

**PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY GENERAL CURRICULUM EDUCATORS
TOWARD INCLUSION IN A MIDDLE TENNESSEE COUNTY**

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To the Graduate School:

We are submitting a field study by Hilary Jane Driver Bock entitled "Perceptions of Elementary General Curriculum Educators Toward Inclusion in a Middle Tennessee County." We recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Education Specialist.

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PERCEPTIONS OF ELEMENTARY GENERAL CURRICULUM EDUCATORS
TOWARD INCLUSION IN A MIDDLE TENNESSEE COUNTY

A Field Study
Presented for the
Education Specialist
Degree
Austin Peay State University

Hilary Jane Driver Bock

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DEDICATION

For my grandmother

Jeanette Summers Dabbs

Who made it clear how important an education was to her when she stayed with her High School English teacher, Ma Birch, in Raytown, Kansas to finish her schooling while the rest of her family moved back to Clarksville, Tennessee. It is with great pride that I wear your class ring.

For my grandfather

Hilliard Black Dabbs

Who has always held his head high and has shown me that people can survive life's most difficult trials.

It is a blessing to be your granddaughter.

I love you 9!

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ABSTRACT

This research evaluated the perceptions of elementary school teachers toward including special needs students in the general curriculum. The main issues investigated in this research were teachers' perceptions of inclusion and their willingness to participate in the inclusion of special needs students in their classrooms. General curriculum teachers from four Middle Tennessee elementary schools were surveyed on issues concerning inclusion.

The results of the research revealed there is a statistical difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience and educators with 11-15 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience depending on the severity of the disability. There was also a statistical difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 11-15 years teaching experience to the amount of college training they possessed.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Gifted students and at-risk students have typically had their needs met in the general curriculum classroom. "However, most students with disabilities have been historically served in segregated special education classrooms" (Snyder, 1999, p. 173). Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which was passed in 1975, mandated that students with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. This mandate opened new doors for students that had typically been educated in segregated schools. This mandate allowed these students to be educated in public schools and to have interaction with their non-disabled peers. According to Snyder (1999), "...the model for most of these students was a resource room with appropriate mainstreaming." (p. 173)

Public Law 94-142 was renamed *The Individuals With Disabilities Act* (IDEA) in 1990 and there has been a move in the special education arena toward total inclusion of students with special needs into the general curriculum classroom. Total inclusion proposes that all students, regardless of the depth of their disability, be educated in the general education classrooms. Lanier and Lanier (1996) suggested that in order for total inclusion to succeed, "it will depend on the willingness of classroom teachers to accept and support those students. It is important that

regular classroom teachers have realistic expectations of the students and their ability to deal with those students." (p. 234). It is also important for the classroom teachers to possess a knowledge of how to educate students using different modalities and to have strong classroom management skills.

Statement of the Problem

Special Education teachers have been empowered by Public Law 94-142 and other mandates to include special education students into the general curriculum. This empowerment has been an attempt to build social skills, as well as academic skills of the special education students and to enable them to feel included in the general curriculum. However, placing special education students in general education classrooms can be difficult because many general curriculum teachers have not received any formal training in the area of special education. The purpose of this study was to survey general curriculum educators from four middle Tennessee schools in order to gain an understanding of their perceptions toward including special education students in the general curriculum.

Research Questions

- 1: What types of special education courses, inservice, and training have general education teachers experienced?
- 2: What is the classroom experience of general education teachers working with inclusion?

3: What is the level of academic degrees held by general education teachers working with inclusion?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis I: There is no significant difference between the general curriculum educators' attitudes toward special education students with mild disabilities and those with more severe disabilities.

Hypothesis II: There is no significant difference in the general curriculum educators' perceptions toward inclusion and the amount of planning and extra attention required by the special education students.

Hypothesis III: There is no significant difference between the amount of college courses a general curriculum educator completed and perceptions toward inclusion.

Definition of Terms

Disability - A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment (Beadles, R.J., 2001, p. 4).

Inclusive education - all students in a school regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff (Renaissance Group, 1999).

Limitations of the Study

1. Limited to educators in four Middle Tennessee schools.

2. Limited by the biases, which are inherent within the opinions of educators who volunteered to participate in the survey.
3. Limited by the level of inclusive education experience a teacher has been exposed to during their teaching career.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

After Public Law 94-142 was passed, most special education students began receiving services in public schools. However, many of them continue to receive their education in special education classrooms segregated from their age appropriate peers. Students educated in this environment often felt isolated and were often treated as outcasts by their peers. The purpose of this law was to insure the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected and to assist states and localities in providing for the education of all handicapped children. Further, Public Law 94-142 was designed to assess and insure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children so that the feelings of inadequacy instilled in disabled students and discrimination was eliminated (Public Law 94-142).

Due to the new mandates, schools are beginning to experience a movement toward an inclusive setting and general curriculum teachers could be serving an array of students in their classrooms. "The current trend in the United States is to serve students with special needs in the inclusive setting with

persons who are not disabled as much as possible" (Monahan and Marino, 1996, p. 316), which could decrease the "36.1% drop-out rate for students with learning disabilities" (Heflin and Bullock, (1999). However, research conducted by Gickling and Theobald (1975) produced results stating that "30% of special education personnel indicated that regular classroom teachers feel imposed upon to help special education students, whereas nearly 50% of the regular educators voiced a similar sense of imposition" (p. 321). Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden's (2000) research assert that attitudes matter by stating, "professional attitudes may well act to facilitate or constrain the implementation of policies which may be radical or controversial, for the success of innovative and challenging programs must surely depend upon the co-operation and commitment of those directly involved" (p. 200). If the latter information was accurate, perceptions of inclusion must be positive in order for it to be successful. Further in the research conducted by Avramids, Bayliss, and Burden indicated that the severity of a student's disability, the amount of planning and time required, and teacher preparation most affected general curriculum teachers' perceptions of inclusion (p. 203).

Severity of the Disability

According to Laniers and Lanier's (1996) research "children with mild to moderate degrees of physical disability were considered suitable for placement in the regular classes if the school was easily accessible, if parental help was provided, or if adaptable instructional materials were available" (p. 234). However, students with cognitive, emotional, or behavioral problems were less likely to be deemed candidates for the general education classroom. Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996) conducted a survey and

"...respondents made it clear that the teachers' attitudes toward inclusion depended on what type of disabilities the children have. Teachers seemed more eager to make accommodations for children with physical disabilities compared to those with cognitive, emotional, or behavioral problems" (p. 151).

Heflin and Bullock noted students with emotional and behavioral disabilities were by far considered the most difficult to include. According to Heflin and Bullock, "teachers express concern that education in a fully inclusive environment will deny these students the specialized instruction they need" (p. 106). Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) found that "pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD) were

seen as causing significantly greater concern and stress than pupils with other difficulties" (p. 198).

Stoler (1992) noted that teachers are also concerned with how they "will handle the presence of seeing eye dogs, medical equipment required by the medically fragile students, and aids for those students who are otherwise impaired and cannot be left alone" (p. 60). This equipment and information again refers to the more severe special education students and raises concern for the general curriculum teacher (p. 60).

Planning and Attention

Research of the extant literature revealed the amount of extra planning and attention was a major concern for general education teachers. Schumm, Vaughan, Haager, McDowell, Rothian, Saumell (1995), discovered elementary general curriculum teachers did more planning to include the needs of diverse learners in the past, "teaching to the middle" was an acceptable instructional method. Noted that today it is no longer a feasible instructional method because "teachers must meet the broadening range of student needs" (p. 335). Stoler (1992) noted that "the perception is that both the regular and special education student will benefit socially from inclusion in a

regular program" (p. 63). Stoler further documented however that teachers' attitudes were more negative if they felt the student would require more of their time. Wilcox and Wigle (1997) delineated that "Many educators do not know how to adapt and modify the curriculum and instructional programs to meet diverse student needs" (p. 379) and therefore struggle with the concept of planning for the inclusion student. Lanier's (2000) research emphasized that "...teachers were more positive about integrating special students into the regular classroom, provided the disabling characteristics were not likely to require extra instructional or management skills on the part of the teacher." The research indicated that teachers were concerned that inclusion students would require more of their time and attention and therefore were less likely to willingly accept students that would require them to modify their curriculum (p. 235).

Teacher Preparation

According to Danne, Beirne-Smith and Latham, (2000) "research has indicated that general curriculum teachers do not always feel prepared to teach students who have special needs" (p. 332) which indicated that the general curriculum teacher was

at a disadvantage when involved in inclusive education. Stoler (1992) echoes those beliefs by stating,

“Regular education teachers are out of their expertise when students who would normally be taught by special education teachers are placed in their classrooms. Most schools do not attempt to fill the gap in the regular education teachers’ background by offering in-services and seminars on teaching and coping with the special needs student” (p. 61).

According to Schumm, Vaughan, Haager, McDowell, Rothian, Saumell (1995), Teachers are frequently ill prepared to deal with the wide range of students’ needs within the general curriculum. In an effort to alleviate the disadvantage general education teachers possess, Snyder proposed that “...if inclusion is going to work for students with special needs, general educators, special educators, and administrators are going to have to take a more aggressive approach to preparing general education teachers for working with those students” (p. 336). Danne, Beirne-Smith and Latham, (2000) suggested one way to accomplish this feat is for administrators to “provide opportunities for on-going professional development with regard to the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities” (p. 387). According to Johnson and Cartwright (1979), “91% of the teachers they questioned indicated they needed special education

courses to better prepare them for dealing with the handicapped" (p. 378). This information alone suggested that general education teachers needed more in-service. However, to better emphasize the lack of preparation Wilcox and Wigle (1997) found "Most states do not require more than a survey course for an introduction to the characteristics of students with the various disabling conditions" (p. 378). Wilcox and Wigle also stated that if general education teachers only have an introductory class concerning special education and are not expected to perform any field experiences with these students then they possibly have reason to feel unprepared and overwhelmed (p. 377).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGIES AND PROCEDURES

Sample

The sample was composed of general curriculum educators from four elementary schools in the Middle Tennessee area. The elementary schools selected were located in different sections of a county in an attempt to survey a more diverse population. All four schools' student populations include special education students with disabilities that range from mild to severe. A total of forty-seven general curriculum elementary educators participated in this study, which would evaluate their perceptions of inclusion. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed.

Instrument

The researcher (2002) developed a questionnaire titled *Perceptions of Inclusion of Students with Disabilities* by referring to questionnaires discovered in several previous studies. These studies included "Mainstreaming: Affect or Effect" Gickling, E.E., Theobald, J.T. (1975), and "Teachers Attitudes Toward Inclusion: Implications for Teacher Education in Schools 2000" Monahan, R.G., Marino, S.B. (1996). The

disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Major areas addressed on the questionnaire included: general curriculum educators' willingness to work with special education students and their perceptions of inclusion.

Sampling Procedures

The Perceptions of Inclusion of Students with Disabilities questionnaire, with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting assistance was sent to all participants through the county courier. The questionnaires were numbered 1-4 depending on which school they were sent to, but did not contain the subjects' name. The participants were asked to answer brief demographic questions and then respond to the questions relating to inclusion. Once the participants completed the survey they were requested to return the survey to the researcher through the county courier by a specific deadline. When the deadline expired the researcher compiled the data.

Analysis of the Data

Surveys were evaluated utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics as calculated in the StatView statistical software. Descriptive statistics were utilized to address research questions creating a picture of the sample. Inferential

statistics in the terms of unpaired t-Tests at the $\alpha = .05$ level was utilized to address the null hypotheses.

Summary

Forty-seven general curriculum elementary educators from a Middle Tennessee county were sent the *Perceptions of Inclusion of Students with Disabilities* survey. The surveys were collected and the data was evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics as calculated in StatView statistical software. The research questions were addressed using descriptive statistics and the hypotheses were addressed in using inferential statistics in terms of unpaired t-Tests at the $\alpha = .05$ level.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Research Findings

The central purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of general curriculum elementary educators in a Middle Tennessee county toward inclusion.

The review of extant literature and research centered on the variable of general curriculum elementary educators' perceptions toward inclusion and if the severity of the disability, planning and attention, or teacher preparation had an impact on their perceptions. Utilizing data obtained from forty-seven general educators, it was evident inclusion was being implemented in the four participating elementary schools.

Research Question 1

Research question one focused on the primary variable of teacher preparation. Evaluated were the courses educators had taken while receiving their education pertained to meeting the needs of special education students. The *Perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion* survey was utilized to obtain teacher information

concerning these issues. The educators' responses were further delineated using StatView statistical software to document specific data using descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Number of special education courses completed by participants as defined and calculated in StatView.

<u>n</u>	<u>Participants</u>
0 special education courses	3
1 special education course	18
2 special education courses	12
3 special education courses	5
4 special education courses	1
5 special education courses	2
Do not recall number of courses	6

Table 1 includes a delineation of the number of courses educators completed while acquiring their education. Six of the participants reported they were not required to enroll in any special education courses or could not recall the number of courses they completed while acquiring their teacher certification. Eighteen

participants reported completing one special education course, twelve participants reported completing two courses, five participants reported completing three courses, one participant reported completing four courses, and two participants reported completing five or more courses. These statistics revealed the majority of participants were required to complete one or two courses in order to receive their teaching certificate.

Research Question 2

Research question two focused on the primary variable of general curriculum educators' classroom experience. Evaluated were the number of years of teaching experience the participants had acquired. The *Perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion* survey was utilized to obtain teacher information concerning this issue. The educators' responses were further delineated using StatView statistical software to document specific data using descriptive statistics.

Table 2

Years of teaching experience of participants as defined and calculated in StatView.

<u><i>n</i></u>	<u><i>Participants</i></u>
0-5 years teaching experience	24
6-10 years teaching experience	13
11-15 years teaching experience	5
16-20 years teaching experience	5

Table 2 includes a delineation of the educators and the number of years teaching experience they have acquired. Of the forty-seven participants, forty-four were females and three were males. Twenty-four of the general curriculum educators had 0-5 years teaching experience, thirteen had 6-10 years teaching experience, five had 11-15 years teaching experience, and five had 16-20 years teaching experience. The amount of teaching experience for the sample was diverse and provided essential information for the study.

Research Question 3

Research question three focused on the primary variable of the academic degrees general educators held. Evaluated were the academic degrees the participants had acquired. The *Perceptions of General Educators Toward*

Inclusion survey was utilized to obtain teacher information concerning this issue. The educators' responses were further delineated using StatView statistical software to document specific data using descriptive statistics.

Table 3

Degrees held by participants as defined and calculated in StatView.

<u>n</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Bachelors Degree	29
Masters Degree	16
Educational Specialist Degree	1
Doctorate Degree	1

Table 3 reveals the majority of the educators, twenty-nine, held a Bachelors Degree at the time of the survey. Sixteen of the educators held a Masters Degree, one held an Education Specialist Degree, and one held a Doctorate Degree.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis number one was: There is no significant difference between the general curriculum educators'

perceptions toward special education students with mild disabilities and those with more severe disabilities.

Educators responses from *The Perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion* survey were compiled using the following questions from the survey:

1. I feel comfortable teaching students with physical disabilities.
2. I feel comfortable teaching students with behavior/emotional disorders.
3. I feel comfortable teaching students with mild learning disabilities.
4. I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities.
5. I feel comfortable teaching students with severe learning disabilities.
6. I am willing to work with special education students in my classroom no matter what their disability.

StatView statistical software was utilized to calculate an unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ level, for each question.

The t-Test's p-value for three of the six questions supported the hypothesis that there is no significant

difference between the general curriculum educators' perceptions toward special education students with mild disabilities and those with more severe disabilities. The results delineated no statistically significant difference for the following questions:

1. I feel comfortable teaching students with physical disabilities.

2. I feel comfortable teaching students with behavior/emotional disorders.

3. I feel comfortable teaching students with mild learning disabilities.

Table 4

Results of an unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ for survey question: I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities as calculated in StatView.

Variable	Mean Diff	<u>t</u>	p
0-5 and 16-20 years exp	0.992	2.728	0.0111
11-15 and 16-20 years exp	1.6	2.921	0.0193

Table 4 documents that statistical difference was noted on two questions concerning the issue of severity of

the disability. The first question, I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities, revealed a difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience and how comfortable they felt teaching students with moderate learning disabilities. A statistical difference was also noted when comparing educators with 11-15 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience and how comfortable they felt teaching students with moderate learning disabilities.

Table 5

Results of unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ for survey question: I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities as calculated in StatView.

Variable	Mean Diff	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
0-5 and 11-15 years exp	0.042	2.298	0.9241
0-5 and 6-10 years exp	-0.189	-0.563	0.5769
11-15 and 16-20 years exp	1	1.414	0.195
6-10 and 11-15 years exp	-0.231	-0.389	0.7022
6-10 and 16-20 years exp	-1.231	-1.981	0.0651

Table 5 delineates there was no statistical difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 11-15 years teaching experience and how comfortable they felt teaching students with moderate learning disabilities. There was also no statistical difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 6-10 years teaching experience or educators with 6-10 years teaching experience and educators with 11-15 years teaching experience and how comfortable they felt teaching students with moderate learning disabilities. Nor was there a statistical difference when comparing educators with 6-10 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience and how comfortable they felt teaching students with moderate learning disabilities.

Table 6

Results of unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ for survey question: I am willing to work with special education students in my classroom no matter what their disability.

Variable	Mean Diff	t	p
0-5 and 16-20 years exp	1.042	2.298	0.0295

Table 6 delineates the results for the second question on the survey, which revealed a significant difference was: I am willing to work with special education students in my classroom no matter what their disability. A significant difference was noted when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience and how willing they were to work with special students with moderate disabilities.

Table 7

Results of descriptive data as calculated in StatView for survey question: I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities.

Variable	Count	Mean	Variance
0-5 years exp	24	3.792	0.433
11-15 years exp	5	4.4	0.3
16-20 years exp	5	2.8	1.2

Table 7 reveals the results to the question: I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities. Educators with 0-5 years teaching experience

were more willing to work with these students than educators with 16-20 years teaching experience. The descriptive data also revealed educators with 11-15 years teaching experience were more willing to work with students with moderate disabilities than educators with 16-20 years teaching experience.

Table 8

Results of unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ for survey question: I am willing to work with special education students in my classroom no matter what their disability.

Variable	Mean Diff	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
0-5 and 11-15 years exp	0.042	2.298	0.9241
0-5 and 6-10 years exp	-0.189	-0.563	0.5769
11-15 and 16-20 years exp	1	1.414	0.195
6-10 and 11-15 years exp	-0.231	-0.389	0.7022
6-10 and 16-20 years exp	-1.231	-1.981	0.0651

Table 8 reveals there was no significant difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 11-15 years teaching experience. The results were the same when comparing educators with 0-5

years teaching experience and 6-10 years teaching experience, 11-15 years teaching experience and 16-20 years teaching experience, 6-10 years teaching experience and 11-15 years teaching experience, and 6-10 years teaching experience and 16-20 years teaching experience and how willing they were to work with special students. This data indicated most educators are willing to work with students with disabilities no matter what their disability.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis number two was: There is no significant difference between the general curriculum educators' perceptions toward inclusion and the amount of planning and extra attention required by the special education students.

Educators' responses to the question, I believe more severe disabilities require more planning and extra attention on the teachers' part, from *The Perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion* survey were compiled and compared using StatView statistical software to perform an unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ level. The results delineated no statistically significant difference. The data supports retaining null hypothesis two.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis number three was: There is no significant difference between the amount of training a general curriculum educator teacher possess and their perceptions toward inclusion.

Educators responses from *The Perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion* survey were compiled using the following questions from the survey:

1. I have had courses training that will help me meet the needs of special education students.
2. I believe I have the skills to deal with the needs of special education students.
3. I feel my college education prepared me to work with special education students.
4. I understand how to make modifications for special education students regardless of the disability.

The results calculated using *StatView* statistical software revealed there was no significant difference for questions 1-3 listed above.

Table 9

Results of unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ for survey question: I understand how to make modifications for special education students regardless of the disability.

Variable	Mean Diff	<u>t</u>	p
0-5 and 11-15 years exp	-1.408	-3.12	0.0043

There was, however, a significant difference to the question: I understand how to make modifications for special education students regardless of the disability when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 11-15 years teaching experience.

Table 10

Results of descriptive data as calculated in StatView for survey question: I understand how to make modifications for special education students regardless of the disability.

Variable	Count	Mean	Variance
0-5 years exp	24	2.792	0.955
11-15 years exp	5	4.2	0.2

Table 10 reveals the results to the question: I understand how to make modifications for special education

students regardless of the disability. Educators with 11-15 years teaching experience felt more comfortable making modifications for special education students than educators with 0-5 years teaching experience.

Table 11

Results of unpaired t-Test at the $\alpha = .05$ for survey question: I understand how to make modifications for special education students regardless of the disability.

Variable	Mean Diff	<u>t</u>	p
0-5 and 16-20 years exp	-0.608	-1.191	0.2441
0-5 and 6-10 years exp	-0.747	-1.909	0.0646
11-15 and 16-20 years exp	0.8	1.265	0.3203
6-10 and 11-15 years exp	0.662	1.026	0.3202
6-10 and 11-20 years exp	-0.138	-0.292	0.8511

There was no significant difference when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 teaching experience, educators with 0-5 and 6-10 years teaching experience, 11-15 and 16-20 years teaching experience, 6-10 and 11-15 years teaching experience, and educators with 6-10 and 11-20 years teaching experience.

Summary of Data

The results of the study revealed a significant difference when comparing educators with 0-5 and 16-20 years teaching experience, as well as 11-15 and 16-20 years teaching experience when asked if they felt comfortable teaching special education students with moderate learning disabilities. The educators with 0-5 and 11-15 years of teaching experience were more willing to accept students with moderate disabilities into their classrooms than educators with 16-20 years experience.

There was also a significant difference when comparing educators with 0-5 and 16-20 years teaching experience when asked if they were willing to work with special education students no matter what there disabilities. Educators with 0-5 years teaching experience.

There was also a significant difference when comparing educators with 0-5 and 11-15 years teaching experience when asked if they understood how to make modifications for special education students regardless of their disability.

Chapter v

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Introduction

Chapter V will review this study beginning with the initial design of the study supported by the literature review. A synopsis of Chapters II, III, and IV will be included. Conclusions and recommendations based on the study's findings will be presented at the end of Chapter V.

Summary

Chapter II of this study included a review of extant literature focused on the perceptions of educators toward inclusion. Studies focused on the specific variable of including special education students in general curriculum classrooms.

Public Law 94-142 enabled special education students to receive their education in the least restrictive environment and required educators to determine how to educate special education students in the appropriate manner. Cochran's (1998) research revealed there are

"...nearly six million students with disabilities who are served by special education services. This accounts for

12 percent of all students enrolled in public schools. The number of children with disabilities served in public schools has increased 51 percent over the last twenty years. More than 73 percent of these students are served in regular education classrooms or regular education classrooms combined with resource rooms in the regular education school building" (p. 4).

Cutbirth, Benge, and Stillwater's (1999) research echoes these findings. The researchers revealed,

"during the last five years regular class placement for special needs students has increased by ten percentage points, while resource room placement has decreased. Currently, 71.5 percent of students requiring special education services are now receiving some proportion of their education in general education classes" (p. 2).

This research indicated that the mandate has been effective and educators were working to serve special education students in the regular education as much as possible.

The review of the literature revealed educators often felt more comfortable accepting students with less severe disabilities in their classrooms as opposed to students with more severe disabilities. In Lanier and Lanier's (1996) research, students viewed as least appropriate for the inclusion classrooms included those with severe or profound disabilities.

Research also indicated educators felt special education students require more planning and attention, which exposed negative reactions to inclusion. Schuum, Vaughn, and Rothlein (1995) stated, "They felt that students with learning difficulties should fit in with the educational program implemented for the class as a whole and not receive a specially designed, individualized program" (p. 336).

The review of the literature revealed educators often felt unprepared to accept special education students in the general curriculum because they do not feel they possessed the training required to educate these students appropriately. According to Cochran's research (1998), educators are hesitant and unwilling to make the necessary accommodations that are required for these students and historically possessed negative attitudes toward disabled persons in general (p. 4).

This study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of elementary educators in the a Middle Tennessee County toward inclusion. The general curriculum educators were asked to complete a survey and the results

were compiled and further delineated using StatView statistical software using t Tests at the $\alpha = .05$ level.

The population utilized for this study included forty-seven elementary general educators. Utilizing the *perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion Survey* the perceptions of the educators toward inclusion were assessed and demographic information was gathered. The results from the survey were further delineated using StatView statistical software utilizing unpaired t-Tests at the $\alpha = .05$ level.

The variables identified and evaluated for this study were (a) the severity of the disability, (b) planning and attention, and (c) teacher preparation. The variables were compared to the educators' teaching experience.

Findings

The analysis of the data revealed the findings of this study as they relate to general curriculum perceptions of inclusion in the four Middle Tennessee schools are as follows:

1. There is a statistical difference in educators' perceptions of including students with moderate

learning disabilities in general education classrooms when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and 16-20 years teaching experience. According to the descriptive statistics gathered from *Perceptions of General Educators Toward Inclusion* Survey educators with 0-5 years teaching experience are more willing to include students with moderate disabilities in their classrooms than educators with 16-20 years teaching experience.

2. There is a statistical difference in educators' perceptions of including students with moderate learning disabilities in general education classrooms when comparing educators with 11-15 years teaching experience and 16-20 years teaching experience. Educators with 11-15 years teaching experience are more willing to include students with moderate disabilities than educators with 16-20 years teaching experience according to the descriptive statistics.

3. There is a statistical difference in educators' perceptions of including special education students in the general curriculum classroom no matter what their disability when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and educators with 16-20 years teaching experience. The descriptive statistics revealed educators with 0-5 years teaching experience were more accepting of special education students being included in their classrooms regardless of the disability, than educators with 16-20 years teaching experience.
4. There is no statistically significant difference between the amount of training a general educator possesses and their perceptions of inclusion.
5. There was a significant difference in educators' perceptions of their knowledge to make modifications for special education students when comparing educators with 0-5 years teaching experience and 11-15 years teaching experience. The descriptive data revealed educators with 11-15 years teaching experience felt more comfortable with their

knowledge to make modifications for special education students than educators with 0-5 years teaching experience.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were developed from an analysis of the findings of this study as they relate to the perceptions of elementary general curriculum educators toward inclusion.

1. Educators with fewer years teaching experience felt more comfortable including special education students in the general curriculum classrooms.
2. General curriculum educators felt they had an adequate amount of college courses to include special education students in their classrooms.
3. General educators with fewer years teaching experience feel better prepared to make modifications for special education students.

Recommendations for Further Study

The recommendations generated from this study are as follows:

1. A longitudinal study of educators' perceptions

toward inclusion of special education students in the general curriculum to determine if their perceptions change after they acquire more teaching experience.

2. A detailed study of the amount of actual inclusive educational experiences that educators possess.

Recommendations

1. General curriculum educators' perceptions toward inclusive education should be evaluated prior to placing a special education student in their classroom.

2. General curriculum educators should receive proper training on how to make modifications for the special education student prior to placing them in their classroom.

3. General curriculum educators should be given the opportunity to attend conferences/in-services pertaining to inclusive education.

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APPENDIX A

Perceptions of Students with Disabilities Survey

Demographic Information

please answer the following demographic information.

- | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1. I have been teaching | 0-5 years | 6-10 years |
| | 11-15 years | 16-20 years |
| 2. I teach grade | 1 | 2 3 4 |
| 3. I am a | male | female |
| 4. I have a | Bachelors | Master |
| | EdS | Doctorate |
| 5. While acquiring my degree I had _____ special education courses. | 1 | 2 3 4 5+ |

Perceptions of Students with Disabilities Survey

please respond to the following statements using the following:

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree
3 = neutral 4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

1. My school participates in inclusion.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Inclusion in my school has been successful.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I support including special education students in the general curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I believe inclusion is beneficial for special education students.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I believe education is beneficial for general education students.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I believe inclusion helps to improve the social skills of special education students.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I believe inclusion helps to improve academic skills of special education students.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have had course/in-service training that will help me meet the needs of special education students.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I believe I have the skills to deal with the needs of special education students.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I understand how to make modifications for special education students regardless of the disability.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel comfortable teaching students with physical disabilities (i.e. visually impaired, amputees, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel comfortable teaching students with behavior/emotional disorders.	1	2	3	4	5

14. I feel comfortable teaching students with moderate learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I feel comfortable teaching students with severe learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I believe more severe disabilities require more planning and extra attention on the teacher's part.	1	2	3	4	5
17. If there were a move away from self contained special education classes, I would be willing to accept special education students into my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I feel my college education prepared me to work with special education students.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am willing to work with special education students regardless of their disability.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I believe special education students need to remain in the self contained education classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5

Austin Peay State University

Institutional Review Board

February 25, 2002

Hilary Bock
c/o Susan Simms
Education
APSU Box 4545

RE: Your application dated February 19, 2002 regarding study number 02-038: Perceptions of Elementary Teachers Toward Inclusion in the Clarksville Montgomery County School System (Austin Peay State University)

Dear Ms. Bock:

Thank you for your response to requests from a prior review of your application for the new study listed above.

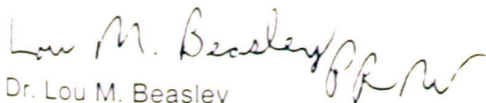
Congratulations! This is to confirm that your application is now fully approved. The protocol is approved through revisions. The consent form submitted with your application is approved. You must obtain signed written consent from all subjects. This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subjects research. You may want to review this policy which can be viewed on the APSU website at: www2.apsu.edu/www/computer/policy/2002.htm

You are granted permission to conduct your study as most recently described effective immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before January 30, 2003, unless closed before that date. Enclosed please find the forms for reporting a closed study and for requesting approval of continuance.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. If you have any questions at all do not hesitate to contact Lou Beasley (221-6380; fax 221-6382; email beasleyl@apsu.edu) or any member of the APIRB.

Again, thank you for your cooperation with the APIRB and the human research review process. Best wishes for a successful study!

Sincerely,



Dr. Lou M. Beasley
Chair, Austin Peay Institutional Review Board

enclosure

December 4, 2001

Ms. Hilary Bock
Kenwood Elementary School
1101 Peachers Mill Road
Clarksville, TN 37042

Dear Ms. Bock:

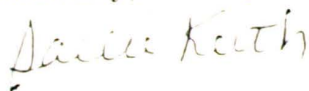
Your research project titled "Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion in the Montgomery County School System" has been approved by the research committee. The date of approval was December 4, 2001.

Now that you have approval from the research committee, you may contact the principal for approval. According to Board Policy File IFA, the principal has the final authority and responsibility for approving or disapproving research conducted in his/her building.

Please read the Research Policy and Procedures Handbook for all information concerning research in the Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools.

If you have questions, please call my office at (931) 920-7819.

Sincerely,



Sallie Keith
Curriculum and Instruction Supervisor

tr
cc: Research Committee

Kenwood Elementary School

1101 Peachers Mill Road Clarksville, TN 37042
931-553-2059 Fax: 931-503-3401

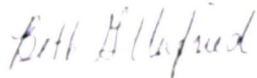
January 15, 2002

Dear Mrs. Bock,

This letter is to inform you that Kenwood Elementary School will participate in your research project. Our teachers will be glad to complete the questionnaire you have prepared.

If additional assistance is needed, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,




Beth G. Unfried

Beth G. Unfried
Principal

Nancy A. Leutert
Assistant Principal



TO: Hilary Bock
FROM: Leah Foote 
SUBJECT: RESEARCH PROJECT
DATE: January 11, 2002

I have received your request to conduct a research project at Woodlawn Elementary and understand the project deals with teachers' perceptions of inclusion. I will be happy for you to conduct your project here and very interested in the results of your project. Please share them with me when the project is completed. Please also send me a copy of the questionnaire. Somehow, only the abstract was attached to my letter

If I can be of any service to you, please let me know.

January 10, 2002

TO: Hillary Bock
FROM: Nancy S. Grant *NSG*
RE: Research Project

Thank you for your request to use my general education teachers in your research project. I would be more than happy for you to send out your questionnaire although one was not attached to your request.

cc: Sallie Keith



ABSTRACT

This research will attempt to determine the perceptions of elementary teachers towards including special needs students in the general curriculum. The main issues considered in this research will be teachers' perceptions of the severity of disability, extra planning and attention requirements, and teacher preparation. General curriculum teachers from four elementary schools in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System will be sent surveys addressing issues concerning inclusion.

You have my permission to conduct the
Study in More Ele. School.

Jackie Hobson
Principal

1-10-02

VITA

NAME: Hilary Jane Driver Bock

ADDRESS: 1720 Walter Rd

Clarksville, TN 37043

EDUCATION: Austin Peay State University Clarksville, TN

Degree: Masters of Arts of Education

Major: Curriculum and Instruction

Degree: Bachelor of Science of Education

Major: Special Education

FIELD STUDY TITLE: *"Perceptions of Elementary General
Curriculum Educators Toward Inclusion in a Middle Tennessee
County"*

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON: Dr. Penelope Masden