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PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL SETTING

by

April A. Prado

Bachelor of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1999

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Science Degree
Special Education Department
College of Education

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is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Parental Attitudes Towards Inclusion of Students With Disabilities in a Private School Setting

by

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Parental attitudes of children with and without disabilities concerning inclusion are essential factors in the implementation of inclusion programs. This study examines the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting, towards inclusion of children with disabilities. Forty-nine parents of children with no identified disabilities were surveyed. All of these children attended a private day school. A 20-item questionnaire was utilized to examine parents’ perceptions of inclusion. The data suggest parents feel children with disabilities benefit academically and socially from inclusion in a private school setting. Results also indicate that parents of children without disabilities generally support inclusion. Parents expressed concern regarding possible negative effects of inclusion of children with behavioral or severe disabilities.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For more than two decades, parents of children with disabilities and advocacy organizations have fought tirelessly to establish, ensure and protect the rights of children with disabilities in the educational setting. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (more commonly referred to as P.L. 94-142), was enacted to (a) ensure that children with disabilities received a free appropriate public education, (b) protect the rights of students and their parents, and (c) assist states and localities in their efforts to provide such services (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2001). In addition, other laws such as Section 504 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have been instrumental in establishing changes in special education programs for students with disabilities. IDEA mandates that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) which is often designated as the general education classroom, thereby affording students with disabilities the same educational opportunities as their peers without disabilities. More recently, the amendments of IDEA in 1997 have greatly contributed to the movement towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. The amendments in 1997 to IDEA went beyond the LRE mandate and stated that students with disabilities be included with non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible. The 1997 amendments to IDEA set the stage for the changes that would take place in special education services as the focus switched from a separate educational
placement to inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classrooms as the common educational placement.

Throughout the rather short history of special education, the process of educating students with disabilities has undergone significant transformation. During the onset of special education services, many individuals held beliefs that children with disabilities were best educated amongst other children with disabilities. Early special education programs advocated the separation of students with disabilities from students without disabilities. It was also believed that children with disabilities needed special education classrooms in order to benefit academically, socially, or emotionally. Later studies would contradict this belief as results indicated that parents of students with disabilities felt their children benefited academically, socially, and emotionally from being integrated into the general education classroom (Duhaney & Salend, 2000).

During the past decade, the number of school districts in the United States implementing inclusion programs for students with disabilities has increased dramatically (MCLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1999). This dramatic increase is a result of the 1997 amendments to IDEA, and a growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of inclusive educational programs encouraging school personnel to implement inclusion programs (Gruenhagen & Ross, 1995; Salend & Duhaney, 1999).

With a growing number of inclusion programs being implemented, many research studies have examined the attitudes of parents of children with and without disabilities towards inclusive educational programs. Research studies on parental attitudes towards inclusion indicate the involvement of parents of children with and without disabilities is an instrumental factor in the effectiveness and success of the inclusion process (Duhaney
& Salend, 2000). In addition, the experiences of parents and their children with and without disabilities contribute to a parent’s decision whether or not to continue to support and place their children with and without disabilities in inclusive educational settings.

While inclusion has become a common component in the education of students with and without disabilities in the public school setting, private schools are not bound by the same laws as public schools, and therefore may choose to deny or accept students with disabilities. Prior research conducted on the subject of parental attitudes towards inclusion reflects the attitudes of parents of children with and without disabilities in the public school sector. Research results indicate the importance of parental attitudes concerning inclusion contribute to the effectiveness of inclusion programs. With this in mind, it is important to examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities, towards the inclusion of students with disabilities prior to an administrative decision to accept, or deny students with a documented disability into a private school setting.

Statement of Purpose

This study will examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into the private school setting. Inclusion has been described to the parents as educating a student with a disability in the general education classroom. The disability could be a mild disability such as a learning or behavioral disability, or a severe disability such as severe mental retardation or autism. A 20-item questionnaire was used to examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. More specifically it addresses the following areas: (1) parents’ perceptions of the academic effects of inclusion for children with disabilities; (2) parents’ perceptions of the academic effects of
inclusion for students without disabilities; (3) parents’ perceptions of the social effects of inclusion for students with disabilities; (4) parents’ perceptions of the social effects of inclusion for students without disabilities, and (5) the effects of a parent’s perceptions regarding inclusion on that parent’s decision whether or not to educate their child without disabilities in a private school setting. It has been suggested that parental attitudes regarding inclusion be examined prior to an administrative decision to deny or accept students with a documented disability into the private school setting.

Research Questions

The questions addressed in this study are:

1. What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the academic effects of inclusion for children with disabilities?
2. What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the academic effects of inclusion for children without disabilities?
3. What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the social effects of inclusion for children with disabilities?
4. What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the social effects of inclusion for children without disabilities?
5. What are the effects of a parent’s perceptions regarding inclusion on that parent’s decision whether or not to educate their child without disabilities in a private school setting?
Significance of the Study

Today's school climate encompasses students from various cultural and social backgrounds who exhibit diverse abilities and educational needs. Increasing numbers of students having disabilities are being included into the general education setting. The general education setting is often determined to be the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The number of students with disabilities continues to increase year after year, resulting in an abundant need for school personnel to implement inclusion programs. Therefore, it is important to examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities regarding inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education setting in a private school.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities, towards inclusion of students with disabilities into the private school setting. It has been suggested that parental attitudes regarding inclusion of students with disabilities into the private school setting be examined prior to an administrative decision to deny or accept students with a documented disability.

Definition of Terms

Inclusion is defined as educating a student with a disability in the general education classroom. The disability could be a mild disability such as a learning or behavioral disorder, or a severe disability such as severe mental retardation or autism. For the purpose of this study, the general education classroom is defined as the setting in which children in grades kindergarten through eighth are educated. Private school setting is
defined as the place in which a parent has specifically enrolled their child to be educated.

The private school is funded by parents paying to educate their children at the school.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION

The review of related literature is divided into three sections. The first section discusses parents of children with and without disabilities as stakeholders in the inclusion process. The second section examines the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities, towards inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education setting. The third section addresses the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities, and the educational placement of their children in inclusive programs.

Attitudes of Parents of Children With and Without Disabilities Toward Inclusion

Throughout the history of special education, a number of laws have been instrumental in protecting the civil rights of students with disabilities. The passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, enacted in 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), enacted in 1990 prohibit the discrimination of students with disabilities. Section 504 protects the rights of students with disabilities in the public school system whereas the ADA can be applied in private school settings (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2000). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990, 1992, 1997) has been extremely important in the advancement of the education of students with disabilities.
IDEA mandated that students with disabilities be provided an appropriate education designed to meet their unique needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE), (Kavale, 2000). The debate about integration of students with disabilities intensified with the passage of IDEA and the LRE mandate. The LRE is determined as part of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process specifically designed to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. The general education classroom is often designated as the LRE, in which the student with disabilities would be educated amongst students without disabilities.

IDEA and the mandate of the LRE have contributed to increasing scrutiny regarding the educational placement of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. In addition, the 1997 amendments to IDEA went beyond the LRE mandate and stated that students with disabilities be included with non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible. The education of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has been referred to as integration, mainstreaming, and inclusion. Prior to the passage of IDEA, the most common placement of students with disabilities was in the special education or resource room setting, thereby segregating students with disabilities from their peers without disabilities. The number of students with disabilities continues to increase year after year causing school districts in the United States to implement an increasing number of inclusion programs. In addition, research supporting the effectiveness of inclusion as an educational practice has played a role in influencing school districts to implement inclusive educational programs (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). The process of placing students with disabilities into the general education classroom involves the participation of the teacher, administrator, students with disabilities and their
parents, as well as students without disabilities and their parents. In particular, the attitudes held by the individuals involved are key to the success of the inclusion process.

Research studies on parental attitudes toward inclusion in the public school setting indicate the involvement of parents of children with and without disabilities is a significant factor contributing to the effectiveness of the inclusion process (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). Parents are extremely critical components of the inclusion process and are instrumental in the success of the placement for their children. The perspectives of parents in relation to inclusion as an effective education model are important because (a) through legislation, parents make decisions in placing their children with disabilities in integrated classrooms (Duhaney & Salend, 2000); (b) parents play a key role in the activities that further the education and development of their children (Duhaney & Salend, 2000); (c) parents initiate many of the services provided to their children (Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Guralnick, 1994); (d) parents initiate and advocate reform for their children (Duhaney & Salend, 2000); (e) parents' attitudes are critical in determining the social value of inclusion for their children (Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Dennis, Williams, Giangreco, & Cloninger, 1993). Parent's perceptions of inclusion programs are relevant in the approach taken by school personnel when implementing and creating inclusion programs. The positive and negative experiences of the parents and their children are likely to influence their commitment to inclusion and future placement of their children with disabilities.

A study conducted by Duhaney and Salend (2000) examined 17 studies involving parents of children with and without disabilities and their perspectives on and experiences with inclusion. Two of the studies focused on mothers of children with disabilities, while...
the other 15 studies involved parents of children with and without disabilities. The children with disabilities included mild, moderate, and severe disabilities ranging in age from 6 weeks to 35 years old. The parents of children without disabilities represented children ranging in age from 18 months to 23 years old. Data were collected for the studies in the form of surveys, interviews, observations, and analysis of various permanent products.

The studies reviewed by Duhaney and Salend (2000) suggest that parents of children with disabilities have mixed but generally positive feelings about inclusion. The majority of parents of children with disabilities support inclusion and feel that it helps foster acceptance and builds relationships between their children with disabilities and their peers. In addition, the parents believe the acceptance and fostering of friendships amongst their peers helps children with disabilities to develop socially, emotionally, and academically. More importantly, parents of children with disabilities credit inclusion with enhancing the self-image of their children by affording them opportunities to interact with appropriate role models, to build friendships, increase confidence, and prepare children for the real world (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). Parents of children with disabilities expressed concerns related to the availability of qualified personnel, specialized services, and adequate training for teachers and administrators to implement inclusion.

In contrast, results of the study by Duhaney and Salend (2000) revealed that parents of children without disabilities had concerns that the students with disabilities needs were so great that they would interfere or compromise the education of their children. Parents of
children without disabilities also questioned the availability of qualified and trained educators to effectively implement inclusion.

Studies conducted by Miller, Strain, Boyd, Hunsicker, McKinley, and Wu (1992) examined the perceptions and values of parents of children with and without disabilities related to preschool mainstreaming. Two hundred thirty-two parents participated in this study. The children of half of the participants were diagnosed with mild to moderate developmental delays. The children of the remainder of the parents did not have disabilities. Half of the children with and without disabilities were educated in mainstreamed preschool settings. The other half were educated in segregated preschool settings. Parents were asked to complete two surveys. One of the surveys measured parents' opinions about integration opportunities for their children with and without disabilities. The second survey measured the parents' perceptions regarding involvement of their child with children with disabilities, and overall satisfaction with their child's involvement.

The results of the study by Miller et al. (1992) with respect to the survey of integration opportunities suggest that parents of children with developmental delays in mainstreamed and segregated settings revealed no significant discrepancy in attitudes concerning integration opportunities. In addition, the mean score for both comparison groups suggest that parents strongly favor integration opportunities.

In contrast, using the same survey, the responses of parents of children without developmental delays in mainstreamed and segregated settings yielded a significant difference. Miller et al. (1992) found that parents of children in mainstreamed settings more strongly favored integration opportunities than did parents of children in segregated
settings. Despite the discrepancy between the two groups, the findings of the study revealed that the mean scores for each sample suggest that the parent groups possess favorable attitudes toward integration opportunities.

The second survey addressed parental attitudes of children with and without disabilities in mainstreamed or segregated settings, concerning their child's involvement with children with disabilities and satisfaction with their child's involvement with children with disabilities. The results of the surveys yielded no significant differences for questions one through three which pertained to parental involvement in the child's educational program (Miller et al., 1992). In contrast, questions four, five, and six pertaining to parental satisfaction concerning the involvement of his or her child without disabilities with children with disabilities yielded significant differences in mean scores for each question. Parents of children in the mainstreamed settings felt stronger than did parents of children in segregated settings that the interaction of their children with disabilities with children without disabilities influenced their development.

The study conducted by Miller et al. (1992) determined that parents of children without disabilities in mainstreamed or segregated settings responding to the second survey had a significant difference in questions four, five, and six as did the previous group of parents. Parents of the mainstreamed children indicated their children interacted more with children with disabilities than did children in a segregated setting and overall, the parents were more satisfied with the integration opportunity than were parents of children without disabilities in a segregated setting.

In summary, studies examining the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities and those of parents of children without disabilities revealed that both groups of parents
had positive attitudes towards integration and inclusion programs. Parents of children with disabilities reportedly had generally positive experiences with inclusion, and believe their child benefited from inclusion socially, emotionally, and academically. In addition, parents of children with disabilities expressed concern regarding adequate administrative and teacher training and their ability to care for their children. Parents of children without disabilities expressed concern that the needs of the students with disabilities may interfere with instruction, and whether or not the teachers and administration were adequately trained to implement inclusion.

Attitudes of Parents of Children Without Disabilities Toward Inclusion

In the United States, the number of school districts with inclusion programs for students with a wide range of disabilities has increased significantly (McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1999). Recent judicial decisions and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are two primary reasons for the increase in the number of inclusive educational programs. In addition, a growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of the inclusive education practices further encourages school district personnel to continue to create inclusive educational programs (Gruenhagen & Ross, 1995; Salend & Duhaney, 1999).

Several researchers have examined the reactions and experiences of parents of children without disabilities to inclusive educational programs. The studies examined the benefits and drawbacks associated with inclusion programs as perceived by the parents of children without disabilities.
Green and Stoneman (1989) examined the attitudes towards integrated programs of 117 mothers and 87 fathers of preschool age children without disabilities. The results of the study indicated that both fathers and mothers generally conveyed positive attitudes towards educating their children in an integrated setting. It was also determined that the positive attitudes were directly related to the positive educational and social experiences of their children in the integrated setting. Green and Stoneman (1989) also found that parents had fewer concerns when their children were integrated with children having physical and sensory disabilities, than when their children were integrated with children having severe disabilities including mental retardation, emotional disturbance, and behavior disorders. Parents in the study also expressed concern over the training of the educators implementing the integration programs as a possible drawback to the integration process. The survey results indicate that the responses of mothers and fathers in the same family were similar. Green and Stoneman (1989) found the attitudes of mothers appeared to be correlated to socioeconomic status, educational background, and the age of both the parent and child. The attitudes of older and more affluent mothers were less favorable toward the integration process. Mothers of older children felt that their children were more likely to benefit from integration. Further results of the study revealed that fathers of older children were more concerned with the effects of disruptive behavior on their children, than were fathers of younger children (Green & Stoneman, 1989).

Peck, Carlson, and Helmstetter (1992) conducted a survey of the perceptions of 125 parents of students without disabilities. The parents of the children without disabilities were enrolled in 44 preschool and kindergarten integrated program settings. Analysis of
the surveys in Peck et al. (1992) revealed that parents believed their children had positive experiences in the inclusive programs, and that the majority of parents surveyed preferred their children be educated in classes that included children with disabilities. The responses of the parents further indicated that their children enjoyed helping others, experienced a greater sense of self-worth, exhibited a greater sense of personal development, and had developed a level of tolerance and acceptance of individual differences. Parents in the study did not feel that their children were more likely to exhibit inappropriate behavior they may have been exposed to in the inclusive setting. In contrast, the parents believe the children with disabilities helped their children in learning appropriate behaviors and that the presence of children with disabilities did not reduce the amount of attention and time their children received from their teachers. Peck et al. (1992) found that concerns about instruction, development of a healthy self-concept, and acceptance of individual limitations were not widespread, but that they did exist among some of the parents.

Giangreco, Edelman, Cloninger, & Dennis (1993) surveyed 81 parents of children without disabilities enrolled in rural and small-town schools. The children without disabilities ranged in grade from kindergarten to 8th grade and had classmates with severe disabilities. The survey completed by the parents was arranged in a 10-point Likert scale format, with questions ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The survey was used to identify the level of agreement of the parents on five items related to their child’s experiences in an inclusive setting. The results of the study by Giangreco et al. (1993) yielded that 90% of the parents indicated that the opportunity for their children to be educated with a classmate with disabilities was a relatively positive experience. Further
results indicated that approximately 81% and 92% of the parents revealed that the educational placement of students with disabilities in their child's classes had a positive effect on their child's social and emotional growth, and did not interfere with his or her education. Giangreco et al. (1993) also noted that 85% of the parents found their children were comfortable interacting with their classmates with disabilities.

In summary, the results of the studies examining the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities toward inclusive educational programs add to the body of literature supporting inclusion programs. The responses of the parents of children without disabilities toward inclusion of children with disabilities revealed that the parents believe inclusion was beneficial and promoted acceptance of children with disabilities. In addition, parents also expressed that experience in an inclusion program exposed their child without disabilities to the real world. Further research results indicated that parents of children without disabilities overcame initial doubts concerning instructional effectiveness, the possibility of their child exhibiting negative behaviors of children with disabilities, and whether or not their child’s educational needs would be met.

Attitudes of Parents of Children With Disabilities Toward Inclusion

Throughout history, numerous laws have been enacted to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. Laws have also been established to protect the rights of students with disabilities while affording them the right to be educated in the general education classrooms in the public school setting. In 1997, the amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act went beyond the LRE mandate and stated that
students with disabilities be included with non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible. The 1997 amendments to IDEA contributed to a significant increase in the number of inclusion programs being implemented in public schools throughout the United States. As the need for inclusion programs grew, parent concerns, student needs, and administrative and teacher training became the focal points examined in a growing body of research regarding parent perspectives and experiences with inclusive educational programs.

Green and Shinn (1994) interviewed and surveyed 21 parents of children in elementary school who received special education resource room services for reading. The survey and interviews were used to examine the satisfaction of the programs as perceived by the parents and their attitudes towards the reintegration of their children into the general education classrooms. The study by Green and Shinn (1994) indicated that parents were very satisfied with the special education services their children were receiving in the resource room. The results also indicated that parents were hesitant to have their children reintegrated back into the general education setting. The parents feared their children would not receive the individualized instruction and attention they required to meet their unique needs, and that their overall progress in reading would suffer as a result of reintegration. Parents also expressed concern over the ability of the general education teacher to meet their child's individual unique learning needs and his or her ability to care for their child.

Bennett, Deluca, & Bruins (1997) surveyed 48 parents of children with disabilities to assess their general attitudes toward inclusion with respect to their experiences with inclusive programs. The parents had a total of 60 children enrolled in preschool through
grade with various cognitive, learning, behavioral, physical, and sensory disabilities who were educated in general education classrooms for varying amounts of time. The results of the study revealed the majority of parents possess positive attitudes toward inclusion and have had positive experiences with inclusive educational programs. Findings revealed that only two parents had negative experiences with inclusive educational programs, 12 parents had both positive and negative experiences with inclusive educational programs, and five parents were unable to make a judgement because of their lack of experience with inclusive educational programs. Bennett et al., (1997) conducted follow-up interviews with the parents of which seven of the parents stated that inclusion benefited their child. The parents indicated their child benefited from being exposed to positive role models, and having opportunities to establish friendships. In addition, the parents also believed inclusion was instrumental in facilitating their child’s acquisition of preacademic, social, language, and motor skills.

In a study conducted by Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, & Widaman (1998) 460 parents of children with significant cognitive disabilities were surveyed on their perceptions of inclusive practices for their children. The parents, having children ranging in age from 3 to 22 years completed an 11-item survey arranged in Likert scale format. The survey conducted by Palmer et al. (1998) assessed parents’ perceptions of the effects of inclusion as an educational placement for their child with disabilities. More specifically, the survey addressed the effects inclusion has on students with disabilities regarding (a) the quality of the educational service provided to their child, (b) the students without disabilities who are educated in the same setting as their child, and (c) the social acceptance and treatment of their child by his or her peers without disabilities (Palmer et
al., 1998). The findings of the study suggest that the parents surveyed had varying perceptions of the efficacy of inclusion programs for their child. Further results indicated that the parents had positive attitudes toward inclusion programs. Respondents indicated that their positive attitudes stemmed from positive experiences of the children, and the belief that inclusion had a positive social impact on children with and without disabilities. However, parents expressed concerns about whether or not their child’s IEP would be effectively implemented in the inclusive setting, and the extent of the teacher training and ability to deal with children with special needs in an inclusive setting.

The attitudes of parents towards inclusion lifestyles was examined in a study by Turnbull and Ruef (1997) by conducting telephone interviews with 17 parents of individuals with problem behaviors. The individuals with problem behavior ranged in age from 4 to 35 years. Interview questions addressed parental concerns in relation to inclusion lifestyle issues. The respondents reported that the placement of their children in inclusive settings offered their children greater access to interact with positive role models. The parents indicated that the placement of their children in inclusive settings resulted in increased happiness, confidence, and demonstration of more extroverted behaviors. Surveys of parents also revealed several drawbacks of inclusion programs. Some drawbacks stated by the parents in Turnbull and Ruef, (1997) include, (a) the demands on the parents’ time, (b) the frustration experienced by the parents in advocating for schools to create and support inclusion programs for their children and, (c) the lack of training and preparation administrators and teachers received in order to implement the inclusion programs more effectively. The findings of the interviews revealed that the age of their children had an impact on the parents’ perceptions of the feasibility of inclusion
programs. Furthermore, parents of children in preschool and elementary grades believed that inclusion was easier to implement and more beneficial for their children than did parents of children in secondary schools.

In another study addressing the perceptions of parents regarding inclusion, Ryndak, Downing, Jacqueline, & Morrison (1995) utilized semi-structured interviews, observations, and analysis of various permanent products to gauge parental attitudes towards the success of the inclusion program in which their child was placed in. Observations were conducted using children in educational and non-educational environments. The analysis of permanent records consisted of various educational records, work samples, and notes from meetings. The 13 parents in the study had children with moderate and severe disabilities ranging in age from 5 to 20 years. The children of the parents participating in this study attended school districts in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in western New York. The findings of the study reported that parents credited the placement of their children in general education settings with improving academic, speech, language, and communication skills. The parents also indicated that the inclusive setting helped their children develop friendships and gave them a sense of belonging and acceptance amongst their peers without disabilities.

Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax (1998) investigated parents’ and caregivers’ perceptions and satisfaction of inclusion model programs versus self-contained model programs with respect to educational opportunities for their high school aged children, 14 to 18 years with severe disabilities. The study participants consisted of 17 parents and caregivers of children educated in inclusive settings, and 23 parents and caregivers of children in self-contained settings. The parents and caregivers were interviewed via telephone and asked
to provide answers to 13 questions. The results of the study by Fisher et al. (1998) revealed that the interviewees support both the inclusion model and the self-contained model that their children were placed in and believed that their children benefited from the model program in which they were currently placed. However, interviewees whose children currently attended self-contained classes indicated they would prefer for their children to have more opportunities to be integrated into the general education program. Fisher et al. (1998) found that although the majority of respondents believe their children benefited from inclusive classroom placements, some mentioned a preference for more functional community-based instruction in their child’s educational program. The findings of Fisher et al. (1998) support the findings of related studies indicating parental concerns regarding the teacher’s ability to teach children with disabilities. Parents and caregivers of children with severe disabilities questioned whether general education teachers were qualified to teach their children effectively in inclusive settings.

Gibb, Young, Allred, Dyches, Egan, & Ingram (1997) conducted research using semi-structured telephone interviews with the parents of 18 students with disabilities. The telephone interviews were used to examine the parental perceptions and attitudes toward their children’s placement in a team-based junior high inclusion program. Seventeen of the parents in the study have children with learning disabilities, while one of the parents has a child with behavior disorders. The children of the parents participating in this study were enrolled in a suburban junior high school in central Utah with an enrollment of 1,300 students in grades 7, 8, and 9. The 18 students included 12 boys and 6 girls ranging in ages from 13 to 15 years. Data were collected through parent interviews via telephone by four professors from the university team during the last 3 weeks of school.
The parents were asked to provide responses to 12 questions during the telephone interview. The results of the study conducted by Gibb et al. (1997) revealed that parents generally were familiar with and understood that general and special education teachers teamed together in the classroom to aid students in completing assignments, to assist in test taking, and to track homework completion. The findings of the study also suggest that parents understood that children in the classroom with and without disabilities worked together, and that there was no designation in the classroom regarding which students had disabilities. Parents of children with disabilities noted that the program had positive effects on their children in the form of increased self-esteem, greater development of social relationships, and increased willingness to participate in activities and be an active member of a group. In addition, parents reported that their children’s grades and attitudes toward their teachers had improved when compared to previous school years. The study by Gibb et al. (1997) reported exclusively positive responses from all 18 participating parents making the study unique as there were not any negative attitudes or perceptions reported by the parents in the findings of the study.

The qualitative study conducted by Grove and Fisher (1999) contributes to the growing body of literature regarding parents’ attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions on inclusion with respect to the educational placement of students with disabilities. Data for this particular study were gathered by means of conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 parents who were drawn from 10 school districts, representing 21 schools. Two of the parents in the study were fathers of children with disabilities and the remaining 18 parents were mothers of children with disabilities. The children of the parents in the study were all receiving instruction in an inclusive educational setting. The interviews
with the parents lasted for approximately 1 hour and were recorded. Interviews of the parents were specifically designed to address the disability of their child, the decision to fully include their child, and the parents’ perceptions of the decision making process to include their child (Grove & Fisher, 1999). Questions in the study were open-ended to allow the parents to explain their personal experiences and attitudes regarding the inclusion process. Upon completion of the interviews with parents, the interview material was transcribed and analyzed. Findings from interviews conducted with the 20 parents revealed that parents gather information from a variety of sources before making any decision on the educational placement of their child. In addition, parents also work to gain access to the general education setting and work to ensure the continued success of their children in the general education setting. Parents in the study also conveyed an understanding that once their child was placed in the general education setting, they still had a role in their education, and even though it may be different, they would experience many benefits and challenges during the inclusion process.

In summary, the studies reviewed revealed that parents of children with disabilities expressed generally positive feelings towards inclusive educational placements. The majority of parents support inclusion and believe that it promotes acceptance of their children by their peers without disabilities, and believe their children benefit socially, emotionally, and academically from inclusion. In addition, study results revealed that parents believe inclusion enhanced their child’s self-image, afforded him or her accessibility to appropriate role models, contributed to his or her happiness, confidence, and preparation for the real world.
Results of the body of studies performed to date also suggest parents have concerns related to inclusion programs. Parents of children with severe disabilities expressed concerns regarding the availability of qualified staff and adequately trained teachers to care for their children. Additional concerns expressed by parents revealed that some parents felt their children lost services, were mistreated, were isolated from their peers without disabilities, and administrators and teachers lacked adequate training to successfully implement inclusion programs.

As discussed, parental attitudes and experiences with inclusion are significant factors contributing to the success of inclusion programs. Parental attitudes on and experiences with inclusion are instrumental elements contributing to a parent’s opinion about whether inclusion benefits his or her child. The majority of parental attitudes studied suggest that parents generally have positive perceptions of inclusion, and that their attitudes are a direct result of the positive experiences of inclusion on their children. Some parents of children with disabilities expressed concern regarding the qualifications and training of the teachers and their ability to educate and care for their children with disabilities. Overall, various studies reported positive attitudes of parents of children with and without disabilities in respect to inclusion programs. Finally, studies suggest that positive attitudes and experiences contribute to the commitment of parents to inclusion programs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND DATA DESCRIPTION

Participants

Sixty-seven parents of children at a private elementary and middle school were recruited to participate in this study. The parents recruited for this study represent 92 children enrolled in a private day school, having no known students who receive special education services for a documented disability. Forty-nine of the sixty-seven parents recruited agreed to participate in this study. None of the parents reported having a child with an identified disability. Seven of the 49 parents also reported having a child with a disability in their child’s class at a school previously attended.

The participants consisted of 11 males and 38 females. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 54 years. Four participants in this study did not disclose their age. One hundred percent of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian. The highest degree of education obtained by the 49 parents ranged from high school diploma to a Ph. D. or M.D. Six of the parents obtained a high school diploma, five obtained an Associates degree, 24 obtained a Bachelors degree, nine obtained a Masters degree, four obtained either a Ph. D. or an M.D., and one parent did not report their highest degree obtained.
Survey

A 20-item questionnaire was adapted from the Integration Survey (Wright & Nathanson, 1998), a survey developed to assess parent views of inclusion of children with disabilities in a preschool setting. One of the questions examined parents' perceptions of the academic effects of inclusion for children with disabilities in a private school setting. Ten of the questions examined parents' perceptions of the academic effects of inclusion for children without disabilities in a private school setting. Two questions examined the parents' perceptions of the social effects of inclusion for children with disabilities in a private school setting. Three questions examined the parents' perceptions of the social effects of inclusion for children without disabilities in a private school setting. Four questions examined the effects of inclusion on a parent's decision to educate their child without a disability in a private school setting. Questions were presented in a five point Likert Scale format, ranging from completely agree to completely disagree. Demographic information, such as age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, spouse's occupation, highest degree obtained, child's age, and child's grade was also assessed.

Procedures

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the institution where the study was conducted. Packets were compiled that contained a letter describing the purpose of the study and the procedure for returning the survey, a consent form, the survey itself, and a postage paid envelope to increase the likelihood of a high return rate. The packets were distributed through the school using the individual parent mailboxes. It was requested that parents return the surveys following the specified
procedures within two weeks time if possible. Sixty-seven surveys were distributed with an initial return of ten surveys.

At the end of the two-week time period, a reminder notice was sent out through the school by again utilizing the individual parent mailboxes. Fifty-seven parents received reminder notices. Seven surveys were returned for a combined total of 17.

One week after the reminder notice was sent out, packets were again compiled and distributed using the parent mailboxes at the school. Fifty parents who had not yet returned the survey received packets containing a letter describing the study and procedures, consent form, the survey itself, and a postage paid envelope. Thirteen additional surveys were returned for a combined total of 30.

Additional surveys were completed through telephone interviews with parents willing to complete the survey over the telephone. The remaining thirty-seven parents were contacted via telephone. Of the thirty-seven parents contacted who had not yet returned surveys, 19 agreed to complete the surveys over the telephone. A final total of 49 our of 67 surveys distributed were completed and returned.

Analyses

SPSS (version 3) was utilized to conduct descriptive analyses on the demographic information of the participants, and on the responses to each question as they related to the five research questions examined in this study. The 20-questions were grouped into five categories predetermined by the conductors of the original study utilizing the Integration Survey (Wright & Nathanson, 1998).
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Parents’ Perceptions of the Academic Effects of Inclusion for Children With Disabilities

The 20 questions contained in the survey were grouped with respect to each of the 5 research questions specifically addressed in the study.

*What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the academic effects of inclusion for children with disabilities?*

When questioned if a child with a disability can benefit academically (see Table 1) from inclusion in the general education classroom, respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the statement ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.05$). Overall, 46.9% of parents completely agree, while 30.6% somewhat agree with the statement. The percentage of parents who were unsure was 12.2%, with 8.2% somewhat disagreeing with the statement. In addition, 2% of the respondents completely disagree that children with disabilities could benefit academically from inclusion. In general, parents of children without disabilities agree that children with disabilities can benefit academically from inclusion.
Parents' Perceptions of the Academic Effects of Inclusion for Children Without Disabilities

What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the academic effects of inclusion for children without disabilities?

Questions 3 through 12 (see Table 2) specifically address parents' perceptions regarding whether or not they felt their child's education would be compromised by having a child with a disability in their classroom. Respondents indicated they were unsure (28.6%) whether or not including a child with a disability would compromise the education of their child ($M = 3.37, SD = 1.23$). Another 24.5% of the respondents completely disagree and 20.4% somewhat disagree that their child's education could be compromised by including a child with a disability in the general education classroom. At the other end of the spectrum, 20.4% of parents somewhat agree and 6.1% of the parents completely agree that including a child with disabilities would compromise their child's education.

When asked if their child's education could be compromised by including a child with a physical disability, 73.5% indicated that they somewhat disagree with the statement ($M = 4.45, SD = 1.02$). Another 8.2% of the parents somewhat disagree, while an additional 8.2% were unsure. Overall, 10.2% somewhat agree, with 0% completely agreeing that their child's education would be compromised by including a child with a physical disability.

Parents were also questioned regarding the educational effects of including a child with a learning disability in their child's classroom. The majority of parents (36.7%) completely disagree with the statement ($M = 3.73, SD = 1.29$). Results indicated that
30.6% somewhat disagree, and 6.1% of the parents were unsure if including a child with learning disabilities would compromise their child's education. Additional results revealed that 22.4% somewhat agree, while 4.1% of the parents completely agree that their child’s education would be compromised.

With respect to the inclusion of a child with a behavior disability, 51% somewhat agree this would compromise their child’s education ($M = 2.30, SD = 1.16$). Findings also revealed that 22.4% completely agree with the statement. A small percentage of the respondents were unsure (6.1%) and 14.3% somewhat disagree that including a child with a behavioral disability would compromise their child’s education. Further findings reported revealed that 6.1% completely disagree.

Results of the survey indicated that 55.1% of parents completely disagree that inclusion of a child with a sensory impairment (i.e. visual or hearing impairment) would compromise their child’s education ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.13$). Results also revealed that 22.4% somewhat disagree, and 12.2% were unsure of their child's education could be compromised. Additional results reported that 6.1% somewhat agree, and 4.1% completely agree that inclusion of a child with a sensory impairment would compromise their child’s education.

With respect to academic effects, results indicated that 30.6% of parents somewhat disagree while 30.6% of parents somewhat agree that their child’s education would be compromised by including a child with mild or moderate mental retardation ($M = 3.29, SD = 1.34$). Results also indicated that 22.4% completely disagree, 8.2% were unsure, and 8.2% completely agree that including a child with mild or moderate retardation would compromise their child’s education.

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In response to whether or not their child’s education would be compromised by including a child with a severe disability, 40.8% of parents completely agree (M = 2.06, SD = 1.21). Additional findings revealed that 34.7% somewhat agree, while 8.2% were unsure. Further results of the question revealed that 10.2% somewhat disagree, and 6.1% completely disagree that inclusion of a child with a severe disability would compromise their child’s education.

A question addressing the overall well being and care of a child without disabilities in the general education classroom, and the inclusion of a child with a disability revealed that parents completely disagree (32.7%) that their child’s education would be compromised (M = 3.61, SD = 1.30). In addition, 26.5% somewhat disagree, and 18.4% were unsure. In response to the question, 14.3% of parents somewhat agree, while 8.2% completely agree that their child’s care and well being could be compromised by including a child with a disability.

Responses concerning the educational effects of including a child with a health impairment (i.e. diabetes or asthma) revealed that 57.1% of parents completely disagree that this would compromise their child’s education (M = 4.47, SD = .71). Results of the study revealed that 34.7% somewhat disagree, 6.1% were unsure, and 2% somewhat agree. In addition, 0% of the parents completely agree that their child’s education would be compromised by including a child with a health impairment.

When questioned concerning if their child could benefit academically from including children with disabilities into the general education classroom, 36.7% of the parents somewhat agree (M = 3.08, SD = 1.10). Findings of the study indicated that 24.5% were unsure, and 24.5% somewhat disagree that their child could benefit academically from
including a child with a disability. Further results revealed that 6.1% completely agree, and 8.2% completely disagree that their children without disabilities could benefit from inclusion of children with disabilities.

Results of the questions addressing the academic effects of inclusion for children without disabilities revealed parents of children without disabilities have mixed feelings regarding inclusion of children with disabilities in a private school setting. Parents generally disagree that inclusion of children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mild or moderate mental retardation, sensory impairments, or health impairments could academically effect their child’s education. In addition, parents also generally disagree that their child’s well being and care in the educational setting could be compromised by the inclusion of children with disabilities. In contrast, parents generally agree that children without disabilities could benefit academically from inclusion.

Parent responses indicated that they generally agree including children with behavioral disabilities and severe disabilities would compromise the education of children without disabilities.

Parents’ Perceptions of the Social Effects of Inclusion for Children With Disabilities

What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the social effects of inclusion for children with disabilities?

The majority of parent responses indicated that they completely agree (59.2) that a child with a disability can benefit socially (see Table 3) from inclusion (M = 4.49, SD =
.71. In addition, 32.7% somewhat agree, 6.1% were unsure, and 2% reportedly somewhat disagree that a child with a disability could benefit socially from inclusion.

When questioned if they would invite a child with disabilities to their child’s birthday party, 100% of the parents completely agree ($M = 5.0, SD = .00$).

Respondents indicated that they completely disagree (93.9%) that they would be hesitant to have their child without disabilities become friends with a child with a disability ($M = 4.94, SD = .24$). In addition, 6.1% of the parents somewhat disagree that they would be hesitant to have their child become friends with a child with disabilities.

In general, parent responses revealed that they agree children with disabilities can benefit socially from inclusion.

Parents’ Perceptions of the Social Effects of Inclusion for Children Without Disabilities

*What do parents of children without disabilities in a private school setting perceive are the social effects of inclusion for children without disabilities?*

Parent responses concerning the social benefits of inclusion for children without disabilities (see Table 4) indicated that 49% somewhat agree that their children without disabilities could benefit socially from inclusion ($M = 4.16, SD = .85$). Additional findings indicated that 36.7% completely agree and 10.2% were unsure. Two percent of parents somewhat disagree, while another 2% completely disagree their children could benefit socially from inclusion.

When questioned if they would encourage their child without disabilities to attend the birthday party of a child with disabilities, 95.9% of the parents surveyed completely
agree (M = 4.90, SD = .57). An additional 2% somewhat agree, while 2% completely disagree they would encourage their child to attend the birthday party of a child with a disability.

Overall, parents agree their child without disabilities could benefit socially from inclusion.

Effects of Inclusion on a Parent’s Decision

What are the effects of a parent’s perceptions regarding inclusion on that parent’s decision whether or not to educate their child without disabilities in a private school setting?

When questioned (see Table 5) as to whether or not having a child with a disability in their child’s class, or school would impact their decision to have their child at that school 38.8% of parents completely disagree (M = 3.61, SD = 1.40). Results revealed that 22.4% somewhat disagree, and 6.1% were unsure as to whether or not their decision on where to educate their child would be effected. Additional results revealed that 26.5% of parents somewhat agree, in addition to 6.1% completely agree having children with disabilities in their child’s school or class would impact their decision in the placement of their child without disabilities.

A question addressing when and if parents wanted to be notified if a child with a disability enrolled in their child’s school revealed that 46.9% of the respondents indicated notification would not be necessary (M = 2.71, SD = 1.32). Additional results revealed that 6.1% of parents would like to be notified at any time during the semester, 18.4% of parents would like to be notified prior to their child’s first day of school, and 28.6% of
parents would prefer to be notified prior to enrolling their child. Results pertaining to this question indicate a discrepancy in the responses of the participants.

When asked if it is important for them to be educated about their child’s classmate’s disability, 42.9% of parents somewhat agree (\( M = 3.92, SD = 1.30 \)). Results also indicated that 38.8% of parents completely agree, 2% of parents were unsure, 4.1% of parents somewhat disagree, and 12.2% of parents completely disagree it is important for them to be educated about their child’s classmate’s disability.

Parents completely agree (51%) that it is important for their children to be educated about their classmate’s disability (\( M = 4.18, SD = 1.20 \)). In addition, 36.7% of parents somewhat agree, 2% of parents were unsure, and 10.2% of parents completely disagree it is important for their child to be educated about their classmate’s disability.

In summary, although 61.2% of parents reported that including children with disabilities in a private school setting would not impact their decision to have their child placed in that class or school, one third of parents (32.6%) revealed that it would impact their decision. Results of the study revealed a discrepancy between the responses of participants regarding when or if they wanted to be notified if school administration decided to accept or deny children with disabilities. However, parents generally agree that it was important for them and their children to be educated about their child’s classmate’s disability.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities, toward inclusion of children with disabilities in a private school setting. This study replicated a study conducted by Wright and Nathanson (1998). A 20-item questionnaire developed by Wright and Nathanson (1998) was used to examine parents’ perceptions of inclusion for their children without disabilities in a private elementary and middle school.

Results from this study showed that parents of children without disabilities enrolled in a private school setting generally support inclusion. Parents overwhelmingly agree (77%) that children with disabilities benefit academically from being included in classrooms amongst peers without disabilities. The results of this study support the findings of other studies in respect to the academic benefits of inclusion for children with disabilities (Duhaney, & Salend, 2000; Miller, Strain, Boyd, Hunsicker, McKinley, & Wu, 1992).

The results of this study, in relation to the academic effects of inclusion for children without disabilities revealed that parents of children without disabilities generally disagree that inclusion could compromise the education of their child. The majority of parents questioned disagree that a child with a physical disability, learning disability, mild or moderate mental retardation, sensory impairment, or health impairment included
in the general education classroom could adversely effect the education of their child.

The findings support the study by Green and Stoneman (1989), in which parents of children without disabilities had fewer concerns when their children were integrated with children having a physical disability or a sensory impairment. In contrast, 73% of the parents agree that a child with a behavior disability could adversely effect the education of their child. In addition, 75% of the parents agree that a child with a severe disability could adversely effect their child's education. Parents who completed the survey via the telephone provided valuable insight into these findings. Several of the parents felt strongly that a child with a behavioral or severe disability would require too much of the teacher's time, and this would result in a loss of educational time for the children in the classroom. A small number of parents also stated they believe children with behavior disabilities and emotional disturbance should be removed from the classroom and not allowed to return. Parents repeatedly expressed concern that teachers be properly trained to handle children with behavioral and severe disabilities. In addition, parents also believe the school should provide additional staff in the classroom to deal with children with behavioral or severe disabilities if necessary. The findings of this study in relation to children with behavior and severe disabilities and parent concerns support the concerns of parents expressed in studies by Peck, Carlson, & Helmstetter, (1992); and Green and Stoneman (1989). The results of this study also indicated that parents disagree that their child's care could be compromised by inclusion of a child with a disability. In addition, 42% of parents agree that their child can benefit academically from inclusion of students with disabilities. Parents in studies reviewed by Duhaney & Salend, (2000) reportedly
believed their children without disabilities benefited academically, socially, and emotionally, as did children with disabilities.

With respect to the social effects of inclusion for children with disabilities, this study revealed that 92% of the parents agree children with disabilities benefit socially from inclusion. This study also examined social benefits outside of the classroom. It was determined that 100% of the parents surveyed would invite a child with disabilities to their child's birthday party. In addition, 100% of the parents disagree that they would be hesitant to have their child become friends with a child with a disability. In telephone interviews, the majority of parents stated that this was part of the real world, and that their children should be exposed to children with disabilities. The views expressed by parents in this study concur with the findings of Duhaney & Salend, (2000), in which parents strongly believe inclusion prepares their child with disabilities for the real world.

Results of this study, in reference to the social effects of inclusion of children with disabilities suggest parents agree that their child without disabilities can benefit socially from inclusion. Specifically, 98% of the parents surveyed would encourage their child to go the birthday party of a classmate with a disability. In addition, 86% of the parents agree their child could benefit socially from inclusion. The findings in this study support the findings by Duhaney & Salend, (2000) which suggests children without disabilities benefit socially from inclusion.

Lastly, the survey examined the effects on a parent's perceptions regarding inclusion and that parent's decision whether or not to educate their child without disabilities in a private school setting. Sixty-one percent of parents disagree that inclusion of children with disabilities in their child's class, or school would impact their decision to have their
child placed at that school. This particular question was a specific area of concern for the administration of the school where the study was conducted. Administrative concern regarding this question largely stems from the fact that private schools may accept or deny children with disabilities. Additional results of this study revealed that 46.9% of the parents suggest notification would not be necessary if the school administrator decided to accept children with disabilities. However, findings in relation to parent notification if a child with a disability were to enroll in their child’s class indicate a discrepancy in the responses of the participants. Further results of this study revealed that 80% of the parents feel it is important for them to be educated about their child’s classmate’s disability. In telephone interviews, parents revealed that this was important because it would enable them to prepare their children and to make sure that their children would treat their classmate with a disability with kindness. Some parents also indicated information about a classmate’s disability would enable their child to be helpful, especially if the child had a health impairment such as diabetes. Finally, 88% of the parents agree educating their child about their classmate’s disability is important for the same reasons as previously stated in regards to educating parents about their child’s classmate’s disability.

Limitations of the Study

A number of possible limitations of this study exist. The relatively small sample size of this study may contain differing results compared to a study with a larger sample size. Out of 67 surveys distributed, a total of 49 were returned. In addition, 19 of the 49 total returned surveys were collected via the telephone. Completing the survey over the
telephone may have affected how parents responded to certain questions. The nature of this study did not provide total anonymity to participants and this may have limitations on the study.

Another possible limitation of this study is that the private school in this study has a relatively short history of operation, approximately five years. In addition, the religious affiliation of the school may also impact the results of the study, as it can not be ruled out that parent views may be related to their religious perspectives concerning their children.

In addition to these limitations, parents in the study have limited experience with inclusive educational programs and children with disabilities. Only seven of the 49 respondents in the study have previously had a child with a disability in their child’s class at a school previously attended.

Directions for Future Research

This study clearly indicates parental attitudes concerning inclusion of children with disabilities be addressed prior to implementation of an inclusion program in a private school setting. However, the literature referenced in this study consists solely of parental attitudes concerning inclusive educational programs in the public school setting. Therefore, more research needs to be done in effort to fully examine the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities regarding inclusion of children with disabilities in a private school setting. In addition, research examining the perceptions of parents of children with disabilities placed in a private school setting would also provide a broader perspective on this subject. Future research should expand this study’s examination of parental attitudes of children without disabilities, toward inclusion of children with disabilities in a private school setting. Furthermore, the use of school vouchers may
greatly influence the need to address this topic, as federal law mandates children with
disabilities be included to the fullest extent possible amongst their peers without
disabilities.

Future research examining the attitudes of parents of children with and without
disabilities would benefit both public and private schools in creating and implementing
inclusive educational programs. More specifically, research conducted on this topic
could assist private school administrators in addressing parent concerns prior to deciding
to accept or deny children with disabilities, and prior to implementing inclusion
programs.

Practical Implications

This study could be the foundation for many more studies examining the attitudes of
parents of children without disabilities, towards inclusion of children with disabilities in a
private school setting. The results of this study indicate that a majority of parents of
children without disabilities in this private, religious day school have positive perceptions
of inclusion practices. The participants conveyed an understanding that children with
disabilities are a part of the real world, and his or her child would benefit socially and
academically from inclusion. Participants seemed to be accepting of inclusive
educational programs, but raised concerns regarding the ability of the teacher to deal with
children with behavioral and severe disabilities. Specifically, participants believe it
would be necessary for teachers to receive training prior to implementing inclusion
programs. In addition, another practical implication that this study indicated is the need
for additional staff in the classroom as expressed by the participants.
Administrators should also address the attitudes held by parents regarding inclusion of children with disabilities. Research studies on inclusion in the public school setting suggest that the involvement of parents of children with and without disabilities is a significant factor contributing to the effectiveness of the inclusion process (Duhaney & Salend, 2000). Presently, the school in this study does not accept children with disabilities. Based on the results of this study, if this school were to implement inclusion, the school administration would need to address accepting children with severe and behavioral disabilities, and the ability of its staff to effectively implement inclusion programs.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that overall, parents of children without disabilities were supportive of inclusion. Parents did however reveal concerns related to the inclusion of children with behavioral or severe disabilities. Although two-thirds of the parents reported the inclusion of a child with a disability in their child's class or school would not impact their decision to place their child in that private school. One-third of parents did report that inclusion would impact their placement decision. Moreover, parents wanted to be informed if inclusion was to take place. Findings of this study, in addition to future findings related to this subject may assist private school administrators in successfully implementing inclusion practices while addressing the concerns of parents beforehand. Addressing parent concerns and attitudes toward inclusion of children with disabilities prior to implementing inclusion may contribute to the likelihood of a more successful and effective experience for all.
APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM, SURVEY, &
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
INFORMED CONSENT

I am April Prado, a Master’s student in the Special Education department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am the researcher on this project. You are invited to participate in a research study. The study consists of a 20-item survey that will examine the feelings of parents toward inclusion of students with special needs into the general education setting of a private school.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a 20-item survey on inclusion of students with a documented disability into the general education setting of a private school. Participants in this study will be asked to complete a 20-item survey, taking approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey questions will examine the educational and social effects of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education environment. The survey will be distributed using the parent mailboxes at the participating school. The completed survey will be returned in the two-week time frame, using the addressed, postage paid envelope provided to all participants. A reminder notice will be placed in the parent mailboxes at the participating school prior to the requested due date.

The benefit of your participation, to yourself, to educators, and parents of children with disabilities, will serve to examine attitudes and feeling towards inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting of a private school. This study focuses on the educational and social effects of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education setting of a private school. The examination of parent attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the private school setting enables professionals in education to successfully meet the educational needs of all involved. Please note that this research project in no way reflects any changes the school is planning to implement. It is for research purposes only.

Risks or discomforts as a result of participating are minimal. You may be uncomfortable answering some of the questions on the survey.

You will not receive any compensation for your participation. The only cost to you is approximately 15 minutes of your time to complete the survey.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact myself at 395-3568, or my advisor, Dr. Nathanson at 895-1101 in the UNLV Department of Special Education. For questions involving the rights of research subjects, please contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895-2794.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about the information being provided to you about this study.
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be kept in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Participant Name (Please Print) ___________________________
Survey of Parental Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in a Private School Setting

Demographics:

Gender: Male ___ Female ___  Age: 20-25  26-30  31-35  36-40  41-45  over 50
Occupation: ______________________ Spouse's Occupation: ______________________
Ethnicity: ______________________ Highest Degree Obtained: ______________________
Children's Grade: __________ Age of child at JCDS: ______________________

This survey was developed to examine parental attitudes towards inclusion of students with a disability in a private school setting. Inclusion is defined as educating a student with a disability in the general education classroom. The disability could be a mild disability such as a learning or behavioral disorder, or a severe disability such as mental retardation or autism. The results of this study could help many schools in the future to successfully address parental attitudes and concerns when implementing inclusion at their children's school. It does not mean that your school will be implementing inclusion.

Have any of your children been identified with a disability? YES  NO
Please specify: ______________________

Have you ever had a child with a disability in your child's classroom? YES  NO
If so, what age was the child? ______________________
What was the child's disability? ______________________

Instructions: Please rate your response to the following statements.

1. A child with a disability can benefit academically from being integrated into a general education classroom.
   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

2. A child with a disability can benefit socially from being integrated into a general education classroom.
   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

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3. My child’s education would be compromised by having a child with a disability in his/her class.

   completely         somewhat         unsure         somewhat         completely
   agree              agree              disagree       disagree

4. My child’s education would be compromised by having a child with a physical disability in his/her class.

   completely         somewhat         unsure         somewhat         completely
   agree              agree              disagree       disagree

5. My child’s education would be compromised by having a child with a learning disability in his/her class.

   completely         somewhat         unsure         somewhat         completely
   agree              agree              disagree       disagree

6. My child’s education would be compromised by having a child with a behavior disability in his/her class.

   completely         somewhat         unsure         somewhat         completely
   agree              agree              disagree       disagree

7. My child’s education would be compromised by having a child with a sensory impairment (i.e. hearing or visually impaired) in his/her class.

   completely         somewhat         unsure         somewhat         completely
   agree              agree              disagree       disagree

8. My child’s education would be compromised by having a child with mild or moderate mental retardation in his/her class.

   completely         somewhat         unsure         somewhat         completely
   agree              agree              disagree       disagree
9. My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a severe disability (i.e. severe mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or autism) in his/her class.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

10. My child's overall well being would be compromised by having a child with disabilities in his/her class.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

11. My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a health impairment (i.e. diabetes, asthma, or other) in his/her class.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

12. My child can benefit academically from having a child with disabilities in his/her class.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

13. My child can benefit socially from having a child with disabilities in his/her class.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

14. I would invite a child with disabilities to my child's birthday party.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree

15. I would encourage my child to go to a child with disabilities birthday party.

   completely agree  somewhat agree  unsure  somewhat disagree  completely disagree
16. I would hesitate to have my child become friends with a child with disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>completely agree</th>
<th>somewhat agree</th>
<th>unsure</th>
<th>somewhat disagree</th>
<th>completely disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17. Having a child with disabilities in my child's class would impact my decision to have my child placed in that class or school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>completely agree</th>
<th>somewhat agree</th>
<th>unsure</th>
<th>somewhat disagree</th>
<th>completely disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

18. If a child with disabilities were to enroll in my child's class, I would want to be notified:

- prior to enrolling my child
- prior to my child's first day of school
- at any time during the semester
- notification would not be necessary

19. It is important for me to be educated about my child's classmate's disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>completely agree</th>
<th>somewhat agree</th>
<th>unsure</th>
<th>somewhat disagree</th>
<th>completely disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

20. It is important for my child to be educated about his/her classmate's disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>completely agree</th>
<th>somewhat agree</th>
<th>unsure</th>
<th>somewhat disagree</th>
<th>completely disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Comments: ________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

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Table 1

Percent of Ratings for the Academic Effects of Inclusion for Children With Disabilities as Perceived by Parents of Children Without Disabilities in a Private School Setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child with a disability can benefit</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academia lly from inclusion</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Percent of Ratings for the Academic Effects of Inclusion for Children Without Disabilities as Perceived by Their Parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a disability would compromise education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a physical disability would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a learning disability would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a behavior disability would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a sensory impairment would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with mild or moderate mental retardation would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Option</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a severe disability would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a disability would compromise the educational care of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including a child with a health impairment would compromise the education of a child without a disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child without a disability can benefit academically from having a child with a disability in the classroom</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child with a disability can benefit socially from inclusion</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would invite a child with a disability to my child’s birthday party.</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would hesitate to have my child become friends with a child with</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disabilities</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Percent of Ratings for the Social Effects of Inclusion for Children Without Disabilities in a Private School Setting as Perceived by Their Parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child can benefit socially from having a child with a disability in</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the classroom</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would encourage my child to go to a child with disabilities birthday</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>party</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Percent of Ratings for the Effects of Inclusion on a Parent’s Decision Whether or Not to Educate Their Child Without Disabilities in a Private School Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child with a disability in my child’s class would impact my decision to have my child placed in that school or class</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent notification if a child with a disability were to enroll in my child’s class</td>
<td>Prior to Enrolling My Child</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior to My Child’s First Day</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At Any Time During the Semester</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notification Not Necessary</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of parent education about the disability of their child’s classmate</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of child education about classmate’s disability</td>
<td>Completely Agree</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completely Disagree</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


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April A. Prado

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Thesis Title: Parental Attitudes Towards Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in a Private School Setting

Thesis Examination Committee:
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Committee Member, Dr. Susan Miller, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Joe Crank, Ph. D.
Outside Department Representative, Dr. Paul Jones Ph.D.