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The Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in the General Education Classroom

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Inclusion of Students with Special Needs
in the General Education Classroom

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in
Liberal Studies

Dominican University of California

by

Megan Walsh

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This capstone has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Date

Abstract

The inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom has been a major topic of discussion for many years. Inclusion education means that all students are part of the school community, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses (“Sec. 300.8 Child With a Disability.” n.d.). These students deserve to have full access to all resources and social interactions that are present in the general education classroom. The ultimate goal of many schools is to create a classroom that has the least restrictive environment to meet the needs of all students, including those with special needs. However, many teachers were not taught how to teach students with special needs. Despite this lack of education, students with special needs are still placed in the general education classrooms (Hyunjeong et al., 2014, p. 16). Studies show that teachers do want students with special needs in their classroom; however they do not feel prepared to fully address the educational needs of these students.

Teachers should be given the opportunity to learn more about how to create successful inclusion classrooms. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to address the different teaching strategies that teachers can use in order to have a successful inclusion classroom. This study answered one research question: How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms? Data to answer this research question was collected through a review of scholarly literature and observations in two elementary classrooms. The researcher results showed that teachers can set students with special needs up for success if they are knowledgeable of a variety teaching strategies to do so.

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Section I: Introduction

Arrival Story

Since ninth grade, I have wanted to learn more about students with special needs. Before entering middle school, I did not have any classes in elementary school that included students with special needs. Either they had very moderate conditions, or they were not present at all. It was not until the seventh grade that I finally had first hand experience with students with special needs, and I remember feeling very uncomfortable. Once I was in ninth grade, I began to meet with the Special Education teachers at my high school. I wanted to help them in any way that I could. The teachers mentioned something about restoring the garden that they were supposed to use to teach independent living skills. I took one look at the garden, and I knew it was a project I wanted to take on. At the time I was a Girl Scout Cadette, seeking to earn my Silver Award, which is the second to the highest award you can earn as a Girl Scout. I created a garden clean-up event that other Girl Scout troops and my family and friends in which they willingly participated. It took months of planning and organizing, but it was all worth it. I can still remember revealing the garden to the students that were going to be using it. They were grateful and happy that they finally had a project that belonged exclusively to them. From that day on, I knew I wanted to be a Special Education teacher. I volunteered in the Special Education classroom for three more years. After going with some of the special education students to the general education classrooms, I began to wonder what teachers do to make these students successful. Although I have wanted to be a Special Education teacher since high school, I had never considered the varied

techniques that Special Education teachers need in addressing these students. However, this past year, I happened to meet my former fifth grade teacher who is now a school principal. I told her about my interest in Special Education, and she invited me to observe a kindergarten class. There was one student in this kindergarten with Down Syndrome. Although I had seen students with special needs in middle school and high school general education classrooms, I had never seen it occur at a kindergarten through fifth grade school. It made me wonder how teachers differentiate their instruction as they integrate these students with special needs in a general education classroom. I decided to choose this topic for my Capstone because it is imperative for me as a Special Education teacher-hopeful to understand what strategies I might use to have a successful inclusion classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The inclusion of students with special needs in the general education classroom has been a major topic of discussion for many years. Inclusion education means that all students are part of the school community, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. Students with disabilities do not need to be placed in a different institutions. They deserve to have full access to all resources and social interactions that are present in the general education classroom. The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a current legal requirement in the United States according to the nation's special education law identified as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA ("Sec. 300.8 Child With a Disability." n.d.). The ultimate goal of many schools is to

create a classroom that has the least restrictive environment to meet the needs of all students.

Unfortunately, many teachers were not taught how to teach students with special needs, yet alone include students with special needs in their general education classroom (Hyunjeong et al., 2014, p. 16). According to one study, in the United States, teachers agreed, “Most education teachers lack an appropriate knowledge base to educate atypically developing students effectively” (Hyunjeong et al., 2014, p. 17). This study shows that teachers do want students with special needs in their classroom; however they do not feel fully prepared for teaching this category of students. While these teachers might be capable of teaching students with special needs, they do not feel confident enough to do so.

This study is important because it addresses the different teaching strategies that teachers need to use in order to have a successful inclusion classroom. Students with special needs should be given the opportunity to learn to their full potential. A classroom environment that is least restrictive is typically most beneficial to all students. Teachers need to know many different inclusion strategies in order for students with special needs to be most successful in an inclusion classroom.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to address the different teaching strategies that teachers can use in their classroom in order to have a successful inclusion classroom.

Research Question

This study addressed the following question:

1. How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms?

Definition of Terms

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD): “When a person has a combination of persistent problems, such as difficulty sustaining attention, hyperactivity and/or impulsive behavior” (“Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children.” 2016).

English Language Learner Plan: A plan created for students whose home language is something other than English, and who struggle academically as a result (Mackey 2014, p. 8).

Inclusive Education: “...all students within a school regardless of their strengths or weaknesses, or disabilities in any area become part of the school community” (Hyunjeong et al., 2014, p. 11).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): “A plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services” (“What is the difference between and IEP and a 504 plan,” 2015).

Student with a Disability: “means a student with a disability who is entitled to attend public schools and who, because of mental, physical or emotional reasons, has been identified as having a disability and who requires special services and programs approved by the department” (“Sec. 300.8 Child with a Disability.” n.d.).

Section II: Review of the Literature

This study examines the different teaching strategies teachers use to set students with special needs up for success. The first section, “The Beliefs of Teachers,” presents a study concerning the feelings from multiple teachers in the United States and South Korea of inclusion classrooms.. The second section, “A Whole New Classroom,” explores how two teachers changed their classroom structure to better fit the needs of students with special needs. The third section, “Three Important Inclusion Strategies,” examines the strategies three different teachers use to support students with special needs in their middle school classrooms. Finally, all three articles came to the conclusion that inclusive education of students with special needs was indeed important and that teachers needed education on effective strategies for inclusion, and that the predictability of lesson plans made students in special education more successful.

Section A: The Beliefs of Teachers

In their study, Hyunjeong et al. (2014) sought to find out from multiple teachers in the United States and South Korea concerning their feelings of inclusion classrooms. The phrase “inclusion classrooms” can be interpreted in different ways. For the purpose of this study, Hyunjeong et al. (2014) define inclusion as, “A policy where students with disabilities are supported in general education classes in their neighborhood schools and receive specialized instruction in a separate classroom” (p. 12). Inclusion classrooms are a major part of the education systems in the United States as well as the education systems in South Korea. In both countries, it is a legal requirement to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Both countries have laws that are put into

place that promote a diverse learning environment for all students with multiple abilities (Hyunjeong et al., 2014). As the United States and South Korea try to determine the best procedures for supporting students with disabilities, it is imperative to look at how inclusion is implemented across different cultures and countries as well as find out how teachers actually feel about inclusion classrooms. There were three main reasons why this study was conducted. First, it was to consider and evaluate the thoughts of teachers concerning inclusive education in the United States and in South Korea. Second, it was to assess teachers' knowledge and ability to use teaching strategies having to do with inclusion. Third, it was to look at different practices that might help teachers, in both countries, have effective inclusive classrooms and understand what barriers might be stopping this from happening.

The participants in this study consisted of elementary school teachers in the United States and South Korea. An email was sent to 780 teachers in the United States and 490 teachers in South Korea. The email asked teachers to complete a survey related to inclusion. Out of the the 780 teachers that were emailed in the United States, only 74 teachers responded to the survey. Out of the 490 teachers that were emailed in South Korea, only 54 teachers responded. In order to analyze the participants' answers to the questions a scale was chosen. The My Thinking About Inclusion scale (MTAI) was selected because it included important questions to reveal teachers' beliefs about inclusion. It included a demographics section so the researchers would know the participants' education levels, training, grades taught, and experience. The MTAI's scale used a 5-point system (1= strong agree, 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4= disagree, and 5= strongly disagree).

The participants were asked a total of 28 questions, that they answered based on the 5-point scale. The inclusion beliefs of teachers in the United States and South Korea, about inclusion, were reviewed using summary scores from the MTAI scale. After reviewing the data, it was separated into three categories (Core Perspectives, Expected Outcomes, and Classroom Practices). From there the researchers were able to examine the studies results.

Hyunjeong et al. found that the scores on the scale indicated a positive rating toward inclusion classrooms in both the United States and South Korea. First, for the Core Perspectives category, the United States teachers had a mean score of 3.45, and South Korea teachers had a mean score of 3.28. Second, for the Expected Outcomes category, the United States teachers had a mean score of 3.60, and South Korea teachers had a mean score of 3.28. Lastly, for the Classroom Practices category the United States teachers had a mean score of 2.62, South Korea teachers had a mean score of 2.72. Although both countries thought inclusive education was an important part of today's education system, it is apparent that classroom practices for inclusion are a weakness. In South Korea, the teachers agreed, "Most education teachers lack an appropriate knowledge base to educate typically developing students effectively" (Hyunjeong et al., 2014, p. 17). The teachers also suggested that it was difficult to have an effective inclusive classroom without knowing more about the effectiveness of an inclusive classroom. The teachers in the United States disagreed with the teachers in South Korea on some questions, but for the majority of the questions they were in agreement.

There were some limitations to the Hyunjeong et al. (2014) study. First, the study used only teachers that volunteered to do the survey.

This provided a lack of random selection because the teachers were able to choose if they wanted to do the survey or not. Second, the number of teachers who actually responded to the survey, in both countries, was less than 12% of the number that were asked. This study was based on a very small amount of participants, so there could have been different results if more teachers had participated in the study.

Based on the survey results, Hyunjeong et al. (2014) concluded that teachers in both the United States and South Korea both thought inclusive education was an important part of today's education system, and that when it came to the teachers' knowledge and ability to use teaching strategies having to do with inclusion, the teachers in both countries thought that they needed to be taught more about inclusion and how to have successful inclusion classrooms. The researchers concluded that in order to learn more about different practices that might help teachers in an inclusive setting, collaboration and sharing of the research associated with effective practices is critical.

Section B: A Whole New Classroom

Compared with Hyunjeong et al. (2014), which emphasized the importance of teacher education for classroom inclusion, this new study by Connolly et al. (2009) specifically observed a pair of teachers who changed their classroom structure to better accommodate students with special needs. In their study, Connolly et al. (2009) examined two teachers, in a middle school mathematics classroom, restructure their shared classroom to better facilitate differentiation. One of the teachers was a mathematics teacher while the other teacher was an inclusion teacher. The mathematics teacher would teach in a lecture format.

Then, without much review of the new concepts, this teacher would give the students a math packet. The inclusion teacher would go around the classroom and make sure the students were on task and taking notes. The inclusion teacher modeled the “one teach, one assist” model. Connolly et al. (2009) do not disagree with this teaching style, but they believe it should not be the only practice done in an inclusion classroom, because it can prevent students from becoming independent learners. Both teachers noticed that most of their students were not making much progress academically. The students did not seem to understand the material and did not show much confidence. Instead of blaming the students, the teachers decided to reevaluate their own instructional strategies. Although they were already considered an “inclusion classroom,” the teachers felt like they could do more to make it benefit the students. They wanted to differentiate their teaching to set all of their students up for success. According to Connolly et al., “...differentiated instruction allows the teacher to meet the needs of every learner by providing students with multiple options for learning...” (p. 46). The purpose of this study was to further understand these teachers’ restructuring process as well as offer suggestions to teachers who may want to try their newly-created teaching strategy in their own classrooms.

The participants in this study consisted of 18 middle school students. Ten of the students were male while eight of the students were female. Five of the students were African American, nine were Caucasian, three were Hispanic, and one was Asian. Eighty-nine percent of these students received some type of help through 504 plans, Individualized Education Plans (IEP), or Access for All Abilities plans. The 18 students were specially selected for the inclusion classroom.

First, any student with an IEP in mathematics was automatically placed in the class. Second, if a student was recommended for the class by their teacher from a previous year they were selected, and lastly some students were randomly selected. This made the classroom include students with all different learning abilities (Connolly et al. 47). The two teachers took these selected students and split them up into four different groups. When creating these groups they took into consideration each student's gender, ethnicity, academic ability, and personality. The teachers believed that assigning the students to specific groups would help them learn how to work together, as well as co-construct deeper understandings of math concepts. Within the groups, the teachers assigned a specific role to each student. One student was the "leader," whose job was to set the tone for the group and provide an example for the other members. Another student was the "messenger," whose job was to report any concerns or questions to the teacher. Each group also had a "distributor," who would hand out the supplies and a "collector" who would return the supplies to their right location. Finally, each group had an "encourager" who was basically the cheerleader for the group. These different jobs were intended to give the students a sense of purpose in the classroom, which is important for the success of all students (Connolly et al., 2009).

The class days were then split up into two different schedules, an "A" schedule and a "B" schedule. The schedule alternated, Monday would be an "A" day, Tuesday would be a "B" day, etc.. This helped facilitate their "four-part instructional model," which split the teaching up into four sections: first, teach new instruction, second, review/remediate basic skills, third, review new instruction, and fourth, computer-based review of

new instruction and exposure to upcoming instruction (Connolly et al. 48). The class was then split up into two different groups. One group would spend half of the class with the math teacher and the other group would spend it with the inclusion teacher. Half way through the instructional time, the groups would switch. On an “A” day, one group would spend the first half of their instructional time with the mathematics teacher to learn new concepts and instruction. This lesson may have included hands on math strategies, while the teacher worked examples with the students. The second half was the review of basic skills. These students would move to a separate part of the classroom, and they would work with the inclusion teacher. During this half of instruction, the teacher would often play games or sing songs with the students. This was a way to work with the students interpersonal musical/rhythmic learning styles. Also, the students would have the opportunity to work on projects where they were able to put into action the concepts they were learning in their own preferred learning styles. The inclusion teacher would monitor the students and respond to any questions.

The next day would be considered a “B” day. The class would be split into two groups again. The first part of the instructional model was a review of the previous day’s instruction. The inclusion teacher would review concepts learned during the “A” day and clarify any misunderstandings. The students were asked to journal during the third practice. They were to write about what they were learning and explain how they figured out the answer. This was to assess whether the students were really understanding the mathematical concepts they were learning. After the review session, the students rotated to the final component of the four-part schedule. The students worked through a computer

program, called Odyssey, which has many engaging math activities. It is a program that individualizes the learning process for each student. They would have the opportunity to work through different games and activities that helped the students further develop their math knowledge (Connolly et al., 2009).

The instruction during the four-part A/B rotation was based on multiple teaching models. First, the teachers implemented “alternative teaching,” which according to Connolly et al., “...one teacher introduces new material, and the other teacher either reviews or reinforces” (p. 50). Second, the groups were small so the students were able to work one-on-one with the teacher. Lastly, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and verbal approaches were used to ensure each student would be able to master basic skills through his or her preferred learning style (Connolly et al., 2009).

Connolly et al. (2009) found that the students benefited from this new classroom structure. The students were assessed, regularly, with the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, which is a computer test that provides teachers with information to improve and to inform student learning. During the first few weeks of the school year, 66% of the class was performing below grade level. At the end of the school year, the students were given another test, and the results show that 67% of the students were meeting the standards. Additionally, 78% of all the students made significant improvements overall. The students were also given a survey about their perceptions of an inclusion classroom. 87% said that they preferred the current class structure over the previous one. Also, 87% said that they felt they were learning more. 92% felt like they were receiving more

individualized instruction, and 87% felt more confident in speaking up in class (Connolly et al. 51).

However, there were some limitations to the Connolly et al. (2009) study. First, the study was done on a low number of students. Only doing it with 18 students, makes it difficult to form conclusions whether or not this classroom structure is beneficial.

The results show that the students improved, but it should be done in different classrooms as well. Also, the small class and group sizes made it easier for the teachers to differentiate their instruction. Based on the student tests and responses to the questions, Connolly et al. (2009) concluded that the teachers restructured their classroom in a way that facilitated differentiated instruction and resulted in increased learning. The four-part classroom instructional model clearly helped the students learn in a more purposeful way. The teachers set their new classroom up for success not only for them as educators, but for the students as well.

Section C: Three Important Inclusion Strategies

The next study, conducted by Mackey (2014), explores how different middle school teachers use inclusion strategies in their classroom everyday. Mackey (2014) studied three different experienced middle school teachers, to understand how they included students with disabilities in their general education classrooms. One of the teachers was a sixth grade science teacher, another was a seventh grade social science teacher, and the third was an eighth grade math teacher. All three of these teachers displayed positive practices when it came to working in an inclusive classroom.

An inclusive classroom, according to Mackey (2009), has about 59% of students with disabilities that spend 80% or more each day in the general education classroom. There have been many studies on the effectiveness of inclusion education, but there has never been one done like Mackey's. Her study explored many inclusion classroom interactions, and the data was collected in many different ways (Mackey 6). The purpose of this study was to examine the practices of middle school teachers in inclusive classroom situations.

These teachers in this study were selected as a purposeful sampling. The Director of Instruction and Special Programs and the Associate Dean of Education of a local university nominated middle schools that included teachers that had demonstrated the following inclusion requirements. First, students with disabilities received their general educational services in the general education classrooms with appropriate in-class support. Second, cooperative teaching was utilized (Mackey 7). After three schools were selected, the principals of those schools identified teachers that he/she thought implemented many positive inclusion strategies. Coincidentally, in the end, three teachers from the same middle school were selected. One was a Caucasian female in her late 20's teaching science. Another was a Hispanic male in his early 30's teaching social studies. This teacher was bilingual so he was also the school's English Language Learner (ELL) Coordinator. The third teacher was a Caucasian female in her late 30's teaching mathematics. The school where the research was conducted, had 30% of its students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and 8% of its population were ELL students. This made it the ideal school for inclusion education.

The study started five weeks into the school year. The teachers were observed over a course of nine weeks. Mackey suggested, “Prolonged engagement allowed the researcher to make repeated observations of the same phenomenon over a period of time” (p. 8). The researcher had a “complete observer” assigned to each teacher. The roll of this person was specifically used to observe the teachers teach in their classroom. The “complete observer” conducted a pre and post interview with the teachers. The complete observer was assigned to take anecdotal notes, paying close attention to three categories: instructional strategies, assignments and assessments, and classroom community. The majority of the data came from formal interviews and observations, but some information came from additional sources like informal conversations with the participants. These informal conversations provided great information for the research and they were recorded in the field notes (Mackey 9). Exams, classwork, and articles were also gathered and analyzed. The data gathered through pre-observation interviews, informal conversations, observation sessions, artifacts, and post-observation interviews were all combined and analyzed. Mackey (2009) claimed the results were just as she had expected (p. 9).

The final results were organized around specific themes and three different areas emerged from the data: preparation, attitudes, and expectations; planning time, collaboration and in-class supports; and instructional strategies.

First, (preparation, attitudes, and expectations), all three teachers explained that their undergraduate programs did not prepare them to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Mackey 9). The math teacher and the social studies teacher explained that their Master’s Degree in ELL education was what helped them understand specific

strategies to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classroom. The science teacher had a Master's Degree that was geared toward earning a principal's license, but she felt that a few of the courses helped her teach students with disabilities. Overall, all three teachers claimed that they had to research more ways to have a successful inclusion classroom. They all said they had to pester the Special Education Department at their school to receive the IEP's of the students that were going to be in their classroom. They claim they had to be "persistent about it" (Mackey 9). The IEP's help the teachers understand the different accommodations teachers need to make in the classroom to set their students up for success. Apparently, if they did not pester the Special Education Department, they would not receive the IEP's until a few weeks after school started. Obtaining the IEP's before the school year started allowed the teachers adequate time to figure out exactly how to help these students.

Second, (planning time, collaboration, and in-class supports), all three teachers expressed concern about having an adequate amount of time to plan extra instruction for students with special needs. Each teacher was only allotted an hour preparation period, and they claimed that they spent extra time, outside of this period, planning. All three teachers were scheduled to collaborate with two other teachers in their content area for a half an hour once a week. These meetings were usually used to discuss content, curriculum, and ideas. The "complete observer" noticed that the teachers usually used this time to discuss student issues and general concerns. With in-class support the science and the math teacher received paraprofessional support in their classroom.

The math teacher also had the support of the special education teacher in one class. The social studies teacher had no in-class support. One thing that was observed, was that the team collaborations did not include the special education teacher or the paraprofessionals. Observations showed that the paraprofessional in one of the math classes offered little in the form of student or teacher support. This individual often would distract the students by talking to them off topic. This was also the case in the science classroom. Both teachers expressed frustration and the feeling of “helplessness” (Mackey, 2014, p. 11).

Third, (instructional strategies), all three teachers used instructional strategies and lesson structures that they thought provided the optimal learning environment for students with and without disabilities (Mackey, 2014, p. 12). According to Mackey, all three teachers claimed, “All students, especially students with disabilities, benefited from reliable, predictable lesson structure” (p. 12). Their lesson sequences were predictable. Observations revealed that the math teacher did the same basic lesson structure each day: warm-up activity, grading of homework, direct teacher-led instruction, and homework time. The math teacher also used wait time, discussions with individual students, and questioning. Also, the math teacher used many instructional strategies such as using different colored markers on the overhead projector for every step of the problem to help students distinguish between steps (Mackey, 2014, p. 12). Mackey (2014) says, “The math teacher was confident that these strategies combined with her step-by-step verbalization and demonstration of the solving of the problems, used of numerous examples and practice problems, mnemonic devices, whiteboards, and visuals helped all students with disabilities achieve success in her classroom” (p. 12). The science teacher also believed

the students benefited from predictable lesson structures. She used the same strategies as the math teacher as well as the use of color-coded notes, models and materials to reinforce information from the notes, reading the notes out loud, and hands-on activities to check for understanding. The science teacher believed all these strategies helped the students with disabilities reach success in her class (Mackey, 2014, p. 13). Lastly, the social studies teacher demonstrated the above strategies for an inclusive classroom, as well as a few more. This teacher had time a table in the back of the classroom, where the students could go if they had any questions or needed extra support. Sometimes, if the teacher noticed a student was struggling during independent work time, the teacher would ask the student to meet them in the back of the classroom. This allowed him to work one-on-one or in small groups with the students that might be struggling.

In conclusion, Mackey (2014) found that all three teachers had been left on their own to understand inclusive education, and manage paraprofessional activity. All three teachers arranged their classrooms, developed lesson structures, and incorporated instructional strategies that they thought were the most effective for both students with and without disabilities (p. 16). Observations revealed that there were areas of concern that were beyond the teachers control like the management of paraprofessionals. However, the teachers did their best job to set their classroom up for success.

There were some limitations to the Mackey (2014) study. First, each of the participant teachers had at least six years of teaching. Also, all three of them had their masters degree. These teachers had had time to develop these inclusive classroom strategy. If a first year teacher, who did not have his/her Master's Degree, was observed, he/she

might have struggled more with their strategies since all three teachers claimed that they did not learn much about exclusive education in their undergraduate education. Second, all three teachers had time to collaborate with other teachers. If a school that did not allow this time to collaborate was observed, the teaching strategies that were used might have been different.

Overall, the teachers were able to set their classroom up in a way that helped students with and without disabilities be successful. First, the teachers' studied the IEP's of the students with disabilities, before the school year, to figure out ways to alter their teaching instruction. Second, the teachers collaborated with other teachers, once a week, to work on lesson planning and discuss ways to work with specific students. Lastly, all three teachers followed a similar lesson plan each day. They found that a predictable lesson plan made it easier for the students. The teachers showed great understanding how to set students with special needs up for success.

Summary

This broad research has made it easier to understand exactly how teachers think about inclusion classrooms as well as how teachers implement specific strategies to set all students up for success. Hyunjeong et al. (2014) examined United States and South Korea teachers' thoughts about inclusive education. Hyunjeong et al. (2014) concluded that teachers in both countries thought inclusive education was an important part of today's education system, but both country's teachers thought they needed more education about successful inclusion strategies. Connolly et al. (2009) observed two teachers restructure their classroom to better facilitate differentiated instruction.

Connolly et al. (2009) concluded that the teachers using the four-part classroom instructional model helped all of the students learn in a new purposeful way. Lastly, Mackey (2014) found three different strategies that the teachers used to set their classroom up for success. First, they reviewed student IEP's before the semester began. Second, the teachers collaborated with other teachers. Third, they all followed a similar lesson plan from day to day because they found that the students were more successful when a predictable lesson plan is made. In conclusion, the studies highlighted the importance of inclusion of students with special needs and teacher education for this relevant task.

Section III: Methods

Overview

The inclusion of students with special needs is an important aspect of any general education classroom. The purpose of this study was to address the different teaching strategies that teachers can use in their classroom, in order to have a successful inclusion classroom. This study answered one research question. The question asked, *How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classroom?*

Procedures

This study follows qualitative design using classroom observation. To answer the research question, the researcher observed two classrooms in one elementary school. In the fall, the researcher was placed in a fourth grade classroom, with observation time occurring once a week over the course of three months. In the spring, the researcher was placed in a first grade classroom. The time spent in both classrooms ranged from two to four hours a week. The researcher recorded observations three times for each semester.

Participants

Two elementary school teachers in the San Francisco Bay area were observed in their classrooms. The classrooms observed were a sample of convenience. In the fourth grade classroom, the teacher, whom the researcher will call Ms. M., is a Caucasian female. She has taught for five years, two of the years in a second grade classroom and three of the years in a fourth grade classroom. In the first grade classroom, the teacher, whom the researcher will call Ms. G., is a Caucasian female. She has taught for 12 years. Ms. G. has always taught first grade. Both teachers have been teaching at this San Francisco Bay area school for their entire teaching career.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data based on a thematic analysis of observations and Review of The Literature. Additionally, the researcher compared and contrasted her observations to the review of the literature to search for common themes and differences.

Section IV: Findings

Overview

This research study followed a thematic analysis of observations. Two different classrooms were observed. The classrooms were chosen because they were the researcher's assigned fieldwork classrooms. The observations helped answer the research question. The question asked: *How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms?*

Fieldwork Observations**Observation 1:** 4th Grade**Date:** Thursday, September 1, 2016**Time:** 8:00 AM- 10:00 AM**Topic of observation:** Student Introductions

My field work placement was in a fourth grade inclusion classroom. There are two students that are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), one student with a speech impediment, and one student with Down Syndrome. I focused my observation on the student with Down Syndrome, who I will call Sara. The teacher, who I will call Ms. M., did not teach a specific lesson on this day. Instead, she had the students do different introductions. It is still the first week of school, so Ms. M. wants to make certain that she gets to know all of the students and they get to know each other. Although Sara does have a learning disability, Ms. M. does everything she can to include Sara in the classroom activities without treating her like she is less capable than any other student. She checks in on Sara to make certain she is performing all of the morning activities to the best of her ability.

Before the students walk into the classroom, Ms. M. has one student at the door that greets each one with a handshake. This student looks every student in the eye and says "Good morning," while shaking his/her hand. This first activity is a strategy that Ms. M. uses to have the students work on their people skills. Sara does this task with ease. She has a huge smile on her face because the student at the front door also gives her a hug after shaking her hand. One thing I noticed was that Sara was at the end of the line. I

asked Ms. M. about this later, and she said Sara's classroom job for the week is to be the "Caboose." The students switch jobs weekly. The "Caboose" is supposed to make sure that all the students in line are walking straight ahead to ensure there are no stragglers.

After all the students are in the classroom, Ms. M. asks students to take out their homework folders. While all the other students take out their folders, Sara raises her hand. Ms. M. walks over to Sara and kneels beside her desk. Sara explains to Ms. M. that her homework folder is still in her backpack, which is located outside the classroom. Ms. M. reminds Sara that she always needs to grab her folder before walking into the classroom. She tells Sara that she can go get it this time, since it is still the first week of school, but next time she needs to remember it. I thought this was especially helpful. Ms. M. got down on her knees to Sara's level and talked to her like she was capable of following this direction. I am confident Ms. M. would allow another student to get their homework folder if they needed to as well. She is not giving Sara special treatment, just because she has a disability. She holds high expectations for Sara, which are imperative for her to be the most successful.

The teacher asks the homework checker to start walking around the classroom and sign off on people's homework. Ms. M says, "When your homework folder is signed, please come have a seat on the carpet." She then asks, "Who can repeat the instructions I just gave you?" She calls on a student who then repeats the directions back to her and to the class. This gives students the opportunity, who might not have been paying attention in the first place, to hear the instructions for a second time. Ms. M. walks over to Sara's

desk and checks to make sure she has her homework folder out. She sees that her folder is out and her homework is completed. Ms. M. gives her a ticket. Ms. M. uses a reward system in her classroom. If students are on task, behaving, helping others, and overall being a good classroom citizen, they can earn tickets. However, if students are not doing these things Ms. M. takes away tickets as well. Ultimately, the students will use these tickets to get something from the teacher's prize box. In speaking with Ms. M., she told me that she has used this method of rewarding students for five years and it has always worked well in her classroom. The students seem to enjoy the reward system and are always looking for ways to earn extra tickets.

After the students had their homework folders signed by the homework checker, most of them walked quietly to the carpet and had a seat. One student got distracted on his way to the carpet and began reading a poster on the wall. Ms. M. simply walked over to the student and touched him on the shoulder. The student then walked over to the carpet. Ms. M. used this strategy as an easy, non-verbal reminder to tell the student she noticed him off task, and that he needs to be sitting on the carpet. This strategy does not seem to distract any other student or draw attention to the situation.

I, too, had a seat on the carpet and we all waited for further instruction. Sara sat on the carpet square next to me. Different students were assigned to present their "Me Bag" today. These students had a bag with four to five personal items. The presenting student was able to sit in the teacher's chair in the front of the classroom. This student told us about all of his items. In the end, the other students were able to ask questions. If a student made a comment, rather than ask a question, Ms. M. would remind him/her that

this was not the time for comments, but for questions. Ms. M. did a phenomenal job at keeping the students on task, and the introductions went smoothly. There was only one point during the presentations that she came over and talked to Sara. Sara had chosen to place her legs in front of her, in someone else's space, while she was supposed to be sitting cross-legged. The other student had asked Sara to move her legs but she did not. I tried to remind Sara to sit cross-legged, but she would not listen to me because she did not know me.

I thought Ms. M. showed confidence when it came to including students with special needs in her classroom. She checked in with Sara a few times, but she did not make it distracting. She spoke at Sara's level, made sure she was on task, but was not overbearing. Ms. M. treated Sara as she did all her students. This teacher deportment is necessary in any inclusion classroom. Although students might need some extra guidance, the teacher must not use all of her energy on one student when there are thirty other students in the classroom. Ms. M. was able to divide her attention among all of the students equally.

Observation 2: 4th Grade

Date: Thursday, October 13, 2016

Time: 8:00 AM- 10:00 AM

Topic of observation: Morning Meeting and Review of the Schedule

Ms. M., was able to help a student with severe Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) be successful. I will call this student, with ADHD, Michael. The time period that I was observing was the class morning meeting and the review of the days

schedule. Ms. M. seemed to be extremely confident when it came to working with Michael. Although he got off task quite often, she did everything she could to make sure he was successful. Ms. M. checked in with Michael often, had alternative seating options for him, and tried her best keep him on task. I feel like Ms. M. did a phenomenal job at including Michael in her classroom.

First, while the students walked in the door, after lining their backpacks up along the wall, Ms. M. noticed Michael did not have his homework folder. Instead of stopping Michael individually, Ms. M. used this time to stop the entire class. She made a general announcement that reminded the students to grab their homework folders before walking into the classroom. Michael was not the only student who had forgotten to grab their folder, however, Ms. M. knew he needed the extra reminder. She used this precious time to remind everyone. Typically, students with ADHD can easily forget something like their homework folder.

Once the students walked into the classroom, I noticed Michael walked straight to his desk. His desk was placed in the very front of the classroom. I am sure Ms. M. did this on purpose. It is a way that she can easily help Michael stay on task. Once the students were sitting at their desks, Ms. M. asked them to open their homework so the homework checker could quickly sign it off. Michael, and one other student, were the homework checkers for the week. Michael placed his homework on his desk and then proceeded to walk around the classroom to check everyone else's homework. He was somewhat slower than the other homework checker, but he was able to still complete the

task as quickly as Ms. M. expected. Ms. M. makes sure to include Michael in all the classroom activities. She sometimes has to give him guidance and support.

After the homework was checked, Ms. M. asked all of the students to have a seat on the carpet to prepare for the morning meeting. Michael had a seat on his assigned carpet square. His spot was in the center of the rectangular rug. The rug was divided up into four rows of six. Ms. M. asked for the roll checker to take roll. Surprisingly, Michael was the roll checker as well. He stood up and looked around the carpet. It was apparent only one student was missing, since there was only one spot empty, but he took awhile to figure this out. Several students whispered to Michael what student was missing, but Ms. M. quickly told them to let Michael figure it out on his own. He was slower at figuring out which student was missing, but he eventually knew the answer. Ms. M. was extremely patient with him which made it easier for Michael to perform at his full potential. He was not rushed when it came to doing his job. Ms. M. gave him the same opportunity that his other classmates have when they do classroom jobs.

Once Michael was finished with taking roll and telling Ms. M. who was missing, he left the group that was sitting on the carpet. At first I wondered what he was doing, but then he proceeded to pull a chair up to the side of the rug. He then sat in the chair throughout morning meeting. I later asked Ms. M. why he did that, and she explained to me that it helps him stay in his own space, without distracting others. Apparently, when he sits on the carpet he gets extremely fidgety and has trouble staying in his personal space. The chair allows him to rock back and forth, if he feels like that is necessary, while still being able to fully participate. Before they decided that he would sit separately from

the group, he would distract the other students around him. Ms. M. told me she and Michael discussed a few different options that would potentially help him from distracting others while still learning. Apparently, he liked the chair option the best. This is a way Ms. M. is still able to include Michael in the classroom discussions. No students seem to get distracted by him this way, and everyone is able to fully participate in the discussions.

Next, Ms. M. went over the schedule for the day and allowed the students to ask questions if they had any. Then she asked the students, “What is one thing that you are looking forward to this weekend?” She told the students to turn and talk with their partners. They knew exactly who their partners were. The students in the first row talked to the students in the second row, and the students in the third row talked to the students in the fourth row. Michael’s partner, in the fourth row turned and faced where Michael’s chair was. Michael had a hard time choosing one thing that he was looking forward to. He shared that he was going to be in a chili cooking contest. He then started to talk off topic. He was talking about a new video game he just had started playing. Ms. M. heard this and she simply walked over towards Michael’s group. Once he noticed her getting closer, he switched back to the chili contest topic. He obviously knew he was off task, and all Ms. M. had to do was show a non-verbal reminder. I have noticed this with a few students now. She is very big on non-verbal reminders. It works because it reminds the students to stay on task, without distracting other students.

Ms. M. then rang a chime, and all the students looked up at her. They obviously knew what the chime meant. I liked this because she did not have to raise her voice to get

the students attention. She told the students to save their thoughts in their minds, because they were going to write about it in their journals.

Ms. M. definitely knew what to do when it came to including students with special needs in her classroom. Although this student has ADHD, it is still considered a disability, and any teacher should know how to alter instruction for these types of students. Ms. M. was able to work with Michael to create the best accommodations that were beneficial for him. Ms. M. reminded Michael, non-verbally, of what he should be doing which worked well for him. She also had alternative seating options for Michael, and she tried her best to set him up for success. These are all strategies any teacher can use in their classroom to assist students with special needs. Some of these strategies can even be used with the general education students. Ms. M. was able to work with Michael, while still teaching the class as a whole. She did not focus all her attention on him. This is important for any teacher to understand in any inclusion classroom. Ms. M., yet again, showed great confidence in her inclusion classroom.

Observation 3: 4th Grade

Date: Thursday, November 10, 2016

Time: 8:00 AM- 10:00 AM

Topic of observation: English Language Arts

Today, in my fourth grade fieldwork placement, I focused my observation on how the teacher was able to help multiple students with learning disabilities be the most successful. This was a short lesson, but Ms. M. clearly was able to implement many strategies that helped these students be successful. She used a microphone to make

herself louder; she repeated herself multiple times; and she made sure to use visuals throughout her lesson.

Ms. M. has a speaker system throughout her classroom. Whenever she is teaching a lesson in front of the whole class, she attaches a microphone to her shirt. This is a way that Ms. M. can easily be heard throughout the classroom. I noticed this was especially helpful for the students that have a hearing disability. These students sat close to the speaker. Ms. M. likes to change her voice whenever she is teaching a lesson. She goes from talking loudly to whispering. This makes the lesson more engaging for the students, but the whispering would be hard to hear if there was not a microphone. The microphone helps the teacher be heard clearly by all students throughout the classroom.

I also noticed that Ms. M. repeats many of her sentences. She said, “Now we are going to open our books. What are we going to do? We are going to open our books.” She asks herself and the students questions, and then she repeats the answer. This is a strategy that also helps English Language Learners. Students that might not hear her the first time, definitely hear her the second time. I have noticed that Ms. M. incorporates a lot of repeating in all of her lessons. This is a fabulous teaching strategy that is used in many classrooms, regardless if there are students with hearing disabilities or not. However, she does not repeat sentences while she is reading the book, “Charlottes Web,” to the class. This would probably make it confusing to the students. She will have the students, sometimes, repeat lines back to her from the book. I think she uses this strategy to make sure all of the students are paying attention and following along.

Her last strategy is that she uses many visuals throughout her lesson. Instead of just reading the book to the class and having them follow along in their own books, Ms. M. projects the book on the Smart Board. While it is projected on the board, Ms. M. follows the text with her finger. This allows the students that might not hear or understand her to see exactly where she is reading, and then these students can read along on their own. Ms. M. also does this same thing when she teaches a math lesson. She projects the problems up on the board and points exactly where she is when she is solving the problem. The visuals throughout the lesson helps all of the students be successful.

Ms. M. is extremely confident when it comes to teaching students with special needs. Although a hearing disability might seem minor, Ms. M. still feels the need to adapt her lessons to set these students up for success. She makes sure the students can hear her clearly by wearing a microphone during group lessons. She repeats herself often so if students do miss what she says, they can hear it a second time. Lastly, Ms. M. uses visuals throughout all of her lessons. This is so that if a student can not hear her, they can still follow along. Ms. M. knows exactly what to do to set students with hearing disabilities up for success.

Observation 4: 1st Grade

Date: Monday, January 23, 2017

Time: 1:00 PM- 3:00 PM

Topic of observation: Physical Education

My spring field work placement was in a first grade inclusion classroom. There three students that are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD),

one student with a hearing disability, and one student who is missing half an arm. The student that I observed today was the student missing half an arm. This student I will call Molly. She is a student that is much smaller than the rest of her classmates. She does not wear a prosthetic arm. She simply uses her right arm for all of her daily activities. The teacher, whom I will call Ms. G. does her best to modify the different Physical Education activities to set Molly up to be successful.

The lesson I observed was a Physical Education lesson. Ms. G. had an obstacle course set up for the students to attempt to master. The course consisted of four different activities. It started with the a jump rope. Ms. G. told the students to jump rope 10 times. She made sure to add a modified activity for Molly. She said, "If you are unable to jump rope, do 10 jumping jacks." Ms. G. asked for a student to demonstrate what a jumping jack looks like. Molly was the student who volunteered. Ms. G. made sure to do the jumping jacks along with her, so the other students can see both arms going up and down, but she did it in a way that did not seem controlling. The second part of the course was a balance beam. The students were told to walk across it in a straight line. Ms. G. told the students that they can have a buddy hold their hand while walking across the beam if they needed extra support. She made this modification for all students. Molly's balance might be off without an arm, so Ms. G. wants to make sure she can still do the activity. The third part of the course were scooters. The students had to go from one side of the gym to the other, and then back. Ms. G. did not verbally give a modification for the activity. However, later she went over to Molly and told her that she can run from one side of the gym to the other if she preferred. Molly had a large smile on her face. I think it made her

feel special that she was allowed to run and everyone else had to scooter. Ms. G. explained the last activity included students crab-walking back to where the jump rope activity began. Ms. G. demonstrated what a crab-walk looked like. She told the students they needed to at least try the crab walk for a few steps. If it was too hard then they could walk backward to where the jump ropes were. Ms. G. then asked the class if they had any questions. No students seemed to have questions.

Next, Ms. G. asked the students to line up. She told them that she was going to count them off by fours. This was to create four different groups, to start at four different parts of the obstacle course. Molly has a friend that typically helps her get around and do different tasks, so Ms. G. made certain to put Molly's friend with her. We will call this friend Jess. Ms. G. then placed each group at a different station. She told the students they could begin the obstacle course. Ms. G. circled around the course, offering assistance wherever she could. She purposely stayed close to Molly. However, Molly did not seem to need much assistance.

Ms. G. was able to correctly infer the different accommodations that Molly needed to be the most successful during the Physical Education lesson. I feel like Molly was able to be just as active as the other students. There were no points at which Molly seemed to struggle. However, Ms. G. was always close by to help her or encourage her if she needed that extra push. Ms. G. knows how to use the correct inclusion strategies to set her students up for success. Although Molly has a physical disability, not a mental disability, Ms. G. still has the correct skills to help Molly.

Observation 5: 1st Grade**Date:** Monday, January 30, 2017**Time:** 1:00 PM- 3:00 PM**Topic of observation:** Clock Making Lesson

I focused my observation on how Ms. G. was able to help a student who has Attention Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) be successful. I will call this student Will. The time period that I was observing was the classes afternoon clock making lesson. Ms. G. showed great confidence when it came to making sure Will was able to stay on task. Although he got off task multiple times, she did everything in her power to set him up for success. Ms. G. talked with Will many times throughout the lesson. Also, Will sat a separate desk away from the table groups. I asked Ms. G. about this seating option, and she explained that this helps keep him on task. Apparently, Will tried sitting at the table groups but he was extremely distracting to the students around him. Ms. G. has worked with Will throughout the school year to set him up to be as successful as he can be.

The lesson started with Ms. G. showing the students two different types of clocks. She showed them the digital clock and she showed them the analog clock. Ms. G. asked the students whether or not they knew how to read an analog clock. Will was one of the few students who knew how to read an analog clock. Ms. G. knowing that Will needs to get up and move around, asked Will if he would read the analog clock to the class. Will stood up and ran to the front of the classroom. Ms. G. asked Will to try that again, since running is not acceptable in the classroom. Will seemed to not want to turn back, but he did. Then, Will read the analog clock with confidence.

Ms. G. then told the students that they were going to make their own analog clocks, on which to practice. Will jumped up and started banging on the table. Ms. G. gave Will a stern look and he quickly sat down. Ms. G. asked the paper passers to pass out paper plates to each student. Will was the paper passer for this day. He grabbed the whole stack of plates, but Ms. G. reminded him that he needs to share the job with his partner. Will grunted loudly. Ms. G. said to him that his reaction was inappropriate. Will went on to pass out the paper plates. Next, Ms. G. showed the students how to glue a clock face onto a paper plate. Will seemed confused. Ms. G. walked over to him and modeled how to glue it. This individual guidance helped him understand the task.

Then Ms. G. modeled how to poke a hole into the plate and place the bobby pins through the hole to use for hands. Will began to rock in his chair. Ms. G. told Will he could go stand at the stand-up fidget desk. This alternative seating option accommodated his need to move. He was still able to complete the task at this standing desk, while getting out his wiggles.

Lastly, Ms. G. had the students work with partners to change the clock to different times by moving the hands. Since Will had his own desk, he did not have a partner. Ms. G. worked with Will as his partner. This allowed Will to stay on task because his teacher was his partner. Ms. G. has had Will work with other students before, but it only happens on days that Will had not been reminded to stay on task. Working with other students is used as a reward.

I believe that Ms. G. was able to set Will up to be successful and productive in her classroom. Even though he sat separately from the other students, he was still able to

participate fully in the lessons. This was just an alternative seating option to keep him from distracting others. Ms. G. used small verbal reminders to help Will know what is appropriate in her classroom. Also, the alternative fidget-desk helped Will move around while still working on the class activity. Ms. G. definitely was able to have a successful system to keep Will focused and continuously participating.

Observation 6: 1st Grade

Date: Monday, February 13, 2017

Time: 1:00 PM- 3:00 PM

Topic of observation: Valentine Hearts

Today, Ms. G. had the students work on creating valentine hearts for their different classmates. Instead of passing out valentines on Valentine's Day, Ms. G. has each student decorate a heart for every classmate and write one good quality about that person. Then, on Valentines Day, the students place the hearts on a necklace. Each students ends up with a necklace filled with different positive qualities about themselves. Ms. G. believes this prevents anyone from feeling left out, and each student will go home feeling loved by all.

For today's activity, the students were finishing up their hearts. They were supposed to have already worked on them at home, and they were to have at most five to finish at school. One student, whom I will call Hailey has ADHD, and she had not even finished four hearts. Instead of Ms. G. getting upset with her, she asked Hailey to come work with me in the back of the classroom. Ms. G. understood that Hailey might have been having trouble focusing today around other students, as well as at home.

Hailey has a difficult home life, so Ms. G. understands that she might need some extra support at school. I feel like Ms. G. dealt with the situation very professionally, and Hailey did not feel attacked or misunderstood. Ms. G. spoke with me separately and explained how Hailey sometimes feels constantly pushed and yelled at when she does not finish her assignments, so Ms. G. asked me to offer her different incentives to help her feel motivated.

Hailey sat in the back of the room with me. She played with a fidget bar on the ground while decorating her hearts. I did not want her to feel constant pressure to finish her work, so I told her I would check in on her every five minutes to see how many hearts she had finished. We set up a goal to have all of them done within the next half an hour. She decided that it would be a race, which helped motivate her to work harder and complete them in a timely manner. I did have to remind Hailey to get back on task a few times, but overall she was a hard worker. I think the race idea helped motivate her.

When the work time was over, Ms. G. called all of the students back to the carpet. Hailey sat in a separate chair right beside the carpet. This chair was a miniature rocking chair. Hailey rocked back and fourth while Ms. G. began to read a book to the class. I noticed that Ms. G. did not ask her to stop rocking. I thought it was kind of distracting and noisy for the other students. Later, Ms. G. explained to me that she and Hailey have a specific agreement. She is allowed to rock in the chair, whenever she is feeling anxious, as long as she is focused and paying attention to the lesson. If she seems to get off task, Ms. G. gives her a warning. If she continues, Ms. G. will ask her to switch out of her

chair and move to a four legged chair. This is a way Ms. G. allows Hailey to create her own accommodations.

I feel like Ms. G. is extremely skillful when it comes to helping students with different disabilities. It is apparent that Hailey has ADHD, but is able to control it due to her special plans and accommodations set up with Ms. G.. Ms. G. knows that it is imperative to set up specific plans with different students. Not all disabilities are the same, so working one on one with the students makes it easiest to help them be successful.

Summary of Findings

The major theme that was found through classroom observations was the variety of strategies that the teachers used to ensure student success. Ms. M. and Ms. G., the two teachers I observed, used the following strategies: Work one-on-one with students, create specific plans for students, and promote active participation and collaboration among all students. Working one-on-one with the students allowed both teachers to create specific plans with their students to help them be successful. Ms. M. specifically went out of her way to arrange the students' desks into small groups that promoted collaborative conversation. This is necessary so the students with special needs can collaborate and work with their other classmates. Both teachers promoted active participation from all students. These two teachers expected all of their students to participate in all classroom activities and discussions. Expecting students with special needs to participate is important so that they feel included in the classroom. Lastly, Ms. M. and Ms. G. implemented inclusion in the classroom through small group discussion. This allowed all

students, including those with special needs, to fully participate, without feeling judged by the rest of the class.

Section V: Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to uncover a variety of teaching strategies teachers use in order to have successful inclusion classrooms. The question that focused this research was: *How do teachers create and maintain successful inclusion classrooms?*

The Review of the Literature and the Findings from this research answered the research question very similarly. Results from the Review of the Literature indicated that having a similar classroom structure each day supported students with special needs by providing them with a sense of predictability for every day classroom structure. I found this in my classroom observations. For example, a teacher put the schedule on the board each day, which the students followed throughout the day. This provided students with a scaffold to actively participate because they were always prepared for what was going to be taught next.

Another teaching strategy that was discussed in both the Review of the Literature and the Findings sections was the teachers' ability to work one-on-one with the students. This was important because the teachers created individual plans with their students which set them up for success. The Review of the Literature also indicated that teachers need to review students IEP's before the school year even begins. In a way, teachers are able to understand exactly what each individual student needs to be successful.

One teaching strategy was found in the Review of the Literature, but not the Findings section. When teachers are able to collaborate with each other they are able to share ideas (strategies) for meeting students with special needs. This is particularly important in a school setting where students have multiple teachers. One strategy might work in a math class, while that strategy might not work in music. It is imperative for teachers to meet, as a group, a few hours each week to discuss students with special needs.

Limitations

There were limitations to this research. For this research, the researcher had to rely on samples of convenience. Therefore the research may not generalize to other populations.

Implications

Practical Implications: The research and findings indicate there is a variety of different effective strategies that teachers can use to aide students with special needs. As a future teacher, hoping to have a successful inclusion classroom, I learned a variety of strategies from The Review of the Literature and the Findings section that I am committed to incorporate in my own classroom. I also hope to incorporate new inclusion strategies as I become a competent professional.

Research Implications: For further research I would like to use a larger sample size and look at specific teachers who have been taught how to teach students with special needs. I observed teachers that were not directly taught how to teach students with special needs. Therefore, to further the research it would be interesting to study teachers

that have their specialist credentials or have taken education pedagogy courses in teaching students with special needs.

Conclusions

To conclude, the Review of the Literature and the Findings both indicate that the teaching strategies to make students with special needs successful academically are: work one-on-one with students, promote active participation and collaboration among all students, follow a similar classroom structure each day, and collaborate with fellow faculty several times a week to brainstorm new strategies. What I found to be true was that these teaching strategies are imperative to have a successful inclusion classroom, and when I have a classroom of my own I will definitely implement these strategies.

About the Author

The author is a Junior Liberal Studies major at Dominican University of California. She is currently preparing to enter into the student teaching portion of the program in the fall. She is in the Dual Dual program where she plans to graduate with her Bachelor's in Liberal Studies, and her multiple subject teaching credential. The following year she will earn her Master's in Education and Educator Specialist Credential. The author has wanted to be a teacher since the first grade. She has worked extremely hard to get where she is today and truly loves the career path she has chosen.

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