarked, “I love staying in the classroom. I feel like I am just as smart as everyone else.” Student 2 mentioned, “I used to dread a certain period of the day because I knew that teacher would be coming and I would have to leave. I don’t have to worry about that anymore and I am so happy.” Finally, student 3, with a huge smile on his face, stated, “At this school, the teacher comes to you and helps you right in the class. It’s like getting served at a restaurant. She comes and helps me whenever I need it.”

In conclusion, based on student comments and concerns, the separate setting resulted in the students feeling inferior to other students academically, socially, and emotionally.

Research Question 3: How does the inclusive educational setting impact students with disabilities’ social growth and development as measured by student interviews and a valid and reliable survey instrument? Students who participated in the SEARS-A also answered survey questions related to social growth and development. The remaining questions on the survey were statistically analyzed to produce results related to social competency and social responsibility. Gender and eligibility areas disaggregate the information. The following tables display information determined from *t* tests and MANOVAS.

Table 10

Social Competency and Responsibility MANOVA Scores for Tier Placement by Gender

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social-Competency	Male	1.43	.507	23
	Female	1.50	.522	12
	Total	1.46	.505	35
Responsibility	Male	1.30	.635	23
	Female	1.17	.389	12
	Total	1.36	.561	35

The results of the MANOVA displays that both males and females scored in the area associated with Tier 1. These students are considered as having average to high functioning social skills. For both males and females, social-competency seems to be an area of need, seeing that the males scored a mean of 1.43 and females 1.50 demonstrating a trend mean leading towards Tier 2. However, in responsibility, females scored a more stable mean of 1.17 resulting in a firm placement in Tier 1, whereas the males obtained a higher mean of 1.30. In conclusion, females require more support for social competency skills than males, but males require more assistance in the area of social responsibility.

Table 11

Social Competency and Responsibility MANOVA Scores for Tier Placement by Eligibility Area

	Label	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social-Competency	OHI	1.36	.505	11
	LD	1.53	.513	19
	SED	2.00	.	1
	ID Mild	1.50	.707	2
	AU	1.00	.	1
	OI	1.00	.	1
	Total	1.46	.505	35
Responsibility	OHI	1.36	.809	11
	LD	1.21	.419	19
	SED	1.00	.	1
	ID Mild	1.50	.707	2
	AU	1.00	.	1
	OI	1.00	.	1
	Total	1.26	.561	35

The results of this MANOVA explain that per disability area the majority of students with varying disabilities placed in the Tier 1 category with the exception of the student with an SED. The average of this student's scores placed him in the at-risk category of Tier 2 for social competency. However, with mean scores of 1.53 and 1.50 respectively, students with LDs and ID Mild are also showing advancement to the Tier 2 area for social competency. The students classified with a ID Mild obtained a mean score of 1.50 trending to the more at-risk range in the area of responsibility as well.

The 10 students who participated in the previously discussed interview were also asked questions that related to their social growth and development. Questions 2 and 4 presented during the interview session addressed the students' own perceptions related to

their social needs.

Interview Question 2: Describe your experiences with remaining in the regular class setting for educational assistance in seventh and eighth grade middle school?

Frequency coding was used to evaluate responses.

Table 12

Interview Question 2: Common Themes

Student Interviewees	Percentage	Comment/Statements
6 of 10	60%	Learned more being in class with their peers and enjoyed getting to learn the “regular stuff.”
5 of 10	50%	Claimed to be better behaved since they do not want to appear “bad” in front of their friends.
4 of 10	40%	Felt better about themselves resulting in having higher self-esteem.
8 of 10	80%	No longer embarrassed.
3 of 10	30%	No longer feel different or isolated from their friends.
2 of 10	20%	Enjoyed staying in class because they can do group work with their friends or peers.

Thereby, the underlying theme related to Question 2 centered on the reduction, if not extinction, of the stigmatizing effect related to being secluded or pulled away from nondisabled when students with disabilities remained in the inclusive educational class setting. A few examples to illustrate this theme are as follows.

Student 1 explained, “This is the first time that the EC teacher does not come and drag me out of class. It is fantastic.” Student 2 noted, “I never thought I could make an A in regular language arts class because I thought since they were pulling me out that I

couldn't do it. I have straight A's in my reading class now." A third student stated, "I love working with my friends. When there are group assignments I am included. I get to go over to friends' houses on the weekends because I am in their group."

Therefore, students who are educated in the inclusive setting feel more positively associated with their peers and have progressed to have a more positive outlook on their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Interview Question 4: What qualities of staying in class with educational assistance do you like? What qualities of being pulled out of class for educational assistance do you like?

Table 13

Interview Question 4: Common Themes

Student Interviewees	Percentage	Comment/Statements
9 of 10	90%	Did not like being pulled out of class.
1 of 10	10%	May have received a little more help when he got pulled out since there were not as many students in the class.
3 of 10	30%	Learned more in the class because the activities were more fun, and there were more students to talk to and be grouped with.
4 of 10	40%	Appreciated and enjoyed having two teachers in the room so that they can ask questions and receive all the help they require.
5 of 10	50%	Got to stay with their friends all day and do not have to be embarrassed when they were required to leave to attend a different “special” class.
2 of 10	20%	Did not get in near as much trouble by being allowed to stay in the room with their peers.
3 of 10	30%	Felt better about their academics and now consider themselves as “smart.”

Hence, the underlying theme associated with Question 4 resulted in students believing they are smarter and well behaved when allowed to be educated with their nondisabled peers and friends in an inclusive environment. Three example quotes presented illustrate this theme.

One student remarked, “I am not embarrassed anymore and I don’t have to worry about being laughed at or picked on by the smarter kids because I am also now a smart kid.” A second student stated, “Group work is much more fun when you have more

students to choose from in the class. My other class was always too small and we couldn't do anything fun.” A third student stated,

I didn't mind getting pulled out because I thought that was the only way I could get help. When I saw that the teacher would come to me I wondered why that couldn't have happened in the sixth grade. It is awesome.

In conclusion, all students participate more and feel more comfortable in the inclusive setting, although one student did find some benefit in the separate setting as well.

The concepts of social and emotional growth and development significantly impact one another as well as students with disabilities on a daily basis. Therefore, the researcher decided to analyze the information presented in the SEARS-A as a whole as well as evaluate two questions presented on the interview protocol that connected both social and emotional perceptions.

Table 14

SEARS-A Total Score by Gender

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	1.39	23	.583
Female	1.50	12	.552
Total	1.43	35	.558

The results of this *t* test explain that when students were asked to rate their social and emotional growth and development in relation to the inclusive educational setting, the average of all the scores fell within the Tier 1 category. However, females have a higher mean resulting in a slightly less rate of confidence in some of these areas as compared to males.

Table 15

SEARS-A Total Score by Eligibility

Eligibility	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
OHI	1.45	11	.522
LD	1.47	19	.612
SED	2.00	1	.
ID Mild	2.00	2	.000
AU	1.00	1	.
OI	1.00	1	.
Total	1.43	35	.558

The results of this *t* test explain that the students with SEDs as well as students with ID Mild actually fall in the at-risk category, Tier 2, for social and emotional needs when all four subgroups are analyzed into one mean. Students with OHIs and Learning Disabilities also demonstrate a slight, yet minimal, trend towards the at-risk range.

Questions 5 and 6 presented during the student interview were also analyzed in terms of acquiring an overall student perception related to both social and emotional growth and development. The answers to these questions incorporated both facets of development.

Interview Question 5: Tell me how your middle school educational experience compared to your intermediate school educational experience. Frequency coding was used to evaluate the responses.

Table 16

Interview Question 5: Common Themes

Student Interviewees	Percentage	Comment/Statements
9 of 10	90%	Educational experience in middle school had been far better than at the intermediate school.
1 of 10	10%	Enjoyed both places and did not have a preference.
4 of 10	40%	“Love” staying in class and having the teacher “come to them.”
3 of 10	30%	Learned more in middle school than in the lower grades.
4 of 10	40%	Not being embarrassed or picked on at middle school as compared to intermediate school.
2 of 10	20%	Not gotten into near as much trouble in middle school than intermediate school.
3 of 10	30%	Have more friends and get along better with their peers.

Therefore, the underlying theme for Question 5 revealed that remaining in the regular, inclusive classroom affected the students’ social and emotional development as well as academics in a positive way. Three examples are presented to illustrate this theme.

One student noted,

My momma is so proud of me because I don’t get in near as much trouble as I used to. Since some lady is not coming to pull me out of class, my friends keep their mouths shut and no one says anything about me needing help. I have been in a lot of fights over kids running their mouths and I have only had two problems this year and they were on the bus. I like my classes much better.

A second student mentioned, “I have made new friends and had the courage to talk to new people because I feel like they don’t know I am EC because I get to stay in class and be with them.” Lastly, a third student remarked,

I think it is so cool that the teacher comes to me in both math and language arts.

She knows what is going on and if I have a question I can ask her either during or after class and she will help me. I know she is the EC teacher but all the kids work and talk with her so I am not picked on.

In conclusion, the inclusive setting allowed students to improve their social skills by remaining in the class setting with their friends while continuing to grow and develop in their own individualized ways.

Interview Question 6: Do you believe you are more successful staying in class or being pulled out of class? Can you explain why? Frequency coding was used to evaluate the responses.

Table 17

Interview Question 6: Common Themes

Student Interviewees	Percentage	Comment/Statements
10 of 10	100%	Remaining in the regular education class setting has allowed them to become more successful than when they were removed from their peers.
6 of 10	60%	Involved an academic piece in that the students stated they felt as if they were getting the same education as everyone else and did not feel “slow” or “behind.”
3 of 10	30%	Having two teachers makes it easier to be successful since someone is there to help you right when you are in need.
2 of 10	20%	Feel better about who they are and what they are learning when in the inclusive classroom with peers and friends.
3 of 10	30%	Can work with their peers in the same class they are more successful.

Hence, the underlying theme for this question focused on students believing they are more successful in the inclusive classroom setting as opposed to being removed.

Student remarks illustrate this theme.

One student noted, “I am so much more successful staying in regular class. I am not worried or upset like I used to be.” A second student commented,

I like being in class with my friends. I stay in touch with what is going and I can talk to them about class because I am in it with them. It is nice because they have said they like having me in the classes and in their groups.

Lastly, a third student stated, “Please do not make me get pulled out again. That was so embarrassing and I don’t like how it made me feel. I hated that feeling that everyone

thought I was dumb and didn't want to be around me.”

Therefore, the inclusive setting was the most preferred setting due to the behavioral, social, and emotional benefits involved in being educated with their nondisabled peers.

Summary

When analyzing the impact the inclusive setting has on students with disabilities, various results were obtained. Discipline referrals and incidents reduced 50% from the separate setting as compared to the regular setting over a 3-year period. The need for behavioral goals written into student IEPs decreased by over 50%. The quantity of BIPs decreased 25% from when the students were served in the separate versus the inclusive environment. When presented with a survey, SEARS-A, students with the disability areas of ID Mild and SED experience a higher risk of needing interventions in the social and emotional development areas resulting in a Tier 2- at-risk placement. Females also displayed a slight trend towards needing minor assistance in the social and emotional domains. Lastly, the information yielded from the interviews with students who have been instructed in both educational environments provided more individual insight. An overwhelming 100% of students interviewed preferred to remain in the inclusive class setting with their peers for instruction. Their responses centered on feeling less stigmatized, less embarrassed, and more successful in this inclusive educational setting. In the following chapter, the researcher discusses the outcomes of this research with implications for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The integration of students with disabilities into the regular classroom setting with their nondisabled peers has been a topic of research that has been analyzed and debated over past decades. Friend and Cook (2000) revealed that students who are educated in the inclusive or regular classroom setting benefit in many ways including academic, behavioral, and social growth and development. Research provided by Klinzing (2005) stated that inclusion can be successful in that both the regular education and special education students benefit from learning from one another, thereby enhancing both students' educational environments. However, McCarty (2006) suggested that obtaining a true measure of impact involving the inclusion setting on students with disabilities is often difficult and not always accurate. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of an inclusive educational setting on the behavioral, social, and emotional growth and development of students with various disabilities. The findings, along with their implications, are presented by research question.

Implications of Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent are students with disabilities' discipline referrals, IEPs with behavioral goals, and BIPs impacted by participation in an inclusive educational setting over a 3-year period? A variety of documents, student records, and disciplinary information were analyzed to determine if the inclusive educational setting had any impact on the rate of disciplinary referrals, need for behavior goals in IEPs, or need for BIPs concerning students with disabilities. Results from previous research suggest that when students are educated with their nondisabled peers, they acclimate to the setting and imitate more appropriate behaviors resulting in fewer

negative distractions or problematic behaviors (Tomlinson, 2012b). Research indicates that students with special needs often acquire more behavioral referrals or tend to accrue more disciplinary infractions than their nondisabled peers (Taylor, 2011). These issues often lead to a need for a behavioral goal being added to the student's IEP or, for more severe behaviors, requiring a BIP to manage and instruct more intensive, direct social skills and strategies (Vaughn et al., 2003).

Table 1 in Chapter 4 demonstrates through a paired *t* test a reduction in the number of disciplinary referrals from a mean of 6.11 to 3.29, a reduction of 53.8% from the separate setting to the regular, inclusive setting. Table 2 displays a mean difference in disciplinary referrals of 2.89 from the separate to the inclusive setting. When this information was analyzed further in Table 3 by gender, the number of disciplinary referrals males received in the inclusive setting decreased by 53% from the separate setting, while the females decreased by 56%. Therefore, both males and females experienced a reduction in the number of discipline referrals and rates in a more inclusive setting with their nondisabled peers than when being excluded and instructed in a separate setting.

Students with disabilities are placed in the program under eligibility labels (Citron, 1983) and served based on their individual needs. Table 4 presents the results of MANOVA comparing differences in discipline referrals from the separate to the inclusive setting based on classification labels. All eligibility classifications experienced a reduction of behavioral incidents. OHI experienced a reduction of 58%, LD of 53%, SED of 50%, ID Mild of 100%, AU of 100%, and OI of 100%. However, the ANOVA presented in Table 5 indicated that there was not a significant statistical difference in the reduction of disciplinary referrals and infractions in students with disabilities when

instructed in the separate versus inclusive setting: $\alpha: .05$, $F(1,33) = .188$, $p = .668$.

Further analysis of the data related to Research Question 1 indicated a reduction in the number of IEPs that included specific goals related to behavior. The goals addressed in IEPs included goals for communication, anger management, and focusing skills and strategies. Fifteen students required the need for a behavioral goal when being educated in the separate setting, while only seven students needed one while being served in the inclusive setting. This resulted in a reduction of 46% of students who were served with IEPs that contained behavioral goals.

Lastly, this researcher reviewed the number of students who required additional behavioral assistance through a BIP based on the educational setting of the student. In the separate setting, four students needed the extra strategies and skills for social, emotional, and behavioral growth and development. However, in the inclusive setting, three students still remain under the guidance of a BIP, resulting in a 25% reduction in the number of students who need a BIP.

These conclusions are in agreement with the research conducted by Abebe and Hailermariam (2007) that suggested that when students are educated in an environment where they feel comfortable, at ease, and less stressed, problem behaviors can be managed more effectively. Alquraini (2013) commented that students with disabilities, especially behavioral concerns, who are educated in the least restrictive environment, experience a decrease in behavioral rates and incidents resulting in a reduced need for specific goals and interventions related to behavior domains.

Research Question 2: How does the inclusive educational setting impact students with disabilities' emotional growth and development as measured by student interviews and a valid and reliable survey instrument? The SEARS-A, an

instrument used to quantitatively evaluate students on their perceptions of their emotional growth, allowed students to reflect upon the progress they have made emotionally while being educated in the inclusive setting. This survey has been proven reliable and valid as well as an effective way to quantitatively measure a student's individual perceptions related to his/her social and emotional growth and development (Nese et al., 2011). The survey asked the student to rate certain emotional characteristics or situations as always, often, sometimes, or never. The survey outcomes were then categorized into four sections: self-regulation, empathy, social competency, and social responsibility. Of the 35 questions, 17 related to emotional experiences or outcomes based on the use of emotional skills or strategies. The two categories aligned with these questions included self-regulation and empathy. Apache (2004) explained empathy as having the ability to understand the feeling of others. Self-regulation is defined as having the ability to control oneself in various situations and environments by using appropriate learned strategies and behaviors (Vaughn et al., 2003). Based on the responses to the student's score, a placement in a tier is made. Tier 1 demonstrates that a student is considered average to high functioning in regard to social and emotional skills; Tier 2 indicates that a student is more at risk for not being able to react in appropriate emotional ways when in a demanding situation; and Tier 3 shows a high risk of emotional maladjustment with a need for intensive intervention. Research results prove that a three-tiered model is effective for categorizing and placing students in correct modules in order to receive instruction or interventions best suited to their individualized needs (Lembke & Stichter, 2006).

A MANOVA statistical calculation analyzed self-regulation and empathy based on gender to determine the mean scores of tier placement. Table 6 in Chapter 4 shows

that when comparing these two emotional domains, males scored a lower mean resulting in a firm placement in Tier 1. Females also scored means that include placement in Tier 1 but also had some high scores demonstrating an upward trend toward Tier 2 and displaying some at-risk behaviors. For self-regulation, males scored 0.12 points lower than females, establishing a stronger use of emotional skills in this domain. Martinek et al. (2001) identified research that analyzed how youth with various disabilities handled situations in which self-regulation was a key factor. The research concluded that males had a higher appreciation for responsibility and were 20% more likely to accept blame or serve consequences than females.

For empathy, both males and females achieved higher means. Males scored closer to the mean score of 1.0 than females but only by 0.03 points. These data suggest that females are more at risk for issues related to empathy than their male counterparts. For the total mean score for both genders combined, there was a 0.23 difference between responsibility and empathy. Therefore, conclusions could be drawn suggesting that empathy is an emotional skill that warrants attention and direct instruction. Research collected and analyzed by Apache (2004) concurs with the premise that students, especially those with disabilities, exhibit a much harder time in being empathetic to others due to cognitive, social, and emotional deficits.

Self-regulation and empathy were also compared using a MANOVA to identify tier placement by eligibility labels. As Table 7 demonstrates, all students, with the one exception of SED, scored means resulting in a Tier 1 placement for both self-regulation and empathy. A review of the table also suggests that students with disabilities, overall, scored closer to the solid mean Tier 1 placement of 1 than when measuring empathy. Also, within the self-regulation analysis, students with ID Mild scored 1.50, a score

advancing towards the placement in Tier 2 and needing some minimal emotional intervention.

When reviewing the results associated with empathy, specific eligibility classifications of students with disabilities experienced a difficult time with learning and utilizing certain types of emotional skills. For example, the student served under the SED classification scored in Tier 1 for responsibility but obtained a solid Tier 2 placement for empathy. Also, the students served under the OHI and LD classifications displayed higher trends toward Tier 2 placement for empathy than in responsibility. Overall, the total mean for responsibility, 1.17, when compared to empathy, 1.40, exhibited an increase of 0.23 points. These results indicate that students with varying disabilities have more confidence in displaying responsibility skills than strategies and skills associated with empathy.

Further data were collected concerning the impact of the inclusive setting on students with disabilities' emotional growth and development through the use of student interviews. Ten students participated in one-to-one verbal interviews that asked questions exploring their own perceptions concerning their emotional growth in the inclusive classroom as compared to the separate classroom. The interview consisted of six questions with two questions related specifically to emotional growth and development. The 10 students who were selected obtained higher rates of discipline referrals and infractions in the separate setting but experienced a reduced rate when educated in the inclusive setting. The researcher questioned why this would be the case and decided to ask the experts on the issue, the students. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Frequency coding and development of thematic trends were analyzed and explained.

Analysis of the two questions that focused on students' perceptions of their own personal emotional growth yielded a plethora of responses all related to the common themes of feeling more emotionally stable when served in an inclusive classroom. Many of the responses provided by the students included not being embarrassed or feeling stigmatized due to having a disability; not getting picked on by their peers for being "slow"; not reacting in negative, emotional, or violent ways to deal with having to be served in a separate setting; and not having to adversely deal with peers who made comments concerning the alternative educational settings for these students. Duran et al. (2013) also discovered that students who were removed from the setting where their nondisabled peers were being educated resulted in a decrease in self-esteem for the student with the disability and provided more opportunities for students without disabilities to draw attention to, pick on, or embarrass the students who were removed.

The data also suggest that when students felt more emotionally comfortable in an educational setting, their concentration increases, anxiety decreases, and learning can be attained. Research studies confirm that when students are educated in a more restrictive setting, they often feel worried and overact as a means to escape and regain control over the situation (Girli, 2013). Students continuously commented that without the fear of knowing the EC teacher would be coming to retrieve and escort them to another room for learning, participation in the class and understanding of the educational content could occur with more ease and less worry. This allowed students with disabilities' self-esteem and confidence to increase resulting in positive feelings about their own emotional skills and development. Research by Tomlinson (2012a) stated that when teachers commit and strive to educate all students in their classroom setting, students with challenging behaviors or academic deficits would rise to the occasion and continue on a consistent

path of progress.

Research Question 3: How does the inclusive educational setting impact students with disabilities' social and emotional growth and development as measured by student interviews and a valid and reliable survey instrument? In

addition to emotional growth, the SEARS-A also measured social growth of students when asked questions pertaining to the inclusive environment. Of the 35-question survey, 18 questions measured students' use of social skills and strategies in various situations. Once again, the students decided if they used these skills always, often, sometimes, or never. These survey questions focused on social competency and responsibility. Meadan and Monda-Amaya (2008) defined social competency as "general evaluative term referring to the quality or adequacy of a person's overall performance in a particular task" (p. 159). Social skills are defined as "specific abilities required to perform competently at a task" (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008, p. 159). Martinke et al. (2001) defined responsibility as being able to accept consequences for actions, both positive and negative.

Displayed in Table 8 in Chapter 4 are the results of a MANOVA applied to social competency and social responsibility for tier placement when analyzed by gender. The results and outcomes for these two types of social skills displayed higher means than for the emotional skills of self-regulation and empathy. Males obtained a mean score of 1.43, while females scored 1.50 in this area, resulting in a difference of 0.07 points. Both genders are in the Tier 1 category but demonstrate an upward advancement towards the needs and interventions associated with Tier 2.

In the area of social responsibility, both genders scored significantly closer to the average mean score of 1, resulting in a more comprehensive placement in Tier 1. For this

social skill, females scored 1.17, while males scored 1.30, a difference of 0.13 points, suggesting the females have a stronger sense of responsibility than the males. Further conclusions suggest that males are closer to the at-risk placement of Tier 2 for responsibility than their female counterparts. Overall, for both of these categories, a 0.10-point difference was noted between social competency and social responsibility for both genders. Social competency was determined to be a more pressing issue that may lead to need for social training than responsibility. These findings are in agreement with the results attained by DiGennaro et al. (2011) that stated adolescent females experienced a tendency to be more socially responsible in both academic and behavioral situations concerning their peers than their male counterparts.

When eligibility classifications were analyzed comparing these two social domains though the statistical test of a MANOVA, the results were comparable to the previous measures. As displayed in Table 9, the means associated with social competency placed five of the six categories of students in Tier 1, but many of the scores are advancing towards Tier 2. Also, the student identified with an SED scored distinctly in Tier 2 demonstrating need for social interventions and at-risk support. Students classified as OHI, LD, and ID Mild also demonstrated an upward advancement towards Tier 2 as their mean score progressed well past 1.0.

For social responsibility, all the classification areas scored within the Tier 1 placement; however, students identified as OHI and ID Mild demonstrated scores closer to Tier 2. Overall, students with disabilities scored a mean of 1.46 for social competency and 1.26 for social responsibility, a 0.20-point difference between the two social areas. Students with disabilities seem to feel more comfortable with their social skills related to social responsibility as compared to social competency (Vaughn et al., 2003).

Additionally, the 10 students who participated in the interview portion of the data collection were also asked questions that related to their social growth and development based on their experiences between the separate and inclusive educational environments. Two questions presented in the interview focused primarily on the individual student's perceptions of his/her own social growth and development. Through additional frequency and coding analysis, trends were developed and analyzed.

Students with disabilities who were served in an inclusive classroom as opposed to a separate setting felt a deeper connection with their nondisabled peers and friends by remaining in the classroom. Canges (2010) investigated the effectiveness of educating students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom and discovered that students with disabilities would emulate the prosocial behaviors of their peers in order to fit in, thereby acquiring and retaining positive social skills and actions. According to the interview data concerning the inclusive environment, the students felt socially included, and the feelings of embarrassment and anxiety were greatly diminished. The students felt as if they were not isolated from their peers and had the opportunity to be educated using the same methods as all of their peers and friends. Also, students with more significant behavioral problems admitted to "calming down" since they did not want to appear different or "bad" in front of their peers. The students explained that since they were being allowed to remain in the room for their education and assistance, they did not want to appear as if they could not handle it so that removal to a more restrictive setting would not become an option again.

In addition to an increase in self-esteem and acquiring more positive attributes related to their confidence, these students presented their ideas that having two teachers in a room also led to their personal social and academic success. Research studies have

indicated that an inclusive classroom containing two teachers not only assists the students with special needs but all students being educated in that setting (Friend et al., 2010). Many of the students noted that when the two teachers were in the room instructing, they could receive the assistance they needed without having to call direct attention to themselves or their disabilities. Also, assistance from their peers became a common trend in the analysis of the data and interviews. Gilberts (2000) remarked that when students gained knowledge and effective feedback from their peers, the ability to self-monitor and continuously check on their and other's progress increased. The students felt more involved in group work as well as collaborative learning and remarked that learning from their peers has been as instrumental as having the two teachers. The trend that arose from these discussions included that remaining in the inclusive classroom setting led to an education full of academic success and social adjustment.

Since the SEARS-A as well as two questions on the interview protocol incorporated the student's perceptions of both social and emotional growth and development, an additional analysis should be reviewed. Table 10 displays the results from a *t* test comparing the total mean score acquired from the integration of all four areas by gender. Males scored a mean of 1.39, while females scored a 1.50, a difference of .11 points. Both of these scores place students in the Tier 1 category, but females are closer to the next Tier. This information suggests that males feel more confident in their social and emotional abilities and skills than females do.

An additional *t* test, as evidenced by Table 11, analyzed the total score of the SEARS-A in regards to disability areas. After the four scores were integrated and analyzed, two of six, 33%, of the eligibility areas scored a mean of 2.0. These included SED and ID Mild. The disability areas closer to Tier 2 placement and at-risk

interventions involved students with OHIs and LDs, 33% of the sample. The special education classifications that scored a mean of 1.0 in the social and emotional domains of the SEARS-A included students with AU and OI, the final 33%. The overall mean for the SEARS-A, based on eligibility, was 1.43, resulting in a Tier 1 placement with a suggestion for review of minimal at-risk interventions due to the inclination towards Tier 2. Morris and Thompson (2008) concurred that students labeled under the classification of SED tend to have higher levels of at-risk behaviors that may result in delinquency and extensive behavioral issues if not provided appropriate instruction and interventions.

Two questions presented to the students during the interview process integrated both the concepts of social and emotional growth and development. The purpose of these two questions included allowing the students to verbalize their own thoughts and perceptions related to their time spent in inclusive and separate settings. The final conceptual schema that developed from the combination of these two questions as well as the overall frequencies and trends of the other questions included the common theme that when students remain in the inclusive setting, they feel less embarrassed, more comfortable with their own learning, more confident in their abilities, and less stigmatized due to having learning differences. Friend and Cook (2000) would agree that when students are included in the environment that is least restrictive and can meet the student's educational and behavioral needs, true progress is evident. In each of the areas of social and emotional growth and development, common threads arose. In both areas, academic understanding and success had improved, social skills and strategies had been implemented positively, and emotional methods and techniques were utilized efficiently and effectively. Farmer et al. (1996) argued that a true and important part of any student's education involves not only the academic piece but a social and emotional

instructional piece as well. As an aside, only one student of the 10 commented that he/she did not mind being removed from the class because he/she received extra assistance; but he/she also stated that he/she enjoyed remaining with his/her peers as well as being a part of that educational culture.

Final Conclusions

In conclusion, students with disabilities who were educated in the inclusive classroom experienced a positive impact within their social and emotional growth and development. Some additional conclusions were determined based on the given data.

First, the student who was classified as a student with AU scored more closely to the mean in all the SEARS-A subgroups and had no discipline problems while being educated in the inclusive settings. This student's behavioral goals were also dismissed due to mastery of his/her behavioral needs. Rotheram-Fuller (2005) explained that students with significant disabilities, like AU, often would acclimate to an inclusive setting with more ease because they are able to observe additional appropriate behaviors instead of being isolated with only students who demonstrate more antisocial behaviors.

Second, research supports that students who are included in the regular education setting with their nondisabled peers will experience an increase in their acquiring and learning of appropriate social and emotional skills, strategies, and techniques (MacSuga-Gage et al., 2012). Therefore, the students who were interviewed had experienced numerous office referrals and disciplinary infractions while being educated in the separate setting. However, once their educational setting changed to a more inclusive environment, their disciplinary infractions decreased greatly. On average, nine of the 10 students experienced a reduction in discipline referrals anywhere from 20%- 41%, although one student experienced an increase from eight referrals to 10 referrals in the

inclusive classroom based on one aggressive action that resulted in a removal for 10 days. Aside from that one infraction, he/she has not had any other removals from the class or school setting. Also, within this group of 10 students, 40% of the students mastered their behavioral goals within their IEPs, and 10% of the students were removed from their BIPs due to successful social and emotional participation in the inclusive environment.

Third, when analyzing the results from the SEARS-A data, 60% of the students interviewed experienced mean scores closer to the average of 1.0, demonstrating a firm placement in Tier 1. However, students classified with OHIs, including ADHD, seemed to score higher than the average mean of 1.0 than the classification labels of LD, AU, and OI. These data as well as additional research suggest students with OHI seem to have a higher probability of advancement towards the Tier 2, at-risk, placement than some other types of eligibility classifications. This represents a need for students who have additional other health concerns, including behavioral needs, to have an education rich in social and emotional skill learning and strategy development as well as academics (Harris et al., 2005). These skills and strategies would be best taught, learned, and utilized in the inclusive classroom where these students can witness and emulate appropriate behaviors to enhance their social and emotional understanding.

Finally, the concept of sociometry became more apparent yet conclusive in the findings as the SEARS-A was evaluated and analyzed. Smoot (2011) identified sociometry as asking specific real-world questions related to social situations. These questions help provoke thought and elicit responses related to the behavioral domains of social and emotional functioning. Within the statistical analysis of sociometry, questions are posed to students relating to these behavioral domains. Then, statistical and numerical values are assigned to various answer choices derived from the responses to

the questions (Smoot, 2011). Therefore, statistical data can be calculated from the responses in conjunction with their numerical assignments in order to yield quantitative data results and calculations (Farmer et al., 1996). The SEARS-A, the survey instrument used for adolescents in this study, effectively used sociometry as a means to gather individual perceptions and perspectives from students concerning their social and emotional growth and development while assigning numerical values to the various response choices resulting in a calculation of statistical means and averages. These scores then allowed students to be placed in a tier (1, 2, or 3) that coincided with their appropriate social and emotional behaviors and needs. The concept and use of sociometry allowed the students to provide valuable statistical data that assisted the researcher in establishing a clearer picture of how students individually viewed their own social and emotional growth and development.

Limitations

There were some limitations associated with this study. The data used in this study analyzed the impact of the students' social and emotional growth and development in regards to two different settings. One setting was a separate setting when the students were educated in intermediate school, whereas the other setting involved the regular, inclusive setting when the students were educated in their middle school careers. Therefore, the students experienced a transition from intermediate to middle school during this time period of 3 years. With this transition came new teachers, routines, and schedules. However, the major limitation associated with this study was the maturation of the students impacting internal validity. These students have matured emotionally, academically, behaviorally, and functionally over the course of the past 3 years due to their ages and both biological and cognitive development (McCarty, 2006). This

researcher could not account for the impact the maturation process had on the students as part of the source of outcomes for some of the students as well as for the limited generalizability of the results.

Delimitations

The researcher determined the group of students chosen and utilized within the study. Within the context of the cohort, the small sample size of $n=35$ impacted the study in various ways. The small sample size affected the data in that this limited scope of students as well as disability classifications could not be fully examined or analyzed as well as a larger group or sample size would have allowed, resulting in a threat to external validity. In addition, the researcher of the study also served as the educator of the students which may be considered a threat to internal validity. This decision was made under the premise that this researcher had extensive knowledge of the students and understood that for these students to supply true and honest perceptions of their feelings and opinions related to their services and settings, someone they felt comfortable with and trusted implicitly had to be included. The students felt comfortable with the researcher and spoke honestly about their social and emotional growth and development while being educated in the inclusive setting. These students would not simply tell the researcher what she wanted to hear, nor fabricate their stories for fear of saying something that would upset the researcher. A sincere, honest, and open dialogue occurred during all processes of this research. Therefore, the researcher administered both the survey and the interviews to this group of students with disabilities. Also, since these groups of students were considered a special population, their involvement in the process had to be managed and handled as efficiently and effectively as possible ensuring no harm or detriment to the students. Additional research also concludes that when

students, especially students with special needs, feel comfortable and at ease with an adult or their educator, they will supply honest feedback to questions or situations when asked (Parker, 2009).

Recommendations

The concepts of inclusive education, students with disabilities, and social and emotional growth and development will continue to be topics of interest in research as the pendulum of education continues to swing. Therefore, additional research will need to be conducted. For further research, this researcher suggests that larger sample sizes of students be used when examining the impact of academic or behavioral growth or development on students. Also, a larger internal sample size of various disabilities should be considered in order to have more generalizability of results instead of limitations due to only having one to three students in a subsample.

In addition to an increase in sample size, researchers may want to consider administering the SEARS-A in each educational setting or at least twice during the study in order for more analytical comparisons to be established. Since the SEARS-A was only administered once to these students while inquiring about a certain educational placement, limited analysis could be conducted on the social and emotional growth and development of these students with disabilities since there were no scores presented from the separate educational setting to compare.

Also, a larger sample size allows the opportunity to interview more students. With the data collected from interviews with more students comes a larger pool of information including perceptions and opinions associated with how students with varying disabilities perceive their own social and emotional growth and development when educated in alternative environments located on the educational continuum. This

additional data and information could only add to the body of research as well as help establish more results to prove generalizability concerning disability and classification labels as well as educational environmental influence.

Lastly, this researcher did not disaggregate the data by race. Additional research may want to examine these ideas or conclusions in regards to race as well as gender and disability areas. This could add an additional component in understanding the impact of a student's educational environment with regard to their social and emotional growth and development.

When considering future impacts as related to other schools, districts, or even state-level advances in inclusive education, the conclusions ascertained by this researcher can be reviewed, researched, and utilized. Students who are served in the inclusive setting feel as if they are more included both academically as well as emotionally and socially with their peers. This setting allows students to grow in all areas of the social, emotional, functional, and behavioral domains by learning and utilizing appropriate behaviors in the inclusive classroom setting. When schools and districts are deciding on implementing inclusive classrooms and educational programs, the research indicates that academic classes that incorporate both regular and special education students benefit both populations of students but seem to have a more substantial impact on the special education students especially with regard to their motivation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The research also concluded that students educated in the inclusive setting performed at or above average in many social and emotional areas (Tier 1) from being educated in an environment that allowed the students to take risks, learn from others, and receive their education with nondisabled peers.

The research also indicates that schools and districts that have a goal to reduce

behavioral infractions, plans, or IEP components could successfully attain these goals by teaching students in the inclusive setting, thereby eliminating the stigma associated with being pulled out of class, embarrassed in front of their peers, and isolated from their classmates to receive instruction that can be delivered in various formats within the inclusive classroom. Districts and even the state level of educational services may decide to implement more inclusive educational environments within various school districts that have higher numbers of discipline referrals or infractions concerning students with special needs in efforts to help intervene and reduce the problem. Districts may decide to use this setting as an intervention to help prevent behaviors from escalating or as a means to gather data on how a student performs in a setting with two teachers along with a diverse peer group in order to make more informed decisions on students' social and emotional as well as academic needs and goals. However, additional training and resources would need to be provided to help teachers and instructional support staff to effectively establish and utilize the inclusive classroom environment.

Also, with the increase of motivation, self-confidence, and self-esteem, students with disabilities are remaining in the classroom setting, acquiring knowledge, and performing more successfully academically. This could lead to a reduction in the drop-out rate and more students with disabilities seeking postsecondary education or employment. Being educated in an inclusive classroom with peers on the standards related to the current grade level has shown to make remarkable differences in the social and emotional growth and development of students with disabilities impacting all students in schools across districts and even the state as a whole.

Summary

When reviewing the impact of the inclusive environment on students with

disabilities, an abundant amount of data were collected and analyzed yielding positive results. Even though there was not a significant statistical difference between the educational environment in which a student with a disability was educated, when discipline referrals and infractions were analyzed, a decrease in the amount of out-of-class and school placements were revealed.

In addition to a reduction in discipline referrals, students classified as OHI, LD, AU, and OI scored predominantly in the Tier 1 continuum of placement, resulting in an acquisition of social and emotional skills that were considered average or above average. Only the eligibility labels of SED and ID Mild scored in a Tier 2 placement, demonstrating a need for minimal interventions since these students are considered at risk for social and emotional needs.

Lastly, when students with disabilities were interviewed, the data gathered and analyzed demonstrated that 90% of the students questioned agreed that being educated in an inclusive environment had allowed for more successful behavioral, social, and emotional experiences when analyzed against being educated in the separate setting. Only one student stated that she did not mind being educated in the separate setting but agreed that the inclusive setting assisted her more with her emotional and social needs.

Overall, the inclusive setting demonstrated a decrease in office referrals and discipline infractions, improved student social and emotional growth and development, and allowed students a feeling of improved self-confidence and self-worth more than when educated in a separate setting. Agarwal (2003) stated that when students are educated in an environment with their peers, their growth could improve in all areas including academic, behavioral, social, emotional, and even functional. This study concurs: What a difference an educational setting can make for students with disabilities.

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Appendix A

District Consent and Parental Consent Form

January 21, 2015

Hello Dr. Fisher,

My name is Heather Lemmons, and I am an Exceptional Children's teacher at Shelby Middle School. I am honored to have been a student and graduate of the Cleveland County School System. After teaching in Raleigh for five years, I returned "home" to teach at my alma mater, SMS, and have happily been there for the best 11 years of my life. I am proud of this school system, what it stands for, as well as the accomplishments I have witnessed as the students have grown into lifelong learners and productive citizens.

As I enter my second year as a doctoral student, I am required to complete a dissertation study. I would like to use a cohort of students currently being served in the Exceptional Children's setting at Shelby Middle School. I would like your permission to use these students to gather data on their behavioral growth and social development through document analysis, a survey instrument, and interview process.

The purpose of my study is to follow a cohort of students who were served in the resource setting in sixth grade but have since transitioned to the inclusion/regular setting for seventh and eighth grade. The study will focus on reviewing demographic data, discipline rates and referrals, and Exceptional Children's documentation. Also, the students will be participating in a survey/scale to measure their own personal perceptions of social growth and development while being educated in the inclusion class setting. I would need access to PowerSchool information, discipline data, and the Exceptional Children's documentation based on the cohort of students included my caseload. This scale, Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scale for Adolescents (SEARS-A), will be administered to this cohort as a means to gather and measure the personal perceptions. I will respect the confidentiality of the students by not using names or other personal information.

I will also be interviewing the students represented in this cohort. With your permission, I would like to interview around ten students from this sample of students. I have developed an interview protocol and debriefing statement so that the students will be well informed of the purpose of this interview. The interview is voluntary and will only be conducted with parent permission. If at any time the student feels uncomfortable or decides not to participate in the interview, the interview will stop without any further consequence to the student.

Again, I would like to request using Shelby Middle School, a school within the Cleveland County School District, as a means to gather data on the social and emotional growth and development of students with special needs who participate in the inclusion setting as compared to the resource setting. The principal of the school, Mr. Quattlebaum, has granted his approval; however, I also wanted to secure

your approval before actively beginning this process. If you have any comments or concerns please feel free to contact me by email (hlemmons@clevelandcountyschools.org) or by phone (704-300-7010). I appreciate you very much. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Heather Lemmons

I agree for Ms. Heather Lemmons to conduct research through her school and within the district of Cleveland County Schools. I agree that she may access to information privy to her student including discipline referrals, IEP information, and other demographic data, administer a social and emotional survey, SEARS A, and conduct student interviews by following appropriate guidelines and procedures.



Superintendent or Designee

01/21/2015
Date

January 15, 2015

Gardner-Webb University
Department of Education
110 South Main Street
Boiling Springs, NC 28017

Dear Parent,

My name is Heather Lemmons, and I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Gardner-Webb University. I would like to invite your student to participate in a research study focused on his/her social growth and development while being instructed in an inclusive environment. Your student is currently being served in an inclusion classroom setting with both a regular education teacher and special education teacher. In previous years, your student had been served in a more restrictive environment resulting in him/her being removed from his/her regular classroom setting in order to receive additional educational services. The purpose of this study is to determine which educational environment impacted your student's social and emotional skills and development. I will be analyzing standard student data collected by the school. I would also like to obtain personal input from your student.

I would like to have your permission for your student to participate in two areas related to this study. First, I am asking permission for your student to participate in the survey titled Social and Emotional Resilience Scale for Adolescents. This is a 35-question survey that will take 20 minutes to administer. Your student will have his/her own individual survey. I will read the directions as well as the test items. Your student will listen to the items being read and will agree or disagree with the statements by circling never, sometimes, often, or always. This survey serves to measure how your student rates socially in the areas of social responsibility, empathy, social competence, and social self-regulation.

Secondly, I would like to interview a small group of students in which your student may be selected. I plan on meeting with the student individually. There will be about five questions that will be asked pertaining to educational and behavioral experiences in a regular class setting versus being pulled out into a separate setting away from other peers. I would like to audio record the interview so that I may review the information to ensure I correctly hear and understand all the responses given by the student. Upon completion of the study, the audio recording will be erased and subsequently destroyed.

Your student may not directly benefit from this interview or survey experience, but the information collected with this study will assist in continuing to improve educational and behavioral practices utilized with students being served in the Exceptional Children's setting.

I plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify your student or harm your student in any way. To keep this information safe, the recording of your student's responses will be placed in a locked cabinet until a written

word for word copy of the audio recording has been created. I will also keep your student's survey under lock and key until the instrument is scored. I will be compiling the information from the survey and the audio recording into a document on a computer that is password-protected. Both the computer and the file with the information will be password-protected ensuring complete security and confidentiality. No other researchers or members of the academic community will see any of the raw data but will only be privy to the results and information published in the study.

If you have any questions concerning your student's involvement or participation in this study please feel free to contact me at Shelby Middle School. I can be reached at 704-476-8328 ext. 4346 or by email at hlemmons@clevelandcountyschools.org. If for any reason your student should feel the need to discuss his or her experience in this study and the matters it investigates with someone other than the researcher, please contact Scott Binion, 8th grade Guidance Counselor at SMS, at 704-476-8328 ext. 4336 or by email at sabinion@clevelandcountyschools.org. He will be available to assist your student if the need does arise.

If you have any questions about your rights or student's rights as a research participant or wish to ask questions or discuss concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher please feel free to contact Gardner-Webb University Graduate School Institutional Review Board, Dr. Jeff Rogers at 704-406-4724 or jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Heather Lemmons M.Ed NBCT
Shelby Middle School
1480 S. Dekalb Street
Shelby, NC 28152

Gardner Webb University Doctoral Student Curriculum and Instruction
110 South Main Street
Boiling Springs, NC 28017

Parental Permission

By signing this document, you are agreeing to allow your child _____, to be part of a study based on gathering data and research related to the social and emotional growth and development of students being served in an inclusive classroom setting. Your child's participation in this study, including the survey and interview, is completely voluntary. At any time if you change your mind, you may request that your student be withdrawn from the study. Your student may choose not to be part of the study, even if you agree, and may refuse to answer any questions or stop participating at any time.

You will be provided a copy of this document for your records while an additional copy will remain with the materials related to the study. Be sure all questions and concerns have been asked, answered, or addressed and please understand what your student will be asked to do. If you have additional questions at any time, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

I give my permission for my student to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

I give my permission for my student to participate in a survey for this study.

Signature

Date

I give my permission for the interview with my student to be audio recorded.

Signature

Date

Student Permission

I agree to participate in this study and am doing so voluntarily.

Signature

Date

I understand that at any time I would like to stop and withdraw from the study I am allowed to do so without any consequence or repercussion.

Signature

Date

Appendix B

Interview Protocol and Debriefing Statement

Student Interview Concerning Least Restrictive Environment Setting-Inclusion Versus Separate/Resource**Date:****Interviewer:****Interviewee:****Instructions:**

Say: Today I am going to ask you some questions about your school settings during your 6th, 7th, and 8th grade years so that I can understand your opinion and experiences of being pulled out of your regular class for instruction versus remaining in class while receiving additional instruction. I want you to answer these questions openly and honestly. I will be recording this interview. Is that all right with you? (Wait for student response) I am going to refer to your classes as educational experiences. Do you know what that means? (Help students if needed) Remember, listen and answer the questions as honestly as you can. Are you ready to begin?

Question 1:

Describe your experiences with being pulled out of your classes for educational assistance in sixth grade – intermediate school.

Question 2:

Describe your experiences with remaining in the regular class setting for educational assistance in seventh and eighth grade- middle school?

Question 3:

Do you prefer staying in class or being pulled out of class for additional educational assistance? Can you explain why?

Question 4:

What qualities of staying in class with educational assistance do you like? What qualities of being pulled out of class for educational assistance do you like?

Question 5:

Tell me how your middle school educational experience compared to your intermediate school educational experience.

Question 6:

Do you believe you are more successful staying in classes or being pulled out of classes?
Can you explain why?

Say: Debriefing statement.....

Debriefing Statement

Thank you so much for participating in this interview today. Your participation is very valuable to me and I appreciate your time and patience.

The purpose of this interview was to reflect and examine your experiences of being taught in a pull out setting during your intermediate school year versus being instructed in the regular setting with in class instruction by the teacher. I wanted to hear your personal perceptions concerning these two settings.

In this study you were asked a series of questions related to your personal beliefs and opinions. I wanted to see how you viewed your own experience of being pulled out of class in the 6th grade for teaching and learning versus remaining in class and having a teacher come into the regular class for your teaching and learning.

I wanted to gain your insight and perspectives into your own educational setting by asking you the questions we discussed. I did audio-record your responses. I will listen to these recordings, write down exactly what you said, and will look to see how your answers compared with your peers. I am looking to see if there are common words, themes, or ideas.

Please know that your ideas and these interviews will remain private and confidential. The results will be published in a research paper but your names or personal information will not be shared. I hope this clears up any questions you may have about why this interview took place and how the information will be used.

It is very important that you do not discuss this information or process with anyone else until all interviews for the study are completed. My efforts will be compromised if your peers come into the interview already knowing the questions and other peer's answers. Therefore, please do not discuss this study at this time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or stop by my room, 1210, and I will help you. Thank you again for your cooperation and participation!!!