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Teacher Perceptions of their Ability to Teach in Inclusive Classrooms

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the rationale for the current research study. First, a statement of the problem that inspired the current study will be provided. Second, the purpose of the study will be stated. Third, the research questions will be listed. Finally, definitions will be provided for relevant terms used throughout the thesis.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher certification in the United States requires those who want to teach a specific grade or content area to complete a teacher training program in general education, while those who wish to teach students with special needs are required to complete a program in special education. However, inclusive practices have placed students who would have been in the special education classroom into general education classrooms. Consequently, general education teachers have had to adapt both their practices and their perceptions of students with special needs.

Goldstein, Ward, and Brody (2013) surveyed 370 general education teacher candidates regarding the rates of students with disabilities in their student teaching classroom assignments. 94% or 348 student teachers reported students with disabilities in their respective general education classrooms. Of those 348 student teachers, 204 reported students with speech and language impairments, 196 reported students with specific learning disabilities, 196 reported students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder,

74 reported students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders, 63 reported students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and 26 reported students with intellectual disabilities.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Students (By Disability) Served Under IDEA in the Fall of 2014

IDEA Disability Category	**Percentage of Students Spending 80% or More of the School Day in General Education Classrooms**
Autism Spectrum Disorder	39.9
Deaf-Blindness	22.6
Developmental Delay	63.6
Emotional Disturbance	46.1
Hearing Impairment	60.0
Intellectual Disability	16.4
Multiple Disabilities	13.2
Orthopedic Impairment	54.3
Other Health Impairment	65.1
Specific Learning Disability	68.8
Speech or Language Impairment	87.0
Traumatic Brain Injury	49.9
Visual Impairment	65.8

The most recent data published by the U.S. Department of Education was obtained in the Fall of 2014 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The data indicates that 62.2% of all students with disabilities spend 80% or more of the school day in the general education classroom. Table 1 shows the percentage of all students in the U.S. with a

particular disability who participate in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day (Adapted from National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Clearly, there are many students with special needs participating in general education classrooms. Therefore, the question arises: Should general education teachers receive more training to effectively teach these students?

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to solicit general education teachers' attitudes and perceived level of preparedness for teaching students with special needs in the inclusive, general education classroom to determine what, if any, factors affect perceived levels of preparedness. This study also aimed to solicit recommendations from practicing general education teachers for teacher preparation programs. The information gathered in this study was not a statement of participants' teaching qualifications, but rather the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in preparing general education teachers for inclusion.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What attitudes and/or beliefs do general education teachers hold regarding students with special needs and inclusive education?

RQ 2: Do general education teachers believe they are prepared to teacher students with special needs in the inclusive, general education classroom?

RQ 3: What challenges do general education teachers experience teaching students with special needs?

RQ4: What recommendations do general education teachers have for teacher preparation programs to better prepare future general education teachers for inclusion?

Definitions and Terms

Accommodation	Supports and services provided to students receiving special education services to help them access the general education curriculum.
General Education Teacher	A teacher who (1) does **not** have a degree in special education and (2) does **not** teach any courses explicitly labelled "special education."
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	A comprehensive, legally binding document created for each student who qualifies for special education services under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The IEP lists goals, objectives, accommodations, modifications, etc. The IEP is mandated by the federal government.
Inclusive Education	Education which seeks to include students with special needs, to the fullest extent possible, in the Least Restrictive Environment. Inclusive Education is mandated by the federal government.
Special Education Teacher	A teacher who (1) has a special education degree and (2) teaches courses which are explicitly labelled "special education."
Students with Special Needs/Disabilities	Students who qualify for individualized special education services under the 13 disability categories of IDEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
Typically-Functioning Student	A student who (1) does **not** have any disabilities and (2) does **not** qualify for individualized special education services under IDEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will provide the theoretical framework for the current research study. First, a brief history of inclusive education and relevant legislation will be outlined. Second, general education teachers' perceptions of students with special needs and inclusion will be examined. Third, collaboration among general and special education teachers will be discussed. Fourth, teacher training programs and preservice teacher perceptions of students with disabilities and inclusive practices will be analyzed. Fifth, best practices for inclusion will be considered. Finally, current research directly related to the topic of this research study will be presented.

This study aims to determine practicing general education teachers' perceived levels of preparedness to teach students with special needs, so current research on this topic was sought. Results indicate that there is an overwhelming lack of research regarding general education teachers' preparedness for inclusion. In fact, only two current studies were located, one of which was not directly focused on students with disabilities. Consequently, any relevant studies regarding teacher perceptions of students with disabilities and inclusion, teacher training programs, and best practices for inclusion were located.

History and Legislation

Prior to 1975, the inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom was not only unheard of but discouraged in the United States. Many believed that the best place to serve students with special needs was either in the self-contained

special education classroom or, for those with severe disabilities, an institution. In fact, many schools did not have special education classrooms, and students with disabilities were excluded from public school and refused a public education (Kirby, 2016).

With landmark cases such as Brown v. Board of Education, 1954 and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, many advocacy groups began forming to support the educational rights of students with special needs. Public pressure on Congress to ensure rights for those with disabilities culminated in the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act in 1973 (Yell, 2016). Section 504 prohibits disability discrimination in any institution that receives federal funds (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). However, access to education was not guaranteed on a federal level until 1975 when Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Act (EHA). EHA was comprehensive legislation that guaranteed every child in the United States, regardless of ability, the right to a "Free Appropriate Public Education," better known as FAPE (Education for All Handicapped Act, 1975; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Parents of children with disabilities no longer had to pay for private school or worry if the education their child was receiving was meaningful.

In 1990, Congress reauthorized EHA and renamed it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Act was reauthorized in 1997 and 2004 with significant revisions. The act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, but it still commonly referred to as IDEA. While the act is extremely comprehensive, the three main provisions of IDEA are FAPE, the Individualized Education Program (IEP), the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). An IEP is a legally binding document which must be created for all students that qualify under one of the thirteen disability categories: Autism Spectrum Disorder, deaf-blindness, hearing impairment, visual impairment, speech

or language impairment, specific learning disability, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairment. The IEP describes the services and accommodations that the student will receive in the public school, regardless of whether they are in a special education classroom or a general education classroom. The LRE mandate of IDEA requires that all students, to the fullest extent possible, be educated in the general education classroom with their typically-functioning peers (IDEA, 2004). This mandate is cited as the cause for the increase of students with special needs in general education classrooms (Kirby, 2016).

Given that students who qualify for services under IDEA are placed in the LRE, which is usually the general education classroom, general education teachers now have federally mandated responsibilities to these students. Namely, general education teachers must adhere to the services, accommodations, and adaptations that are outlined in the IEP, regardless of whether they agree with the provisions. Many have criticized teacher training programs and professional development opportunities for not adequately preparing general education teachers for inclusion (Kirby, 2016).

The current research study will be conducted in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Special education is unique in Pennsylvania, in that schools must adhere to stricter LRE guidelines due to case law established by Gaskin v. Pennsylvania Board of Education, 2005. This class-action lawsuit represented over 200,000 students receiving services under IDEA in the Commonwealth. In short, a settlement agreement was reached after eleven years of litigation. The agreement requires all Pennsylvania school districts to ensure that students are placed in the general education classroom with supplementary

aids and services prior to being placed in a more restrictive environment. Only if a student cannot succeed in the general education classroom with reasonable support, can they be removed from the general education classroom. The case law established by Gaskin v. Pennsylvania Board of Education, 2005 requires general education teachers to adapt their teaching practices and welcome more students with special needs into their classrooms.

General Education Teacher Perceptions of Students with Special Needs

The few studies that have sought to define general education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities found that those views are mostly positive. General education teachers welcome students with special needs into their classrooms and believe they can learn. However, learning goals are often related to social development and behavior management, not academic success (Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017). In fact, academic success seemed to be insignificant. Many general education teachers reported that the behavior and social problems which accompany some disabilities take priority since they can be a distraction in the classroom. Classroom management was an overwhelming factor in the goals that general education teachers set for students with special needs (Cameron & Cook, 2013).

While many general education teachers have positive views of students with disabilities, Harkins and Fletcher (2015) suggest that these views differ depending on the type and severity of the disability. Students with mild disabilities such as speech and language impairments and specific learning disabilities were typically viewed more favorably than students with severe difficulties. Many of the teachers surveyed expressed

that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Emotional Disturbances should be educated in a self-contained, special education classroom.

Similarly, Cameron & Cook (2013) suggest that the theory of differential expectations occurs in inclusive, general education classrooms. Differential expectations refers to teachers setting "inappropriately low goals for their included students ... because they perceive the likelihood that students will experience gains from their teaching efforts are minimal" (p. 27). In other words, general education teachers often set much lower goals for the students with special needs in their classrooms because they feel that the typical expectations are unattainable. According to Cameron and Cook (2013), this view is very common, but it could be detrimental to the academic success of students with special needs because they are not expected to improve.

Other studies have sought to find correlations between general education teachers' age, gender, years of experience, etc., and their perceptions of students with special needs. Çelik and Kraska (2017) conducted the most recent of these studies in Alabama. Though they found correlation between general education teachers' gender and age and their perceptions of students with special needs, the results were statistically insignificant. Furthermore, the researchers warned against making country-wide generalizations based on a study conducted only in Alabama. Çelik and Kraska (2017) recommend a nation-wide attitude survey of general education teachers.

Overall, general education teachers' perceptions of students with special needs are overwhelmingly positive. However, perceptions depend on the type and severity of the disability and the symptoms that accompany it. General education teachers want to do

what they feel is best for their included students; but, without training, differential expectations can and do occur.

General Education Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion

The inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom is often debated. While federal legislation requires inclusion in the least restrictive environment for all students with special needs, many factors affect whether general education teachers welcome students with disabilities into their classrooms. Recent studies have found that general education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are fairly positive. In fact, many general education teachers agree that students with special needs benefit from both the general education curriculum and interaction with their typically-functioning peers (Harkins & Fletcher, 2015; Hwang & Evans, 2011; Kargin, Güldenoglu, & Sahin, 2010; Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017). While many believe inclusion is both positive and necessary, Hwang and Evans (2011) found that over half of the general education teachers surveyed in their study did not wish to teach students with special needs in their classrooms. About a third also reported they were ill-prepared to teach students with special needs and did not feel they could ethically teach them.

Class size and accommodations also play a role in general education teachers' perception of inclusion. Many general education teachers report that they already do not have enough time to plan for academic instruction. Planning the accommodations for students with special needs then limits the amount of time that they have to focus on the majority of the students in their classroom. General education teachers also reported that

larger classes make accommodating students with special needs more difficult (Hwang & Evans, 2011).

While general education teachers report inherent challenges, they do recognize the importance of implementing the accommodations present in students' IEPs. Physical accommodations to the classroom are implemented far more often than adaptations to lesson and assessment materials. Some general education teachers cite their lack of training in adapting lesson materials for this disparity. Others claim adaptations to lesson and assessment materials jeopardize the integrity of their teaching. They are, therefore, reluctant to make those changes (Kargin, Güldenoglu, & Sahin, 2010).

Overall, general education teachers recognize the importance of inclusive practices for students with special needs, even if they are reluctant to implement them. Many general education teachers cite a lack of training in inclusive teaching practices for their opposition to inclusion. Others claim that they are not allotted sufficient time to adequately plan for students with special needs, especially when they have larger class sizes. While there are inherent challenges to effectively implementing inclusion, research indicates that most general education teachers want to include students with special needs but do not have the resources or experience to do so.

Collaboration Among General and Special Education Teachers

Contemporary teaching models emphasize collaboration among teachers to provide the best education possible for their students. However, many of these models neglect to include collaboration among general education and special education teachers (Orelove,

Sobsey, & Gilles, 2017). Current trends also seem to show a lack of support from special education teachers in the general education classroom (Mackey, 2014).

Few studies have sought to determine the effectiveness of collaboration among teachers in public schools. Furthermore, little research exists regarding collaboration among general and special education teachers for included students. Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant (2009) have shown that general education teachers collaborate most effectively with other general education teachers in the same content area. For example, English teachers collaborate best with other English teachers, which is to be expected given that they focus on the same types of materials on a day-to-day basis. There is no correlation between one's certification area and their ability to collaborate effectively (Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, & Zhou, 2013).

Carter, Prater, Jackson, and Marchant's study (2009) required general education teachers to work together with adherence to a specific collaboration model. They found that teachers' personal beliefs regarding pedagogy, methodology, and lesson/assessment materials affected their ability to collaborate effectively. In one case, these beliefs impeded the teachers' ability to collaborate altogether. Similarly, Zagona, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017) found that general education teachers felt it was harder to collaborate with other teachers who were not as receptive to inclusion.

Collaboration among teachers is lacking in public schools, particularly among general and special education teachers. While it is unrealistic to expect the special education teacher to collaborate with every general education teacher who has a student with special needs in their classroom, the special education teacher should still be available for support (Mackey, 2014). Contemporary teaching models emphasize the importance of

collaboration among teachers because it has shown to be the most effective and efficient way to educate students.

Teacher Training Programs

Nearly every state in the United States requires all public-school teachers to have successfully completed an accredited teacher training program (usually at a four-year college or university) prior to becoming certified. Teacher certification is mandatory in every state, but teacher training programs vary depending on state requirements. One prevailing theme in most teacher training programs across the country is the lack of special education course and practicum requirements for general education candidates (Allday, Neilson-Gratti, & Hudson, 2013; Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011; Shani & Hebel, 2016; Thompson, 2012). Many studies exist on the effectiveness of teacher training programs in general, but few seek to determine whether these programs adequately prepare general education candidates for inclusive practices.

Allday, Neilson-Gratti, and Hudson (2013) examined 109 teacher training programs across the United States. Their study compared the proportion of special education course requirements to content-specific, general education curriculum. They found that general education candidates were exposed to very little, if any, coursework and training in special education and inclusive practices. Specifically, only 73 of the colleges and universities examined required a mere three credit hours in special education, most of which focus on disability characteristics. Courses in disability characteristics are heavily concerned with the definitions of the thirteen disability categories outlined in the IDEA, not inclusive practices. These definitions are diagnostic in nature and point to the individual's

differences in relation to a typically-functioning individual. According to Kurth and Forber-Pratt (2017), these types of courses lead to a deficit-based attitude of students with disabilities. In other words, teacher candidates only exposed to the definitions of disabilities tend to notice the diagnostic characteristics of the disability in an individual, which are inherently deficit-based.

Allday, Neilson-Gratti, and Hudson (2013) also found that 3.9% of all credit hours required in general education teacher training programs account for special education. Twenty-one of the 109 colleges and universities examined in this study did not require any coursework or practicum in special education. None of the teacher training programs required coursework in inclusive general education, behavior management, or general and special education collaboration, though most offered them as part of their special education degrees.

While many of the teacher training programs in the United States do not require special education coursework, some programs have begun to include courses and practicum experiences directly related to inclusive practices within general education candidates' content areas. Thompson (2012) developed and piloted a course for secondary preservice mathematics teachers. This course taught students about inclusive mathematics practices and required a practicum experience in an inclusive mathematics classroom. Thompson (2012) found that students who participated in this course not only had more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities and inclusion but also felt more prepared to implement inclusive practices than their peers who did not take the course. This is supported by a similar study conducted by Lucas and Frazier (2014), wherein 110 preservice teachers were surveyed before and after completing a practicum experience in

an inclusive classroom. The majority of students reported that their perceptions of students with disabilities were more positive, and their confidence in implementing inclusive practices increased after this experience.

While courses specifically designed for inclusion in general education classrooms have a positive effect, practicum experience seems to be a necessary component. Shani and Hebel (2016) found that students who participated in such a course without a practicum component experienced a disconnect between learning about inclusion and actually implementing it. The students reported that they were now more familiar with inclusive practices. However, they worried that they would not be able to effectively include students with special needs because they had never actually seen successful inclusion.

In summary, the majority of general education teacher training programs lack coursework and practicum experience in special education and inclusive practices. If a teacher training program requires special education coursework, that course is often definition-based, which leads to a deficit view of students with disabilities. Coursework and practicum experiences in inclusive general education have been shown to have positive effects on teacher candidates' attitudes toward inclusion. Overall, the nature of teacher training programs completed by preservice teachers influences their preparedness to teach their content area, their perceptions and knowledge of students with disabilities, and their ability to effectively implement inclusion in the general education classroom.

Preservice Teacher Perceptions of Students with Special Needs

More research exists on preservice teachers' perceptions of students with special needs than on practicing general education teachers' perceptions. Studies indicate that

preservice teachers' perceptions are generally positive (Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017; Lucas & Fazier, 2014; Mahar, Terras, Chiasson, Chalmers, & Lee, 2010; Yuknis, 2015). They believe students with special needs can learn in the general education classroom and recognize the importance of setting appropriate goals for these students. This positive attitude can be attributed to the rise in special education course requirements for general education candidates in teacher training programs (Lucas & Frazier, 2014).

Mahar, Terra, Chiasson, Chalmers, and Lee (2010) completed a study wherein 56 preservice general education teachers were surveyed regarding their knowledge and attitudes toward students with disabilities. Although these attitudes were generally positive, participants reported that they lacked knowledge of applicable legislation, specific requirements of general education teachers, severe and multiple disabilities, and IEP development and implementation. Preservice teachers in similar studies also reported a lack of knowledge regarding students who are deaf, blind, or have physical disabilities (Goldstein, Warde, & Rody, 2013; Yukins, 2015).

Lucas and Frazier (2014) surveyed 110 preservice teachers after taking a pilot special education course which required a practicum experience in a special education classroom. The researchers found that preservice teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities were more positive after this experience, and their anxiety regarding teaching students with special needs was reduced. Lucas and Frazier (2014) also found that preservice teachers who completed grade school in a district which implements inclusion had more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities than those who had little to no exposure prior to starting their teacher training program.

Preservice general education teachers have positive perceptions of students with special needs, perhaps more so than practicing general education teachers due to the increase in special education course requirements in teacher preparation programs. Although these attitudes are positive, many preservice teachers define students with disabilities by their deficits rather than their strengths (Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017). However, preservice teachers that participate in a practicum experience in an inclusive classroom have more positive attitudes toward students with disabilities than those who do not participate in such an experience.

Preservice Teacher Perceptions of Inclusion

Again, more research exists on preservice teachers' perceptions of inclusive practices than on practicing general education teachers' perceptions. Many studies indicate that these views are generally positive, which is, again, attributed to the rise in special education course requirements in general education candidates' teacher training programs (Ajuwon, Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, Sokolosky, Zhou, & Mullins, 2012; Berry, 2010; Crowson & Brandes, 2014; Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017; Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, & Zhou, 2013; Mahar, Terras, Chiasson, Chalmers, & Lee, 2010).

Although preservice teachers' perceptions of inclusion are positive, many are apprehensive to actually implement inclusive practices in the classroom. Four similar studies have surveyed preservice teachers regarding the curriculum of their teacher training program and their readiness to implement inclusion. The majority of participants in these studies reported that their perceptions of inclusion became more positive only after taking an introductory special education course. However, many also reported that

they were nervous to implement inclusive practices because they did not have any practice in their respective programs (Ajuwon, et al., 2012; Berry, 2010; Crowson & Brandes, 2014; Mahar, et al., 2010). Crowson and Brandes (2014) specifically found that opposition to inclusion in many preservice teachers was the result of stereotyping and a definition-based curriculum in their required coursework. Direct interaction with students who have special needs seemed to alleviate this opposition. This is supported by Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, and Zhou's study (2013) wherein preservice teachers were required to have practicum experience in an inclusive classroom. Students reported that directly working with an experienced teacher to implement inclusive practices not only lessened opposition but also increased confidence.

Receptivity of inclusive practices increases when general education candidates are exposed to special education coursework in their training programs. Perceptions of inclusion also become more positive when preservice teachers are afforded the opportunity to observe an inclusive classroom with an experienced teacher. Although studies indicate that perceptions are generally positive, preservice teachers are still nervous, apprehensive, and, in some cases, even opposed to implementing inclusive practices due to the lack of training they receive in college.

Best Practices for Inclusion

Well-researched, evidence-based practices are imperative for the successful implementation of inclusion in general education classrooms. Due to the range of disabilities and severity of symptoms that may be present in general education classrooms, teachers must be prepared to teach any student on their roster. An effective and efficient

way to implement inclusion is through collaboration with students' special education teachers on lesson plans, accommodations/adaptations, and instructional strategies (Carter, Prater, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009; Lechtenberger, Griffin-Shirley, & Zhou, 2013). Special education teachers have more training for teaching students with disabilities than general education teachers. Oftentimes, they also have an extensive caseload of students with a variety of needs. Therefore, full collaboration is not always possible. Hallahan, Kauffman, and Pullen (2019) suggest collaborative consultation. Collaborative consultation differs from full collaboration in that the special education teacher is not actively involved in the planning process. Instead, the special education teacher provides the general education teacher with strategies, tips, and resources.

While collaboration and support from the special education teacher is ideal, Vitelli (2015) recommends the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is a framework for lesson planning which provides all students, regardless of ability, the opportunity to learn the same material, in the same classroom, at the same time. The UDL framework contains three major principles: (1) provide multiple means of representation, (2) provide multiple means of action and expression, and (3) provide multiple means of engagement. While the UDL framework requires teachers to spend more time planning for lessons, it is one of the most evidence-based strategies for implementing inclusion in the general education classroom (Center for Applied Special Technology). UDL is also supported by the United States Department of Education, which, under the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008), provides funding to teacher training programs that incorporate UDL into their curriculum. Vitelli (2015) completed a study wherein 712 college and university faculty members were surveyed about the curriculum for their special education courses. Of these

712 faculty members, only 55% or 392 reported that they thoroughly understood UDL and taught it in at least one of their classes.

Although a well-researched framework for teaching and lesson planning is very effective, Yildiz (2015) suggests teachers' awareness of their responses to students with special needs can dramatically affect student performance in inclusive classrooms. Yildiz' study (2015) examined the types of behaviors students with disabilities exhibited in the general education classroom and teachers' responses to the behavior. Research indicated students with disabilities were on-task 58.58% of the time, off-task 34.11% of the time, and exhibiting problem behaviors 7.31% of the time. Teachers neither approved nor disapproved of student behaviors 92.1% of the time. Results from this study also suggest that teacher behaviors did not directly affect student behavior, but their actions and responses did. For example, when a student exhibiting problem behavior was moved to the front of the room, the behaviors worsened. Conversely, when an assignment was adapted for a struggling student, behavior improved. Cameron and Cook (2015) also suggest that teacher responses to behavior are disproportionate when comparing students with disabilities to their typically-functioning peers. In some instances, teachers ignore behavior that they would address with a typically-functioning student, whereas other behaviors are more strictly reprimanded for students with special needs. Again, Cameron and Cook (2015) refer to this disparity as "differential expectations." They recommend enforcing the same rules for all students in the classroom to avoid isolation of the student with special needs and confusion regarding classroom expectations.

Best practices for inclusion vary depending on the class demographics and the nature of any particular student's disability. However, collaboration, Universal Design for

Learning, and the enforcement of the same expectations for all students are well-researched, evidence-based strategies for the effective inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom.

General Education Teachers' Perceptions of their Preparedness for Inclusion

Research exists on students with special needs and inclusive practices in public schools, but only two previous studies could be located regarding general education teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach these students. Rowan, Kline, and Mayer's study (2017) focused primarily on "diverse learners" in Australia. They defined "diverse learners" by race, socioeconomic status, geographical location, and, to a lesser extent, disabilities. Therefore, their study will be excluded from this review. That leaves one previous study regarding how well teacher training programs actually prepare general education teachers for inclusive practices.

The findings of this limited research suggest that novice teachers feel slightly more prepared than veteran teachers since teacher training programs have only recently begun requiring special education classes for general education candidates. Furthermore, teachers who took a course on inclusive practices for their specific content area felt more prepared than those who took only an introductory, definition-based special education course. Finally, general education teachers reported that they felt far more prepared to create a welcoming classroom environment for students with special needs than to actually implement the accommodations and adaptations listed in the students' IEP. In this single study, general education teachers, for the most part, reported that they were ill-prepared to teach students with special needs in their classrooms, primarily due to a lack of exposure

to inclusive practices in their teacher preparation program (Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017).

Summary

This review covered ten topics: (1) a justification for the current research study, (2) relevant history and legislation, (3) general education teacher perceptions of students with special needs, (4) general education teacher perceptions of inclusion, (5) collaboration among general education and special education teachers, (6) teacher training programs, (7) preservice teacher perceptions of students with special needs, (8) preservice teacher perceptions of inclusion, (9) best practices for inclusion, and (10) general education teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for inclusion.

Overall, practicing and preservice general education teachers generally have positive views of both students with disabilities and inclusion. However, many also express a lack of training in effectively including students with special needs in their classrooms. Current research also suggests that teacher training programs are not adequately preparing teachers for inclusion. Since a significant number of students with special needs participate in general education classes, the question again arises: Should general education teachers receive more training to effectively implement inclusive practices in their classrooms? Given the lack of research regarding general education teachers' perceived levels of preparedness to teach in inclusive classrooms, the current research study aims to bridge that gap.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This chapter will delineate the design of the current research study. First, participants and general demographic information will be presented. Second, a description of the research instrument will be provided. Third, study procedures will be defined. Finally, the descriptive data analysis techniques used in the current study will be addressed.

Participants

An invitation to participate in this research study was extended to all general education teachers at a suburban middle school in south-central Pennsylvania. In this study, the term *general education teacher* included teachers who, at the time of the study, did not teach any classes specifically designed for students with disabilities. A total of 20 out of 43 possible general education teachers at this school agreed to participate in the study and completed the online survey. Table 2 shows the content area(s) in which the participants taught at the time of the study.

In addition to content area(s) taught, participants were asked to select from four options regarding the number of years of teaching experience they had. One participant had less than 5 years teaching experience; four participants had 5 – 10 years of teaching experience; six participants had 10 – 15 years of teaching experience; and nine participants had more than 15 years of teaching experience.

Finally, participants were asked if they have ever been a member of an IEP team. 17 participants responded that they have been a member of an IEP team, while 3 responded that they have never been a member of an IEP team.

Table 2: Number of participants per content area(s) taught.

Content Area(s) Taught	Number of Participants
English	2
Math	2
Science	3
Social Studies	3
Health/PE	2
Multiple Subjects	5
Other	3

Instrument

The questions in the survey used for this study were adapted from Harkins and Fletcher's *Educators' Attitudes Regarding Inclusive Education Online Survey* (2015) and LeDoux, Graves, & Burt's *Teacher Questionnaire* (2012). The survey aimed to solicit information about general education teachers' attitudes regarding students with special needs, their perceived level of preparedness for teaching students with special needs in the general education classroom, and their overall recommendations for teacher preparation programs to better prepare general education teachers for inclusion. The survey was administered on SurveyMonkey.com and consisted of 3 general demographic questions, 20 Likert-Scale questions, and 3 open-ended questions (See Appendix A).

Procedure

An email requesting permission to carry out the current study was sent to the superintendent of the participating school district. Attached to the email was a site consent form (See Appendix B) outlining all pertinent study information, including but not limited to the following: the purpose and procedure of the study; the absence of risks, discomforts, benefits, and compensation; a confidentiality statement; and contact information. The superintendent agreed to participate in the study and signed the consent form. All general education teachers at the participating school were then contacted via email and sent a link to the online survey. The survey was preceded by a participant consent form (See Appendix C) with content similar to the site consent form. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, signatures were not collected on the participant consent forms. Instead, participants were made aware that completion of the survey indicated their consent. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey and a second reminder email was sent at the start of the second week.

Descriptive Data Analysis

At the end of the two-week collection period, hard-copies of the survey responses were printed from SurveyMonkey.com to analyze the data. Quantitative descriptive statistics in the form of percentages were calculated for the demographic and Likert Scale questions, while qualitative data was collected from the open-ended questions. The open-ended responses were also analyzed for themes. The researcher attempted to analyze the data in the context of teacher content area(s) and years of experience, but the results were statistically insignificant due to the small sample size.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter will outline the results and findings from the online survey used in the current research study. The chapter is separated into two sections: Quantitative Data and Qualitative Data. Some Likert Scale questions have been omitted due to statistically insignificant results.

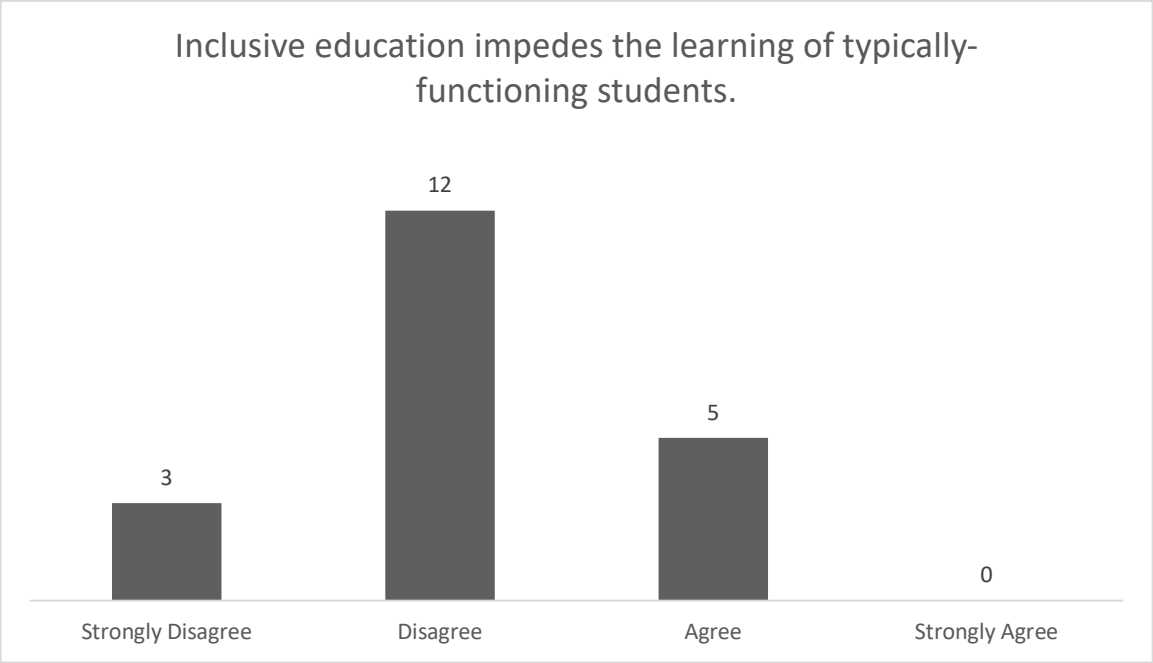
Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was obtained from the Likert Scale questions of the online survey and descriptive statistics in the form of percentages were calculated in order to analyze the data. The survey questions were separated into four themes: (1) attitudes and beliefs of students with special needs and inclusion, (2) perceived level of preparedness for inclusion, (3) challenges and needed supports to effectively implement inclusive practices, and (4) planning and preparation for inclusion. The researcher attempted to analyze the data in the context of the demographic information collected in the survey, but, due to the small sample size, the results were statistically insignificant. Therefore, the results reported in the subsequent four sections only reflect the overall percentages of Likert Scale responses from all participants.

Theme 1: Attitudes and beliefs. Responses varied for Likert Scale questions which asked participants to identify their attitudes and beliefs regarding students with special needs and inclusive education, though most seemed to align with contemporary views of special education. For example, when asked to respond to the statement, “inclusive education impedes the learning of typically-functioning students,” 75% of participants

stated that they disagree or strongly disagree. Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses for that Likert Scale item.

Figure 1: Response Distribution for Likert Scale Response #2

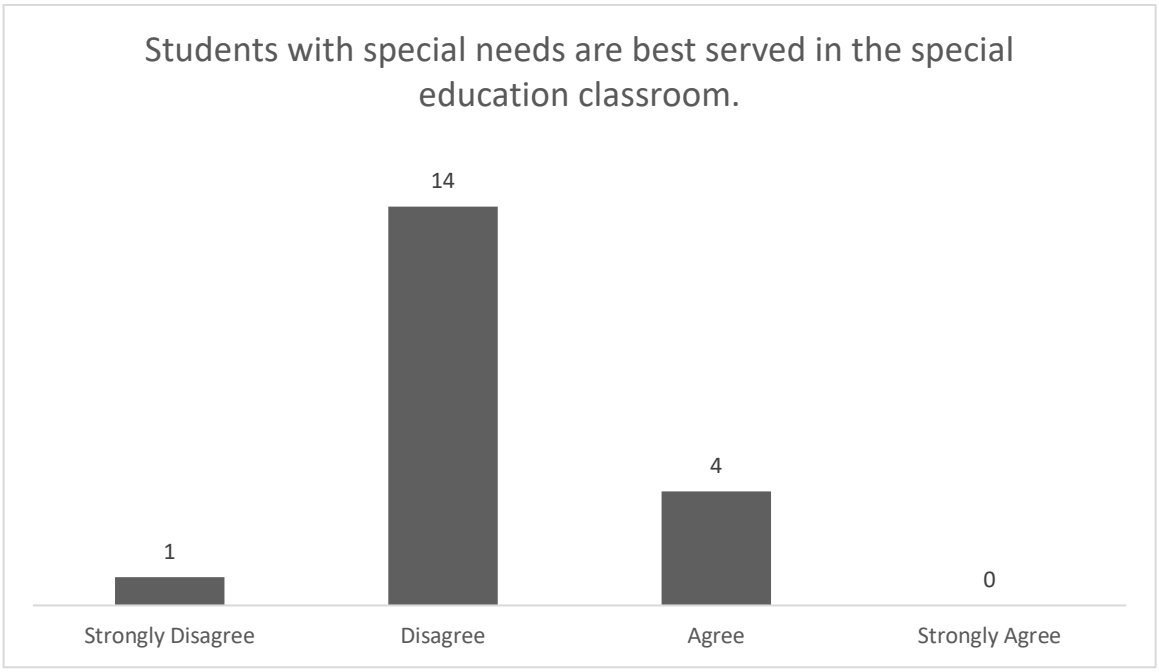


Similarly, when asked to respond to the statement, "students with special needs can learn in the general education classroom," 100% of participants stated that they agree, with five participants strongly agreeing. Interestingly, even the participants that believed inclusive education impedes the learning of typically-functioning students, agreed that students with special needs can learn in the general education classroom. Therefore, one can surmise that even when participants believe inclusive education is not beneficial for all students, they do believe it is beneficial for students with special needs.

Finally, participants were also asked to respond to the statement "students with special needs are best served in the special education classroom." About 79% of participants disagreed with this statement; one participant chose not to respond to this item. While the majority disagreed with this statement, four participants did agree that the

best placement for students with special needs is the special education classroom. Given that the question did not specify what kind of disability, one can assume that those participants believe all students with special needs, regardless of disability, are best served in a self-contained environment. Figure 2 shows the response distribution for that Likert Scale item.

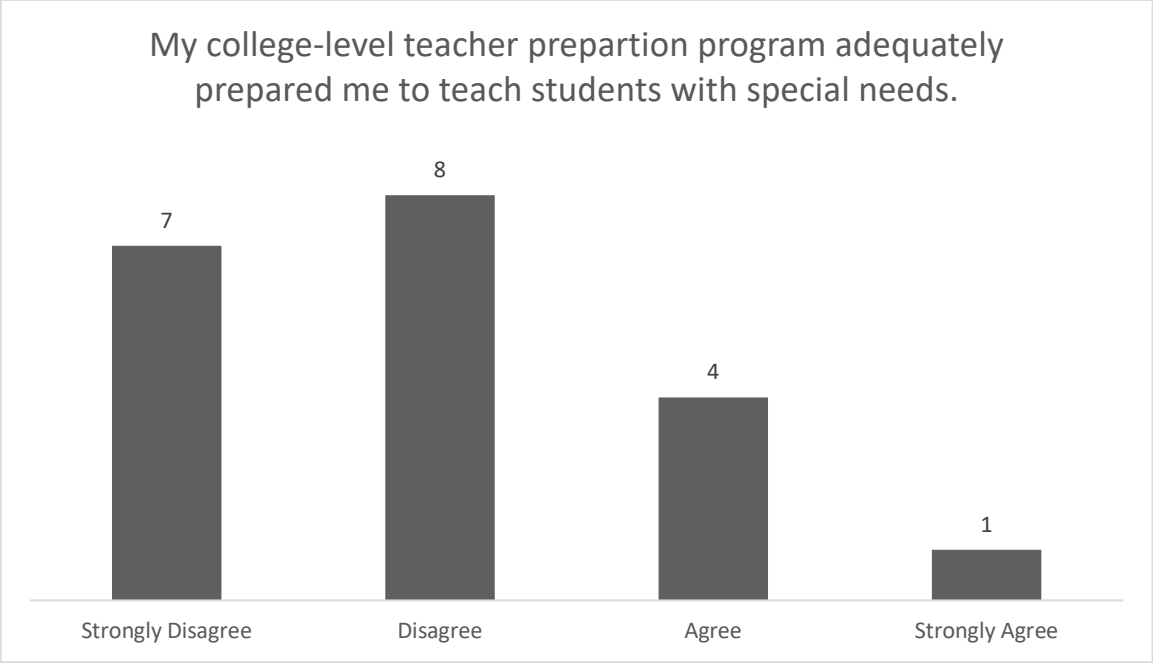
Figure 2: Response Distribution for Likert Scale Response #7



Theme 2: Perceived level of preparedness. Participants generally agreed that their respective college-level teacher preparation programs did not prepared them for inclusion in the general education classroom. For instance, when asked to respond to the statement, "my college-level teacher preparation program adequately prepared me to teach students with special needs," 75% of participants disagreed. Figure 3 shows the response distribution for that Likert Scale item. Conversely, 65% of participants agreed that they had a thorough understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section

504 of the Rehabilitation Act and their effects on general education teachers. Given that participants did not feel prepared to teach students with special needs, but felt they had a thorough understanding of relevant legislation, one might surmise that their college-level teacher preparation programs focused heavily on legislation and not inclusive practices (see Qualitative Data for more details).

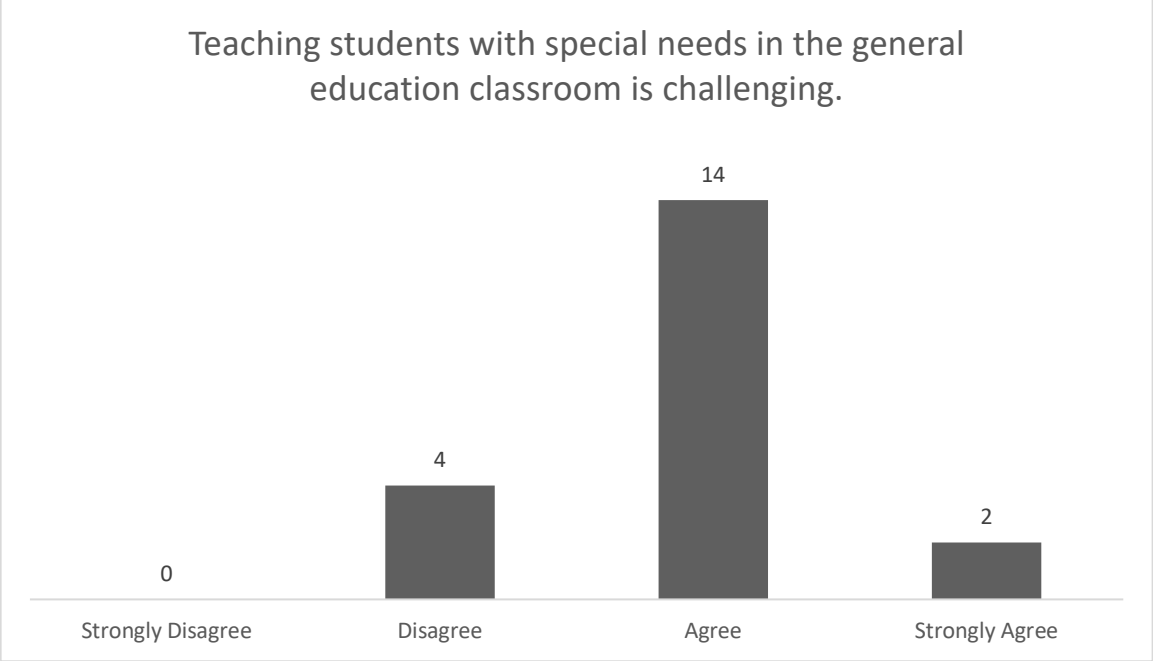
Figure 3: Response Distribution for Likert Scale Response #4



Theme 3: Anticipated challenges and needed supports. Responses varied for Likert Scale questions regarding anticipated challenges and needed supports. In fact, challenges and needed supports that the researcher anticipated were, for the most part, not perceived as challenges for the participants. For instance, 75% of participants disagreed with the statement, "IEPs are difficult to interpret." Similarly, 90% of participants agreed that there is effective collaboration among general and special education teachers at their school. While participants did not find IEPs or collaboration challenging, 80% did agree

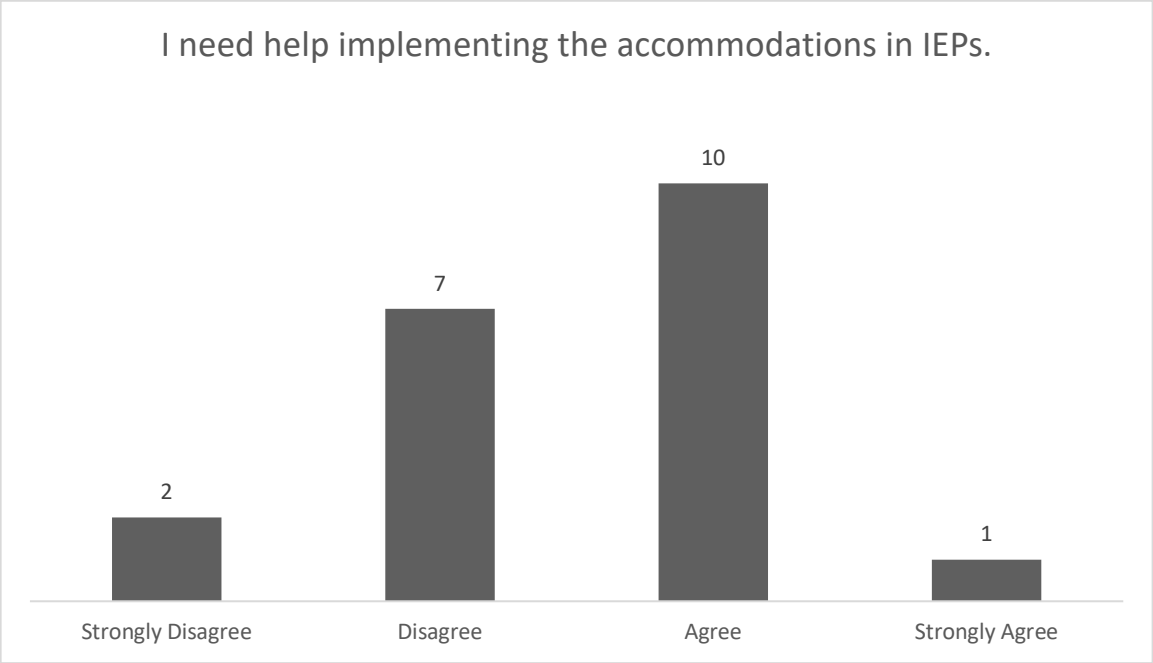
with the statement, “teaching students with special needs in the general education classroom is challenging.” Figure 4 shows the response distribution for that Likert Scale item. Therefore, one might gather that, effective collaboration and the ability to interpret an IEP does not affect actual inclusive teaching practices.

Figure 4: Response Distribution for Likert Scale Response #9



Theme 4: Planning and preparation. Responses were varied for Likert Scale questions regarding the planning and preparation process for inclusive education. For example, when asked to respond to the statement, “I need help implementing the accommodations in IEPs,” 55% of participants agreed and 45% of participants disagreed. Figure 5 shows the response distribution for that Likert Scale item. There was no indication that years of experience or the content area(s) in which the participants taught affected whether or not a participant felt they needed help implementing accommodations.

Figure 5: Response Distribution for Likert Scale Response #14



Participants were also asked to respond to two Likert Scale questions regarding the amount of time they spend planning for students with special needs and differentiated instruction. 65% of participants stated that they spend more time planning for typically-functioning students than they do for students with special needs, yet 75% also expressed that they needed more time to plan for differentiated instruction. Perhaps more time allotted for planning and preparation would affect these results.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was obtained from the three open-ended questions of the online survey: (1) What challenges have you experienced teaching students with special needs in your classroom? (2) How did your college-level teacher preparation program prepare you to implement inclusion in the general education classroom? And (3) What specific kind of training do you think should be included in teacher preparation programs to better

prepare general education teachers for inclusion? The subsequent three sections reveal the major themes that emerged from participant responses to each question.

Question 1: Challenges with inclusion. When asked about challenges participants have experienced teaching students with special needs in the general education classroom, two major themes emerged: large class sizes and lack of time. Many participants expressed that large class sizes (over 30 students at this particular school) makes it very difficult to effectively and efficiently implement inclusive practices. In fact, one participant stated that it is very challenging to "...meet the needs of students in general, let alone students with special needs when there are 36 kids in the class." Nine other participants agreed that it is difficult to balance working with students who need one-on-one attention when there are 20-30 other students in the room who also need their help.

Similarly, participants expressed that there is not enough time in a class period to give the individualized attention that some students with special needs require. One participant stated that students with special needs often require "...additional time on tasks when the majority of the class is ready for a new topic." Another participant wrote that, in their experience, students with special needs require more "one-on-one time than I can give them in a single class period." Overall, practicing general education teachers seem to credit their challenges with inclusion to large class sizes and the notion that students with special needs take longer to complete their work than a typically-functioning student.

Question 2: Preparedness for inclusion. Participants were, for the most part, in consensus when asked how their college level teacher preparation program prepared them for inclusion in the general education classroom. In fact, 15 out of the 17 participants that responded to this question stated that their respective college-level teacher preparation

programs did not prepare them for inclusion. One participant stated that they were "...not prepared at all," and another participant wrote that their teacher preparation program "...did not [help]. Most of what I learned about inclusion came from me being [a general education teacher] in the classroom." In other words, practicing general education teachers felt underprepared for inclusion and have been forced to learn inclusive techniques on the job.

While the majority of participants stated that their college-level teacher preparation program did not prepare them for inclusion, two participants that chose to answer the question felt otherwise. One participant simply stated that they had taken several classes, and the other wrote that their "...experiences were beneficial and helped [to] make the transition from college student teacher to full-time educator." This participant also pointed to their student teaching experience being a major contributor to their preparedness for inclusion, as that classroom was a well-established inclusive classroom.

Question 3: Recommendations for college programs. Participants provided many recommendations for college-level teacher preparation programs when it comes to better preparing general education teacher candidates for inclusion. However, there were two recurring themes in the responses: explicit inclusive teaching strategies and practicum experience in an inclusive classroom. A number of participants agreed that it would be beneficial for teacher preparation programs to spend more time teaching about explicit inclusive techniques and "...how to actually read and implement an IEP and 504 plan" than on disability characteristics and legislation. One participant wrote that it is necessary to "prepare teachers for the specifics," and gave examples such as differentiation techniques, explicit accommodations that work, progress monitoring, the general education teacher's

role during the IEP meeting, and more. Other participants thought it necessary to provide a number of practicum experiences in an inclusive, general education classroom so that general education teacher candidates can "...see real-life examples of how [inclusion] works effectively." Overall, participants felt that, while the traditional model of providing disability definitions and exposure to relevant legislation is important, practical skills may be more beneficial.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide a summary of the current research study. First, a review of the findings as they align with contemporary literature will be discussed. Second, limitations will be highlighted. Third, implications for future research and teacher preparation programs will be suggested. Finally, a brief summary will be provided.

Review of the Findings Based on Contemporary Literature

Overall, the findings of the current study align with contemporary literature. Participants in the current study have generally positive attitudes toward inclusion and believe that students with special needs can learn in the general education classroom. Many contemporary studies support these findings, and further state that general education teachers also believe that students with special needs benefit from instruction with their typically-functioning peers (Harkins & Fletcher, 2015; Hwang & Evans, 2011; Kargin, Güldenoglu, & Sahin, 2010; Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017).

While these views are generally positive, there are inherent challenges. Participants reported that class size and needed support in implementing the accommodations in students' IEPs play a major role in not only the effectiveness of inclusive education, but also general education teachers' perceived levels of preparedness for teaching students with special needs in their classrooms. Contemporary literature reinforces these findings, one study suggesting that the lack of sufficient training in inclusive education, specifically the adaptation of lesson materials, causes general education teachers to feel that they cannot ethically teach these students (Hwang & Evans, 2011; Kargin, Güldenoglu, & Sahin, 2010).

Finally, it is evident that college-level teacher preparation programs are integral to effective, confident implementation of inclusive practices by general education teachers. A prevailing theme in most teacher preparation programs across the country is the lack of special education coursework and practicum experience for general education teachers, and many studies have sought to determine the effectiveness of these programs when it comes to inclusion (Allday, Neilson-Gratti, & Hudson, 2013; Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011; Shani & Hebel, 2016; Thompson, 2012). The findings of this study suggest that general education teachers are severely underprepared to effectively implement inclusion upon graduation because coursework is heavily focused on disability definitions and relevant legislation, not inclusive practices specific to general education content areas. Contemporary research supports these findings and assert that more practicum experience in inclusive classrooms is necessary to provide general education teachers the tools, resources, and experience to effectively teach students with special needs in their classrooms (Lucas & Frazier, 2014; Thompson, 2012).

Overall, more research is necessary to determine the best course of action for adequately preparing general education teacher candidates for inclusion. Contemporary literature and the findings of this study assert that general education teachers recognize the value of inclusive practices and want students with special needs to succeed in their classrooms, but a lack of training impedes this desire. College-level teacher preparation programs play a major role in the development and acquisition of skills and resources for all teachers, and current research seems to point to a gap in the curriculum of these programs when it comes to inclusion in the general education classroom.

Limitations

A number of limitations affect the findings of the current study. First, the participants in the current research study were a sample of general education teachers from one school in south-central Pennsylvania, which limits the ability to generalize results to all general education teachers. It also limits the researcher's ability to make claims about the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding students with special needs and inclusive education in other school districts, states, or national educational jurisdictions.

Another significant limitation of the current study was the very small sample size (only twenty participants). A larger sample with more participants, perhaps from a variety of schools across the United States, would likely yield more significant results. Moreover, a larger, more diverse sample might also allow researchers to analyze the data in the context of the general demographic information that was also in the survey (e.g. content area(s) taught, years of teaching experience, and membership on an IEP team).

The next possible limitation of the study is that all collected data was self-reported. Given the controversial nature of a number of the survey questions, it is possible that participants may have chosen answers which they believed aligned with contemporary views of special education and inclusion, not their own personal attitudes and beliefs.

Finally, the survey instrument used was developed solely for use in the current study by adapting questions from two surveys form two previous studies (See Chapter 3). However, due to time constraints, a pilot study was not conducted. Therefore, it is possible that survey questions may have been written in a way which caused confusion. A pilot study would have eliminated this concern.

Due to these limitations and other potential limitations not recognized by the researcher, results of this study should not be used to makes generalizing claims about *all* general education teachers.

Implications for Further Research and Teacher Preparation Programs

A variety of implications arise from the current study, both for future research and teacher preparation programs. First, to obtain more meaningful results, the researcher suggests collecting survey responses from a variety of schools across the United States. A larger sample would allow researchers to analyze the data in the context of the general demographic information collected in the survey. It would also allow researchers to make more generalized claims about the majority of general education teachers.

Another possible research implication would be to also survey special education teachers regarding how well prepared they believe general education teachers are for inclusion, as well as their recommendations for teacher preparation programs. Surveying general and special education teachers would not only provide more robust data, but a variety of different viewpoints on the effectiveness of inclusion in American schools.

Implications other than those for future research also arise from the findings of the current study, namely for teacher preparation programs. Given that questions in the survey asked about the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and practicing teacher recommendations, a great deal can be surmised from these surveys. First, if programs even require special education coursework for their general education candidates, the researcher suggests that these courses go beyond disability definitions and relevant legislation. In other words, programs should offer and require courses which teach explicit

inclusive strategies for inclusion in the general education teacher candidates' respective content areas (e.g. Math teacher candidates should be taught specific strategies for teaching math to students with special needs in the general education classroom). Along with these course additions, practicing general education teachers and the researcher also suggest including practicum experience in an inclusive classroom. This would allow general education teacher candidates first-hand experience prior to their teaching their own students in their own classrooms.

Summary

The results of the current study suggest that more research is needed regarding general education teachers' preparedness for inclusion. Results also indicate that levels of preparedness are directly related to a lack of sufficient training in inclusive strategies for general education teacher candidates from college-level teacher preparation programs. Both the current study and contemporary literature support general education teachers having positive attitudes toward students with special needs and inclusion, but, again, due to the lack of proper training, general education teachers find teaching in an inclusive classroom challenging. With the numbers of students with special needs participating in general education classrooms rising every year, the question again arises: Should general education teachers receive more training to effectively teach these students? According to the findings of this study, the answer to that question is yes.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Select the content area(s) in which you currently teach.
☐ English ☐ Math ☐ Science ☐ Social Studies ☐ Art/Music ☐ Health/PE ☐ Foreign Language
☐ Other (please specify)

How many years of teaching experience do you have?
☐ Less than 5 years ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ More than 15 years

Have you ever been a member of an IEP team?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Likert Scale Questions

Each of the following twenty statements were proceeded by a 4-point Likert Scale. Participants were asked to select the response which most closely aligns with their experiences and beliefs.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

1. I have had positive experiences with inclusive education in my classroom.
2. Inclusive education impedes the learning of typically-functioning students.
3. I am adequately prepared to teach students with special needs in my classroom.
4. My college-level teacher preparation program adequately prepared me to teach students with special needs.
5. I have enough support to teach students with special needs.
6. There is effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers in my school.
7. Students with special needs can be best served in the special education classroom.
8. Students with behavioral problems impede the learning of other students in my classroom.
9. Teaching students with special needs in the general education classroom is challenging.
10. I need more time for planning differentiated instruction.
11. I spend more time planning for students with special needs than for the rest of my students.

12. Appropriately grading students with special needs is challenging.

13. Physical accommodations to my classroom are easier to implement than academic accommodations.

14. I need help implementing accommodations in students' IEPs.

15. I need more resources for modifying curriculum for students with special needs.

16. My school has provided professional development for teaching students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

17. IEPs are difficult to interpret.

18. I have a thorough understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its effect on general education teachers.

19. I have a thorough understanding of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and its effect on general education teachers.

20. Students with special needs can learn in the general education classroom.

Open-Ended Questions

What challenges have you experienced teaching students with special needs in your classroom?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How did your college-level teacher preparation program prepare you to implement inclusion in the general education classroom?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What specific kind of training do you think should be included in teacher preparation programs to better prepare general education teachers for inclusion?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Survey Questions Adapted From:

Harkins, B., & Fletcher, T. (2015). Survey of educator attitude regarding inclusive education within a southern arizona school district. *Journal of Multilingual Education Research, 6*(1), 61-90.

LeDoux, M., Graves, S.L., & Winona, B. (2012). Meeting the needs of special education students in the inclusion classroom. *JAASEP,* 20-34.

APPENDIX B: SITE CONSENT FORM

Purpose of Research
This study aims to solicit general education teachers' attitudes and perceived level of preparedness for teaching students with special needs in the inclusive, general education classroom to determine what, if any, factors affect perceived levels of preparedness. This study also aims to solicit recommendations for teacher preparation programs from practicing general education teachers. The information gathered in this study is not a statement of participants' teaching qualifications, but rather the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in preparing general education teachers for inclusion.

Procedures
By participating in this study, participants will complete a one-time online survey soliciting information about their attitudes and perceived level of preparedness to teach students with special needs in the inclusive classroom and their recommendations for teacher preparation programs. Participants will be contacted via email and sent a link to the online survey. The data collected from the survey will be stored electronically in a password-protected file for two years, at which time the file will be deleted. The data will be analyzed and compiled into an unpublished master's thesis, which may be presented at professional meetings. All steps will be taken to protect the interests of the participating school district; no financial support is required or expected.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated from participating in this study.

Benefits
There are no benefits from participating in this study.

Compensation
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality
The information gathered in this study will remain confidential, and participants will not be asked to provide any information that would make it possible to identify them. Only the researchers listed on this form will have access to the study data and information. The results of the research will not be published, but will be reported in the form of a master's thesis, and may be presented at professional meetings.

Withdrawal without Prejudice
Participation in this study is strictly voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time.

Contacts and Questions
If participants have any questions concerning the research project and its procedures or would like to review the results, they may contact the following individuals:

Principal Investigator: Matthew VanCleef, Graduate Student, vancleefm@etown.edu
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Shannon Haley-Mize, Associate Professor of Education, mizes@etown.edu

Should participants have any questions about their rights as a participant in this research, they may contact the Elizabethtown College Institutional Review Board at (717) 361-1133 or the IRB submission coordinator, Pat Blough at bloughp@etown.edu.

Statement of Consent:

- ☐ I am in the position of authority to approve this study.
- ☐ I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. My organization is willing to participate in this study.
- ☐ A copy of this consent form has been provided to me.

Name of Site _____

Site Representative Name (Printed) _____ Date _____

Site Representative Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Purpose of Research
This study aims to solicit general education teachers' attitudes and perceived level of preparedness for teaching students with special needs in the inclusive, general education classroom to determine what, if any, factors affect perceived levels of preparedness. This study also aims to solicit recommendations from practicing general education teachers for teacher preparation programs. The information gathered in this study is not a statement of participants' teaching qualifications, but rather the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in preparing general education teachers for inclusion.

Procedures
By participating in this study, I will complete a one-time online survey soliciting information about my attitudes and perceived level of preparedness to teach students with special needs in the inclusive classroom and my recommendations for teacher preparation programs.

Risks and Discomforts
No risks or discomforts are anticipated from my participation in this study.

Benefits
I will not receive any benefits for participating in this study.

Compensation
I will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality
The information gathered in this study will remain confidential, and I will not be asked to provide any information that would make it possible to identify me. Only the researchers listed on this form will have access to the study data and information. The results of the research will not be published, but will be reported in the form of a master's thesis, and may be presented at professional meetings.

Withdrawal without Prejudice
My participation in this study is strictly voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. If I initially decide to participate, I am still free to withdraw at any time.

Contacts and Questions
Should I have any questions concerning the research project and its procedures or would like to review the results, I may contact the following individuals:

Principal Investigator: Matthew VanCleef, Graduate Student, vancleefm@etown.edu
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Shannon Haley-Mize, Associate Professor of Education, mizes@etown.edu

Should I have any questions about my rights as a participant in this research, I may contact the Elizabethtown College Institutional Review Board at (717) 361-1133 or the IRB submission coordinator, Pat Blough at bloughp@etown.edu.

COMPLETION OF THIS SURVEY INDICATES MY CONSENT.