

EXPLORING GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES IN GENERAL EDUCATION

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Submitted to the College of Graduate and Professional Studies

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education


Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA

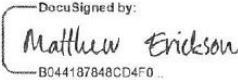
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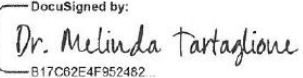
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ABSTRACT

This research proposal aims to explore the perceptions of general education teachers towards children with disabilities who are integrated into general education classrooms. This qualitative study seeks to gain insights into how these teachers perceive the abilities and challenges of these children and how they believe they can best support them in their learning. The research will survey responses with a sample of general education teachers to collect data on their experiences and perspectives. The findings of this study could contribute to a better understanding of the attitudes and beliefs that inform teachers' practice towards children with disabilities in general education and inform the development of strategies to enhance inclusive education for all students.

Keywords: inclusion, perceptions, special education, general education

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my brother, who has been my inspiration throughout my academic journey. Despite facing his own challenges and obstacles with learning and the world around us, my brother has always been there for me. His strength, resilience and compassion have taught me valuable lessons and have shaped me into the person I am today. I am grateful for his love and support, and I dedicate this work to him with all my heart.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my husband, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been instrumentation in the completion of this work. Throughout my academic journey, you have been a constant source of inspiration and motivation, always cheering me on and reminding me of my strengths. Thank you for being my partner, confidant, and best friend, I love you.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my son Alexander, whose presence in my life has brought me immense joy and purpose. As I have pursued my academic goals, he has been a constant reminder of the importance of hard work, perseverance, and dedication. I hope that this work will inspire him to pursue his own passions and to never give up on his dreams. I am honored to me your mom, and I love you more than words can express.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my family, who have supported and encouraged me throughout my academic journey. Their encouragement has sustained me through the ups and downs of school, and I am grateful for their sacrifices and belief in me.

Finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to all the participants who generously gave their time and shared their experiences for this study. Without their contributions, this research would not have been possible.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Christopher Tarr, for his invaluable guidance and support throughout the entire research process. His knowledge and expertise were instrumental in helping me to refine my research questions, design my study, and analyze my data. Dr. Tarr, thank you for constantly pushing me, and checking in on me and answering all my questions. You kept me on track, and I am forever grateful for you.

I want to thank all my students have had the privilege of teaching throughout my graduate studies. Your passion for learning and your dedication to your academic pursuits have been a constant source of inspiration to me, and I feel honored to have had the opportunity to work with such a talented and motivated group of students.

To my “Rockstar’s”, who have been on this journey with me. I could not have done this without you ladies. I am thankful for all of you, and each of you has had a profound impact on me, and I will always cherish the memories

Finally, I want to thank all the teachers that have influenced me during my life. From my earliest years in school to my most recent studies, I have been inspired by the dedication and passion of my teachers. Your enthusiasm for learning and your commitment to helping students succeed has been a constant source of motivation and inspiration for me. I have been fortunate to learn from some of the most knowledgeable and caring educators, who have taught me valuable lessons that have stayed with me throughout my life

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The inclusion of children with disabilities began in 1975, after the public law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) passed. This law required that all public schools accepting federal funds must provide equal access to education for children with physical and/or mental disabilities (United States Congress, 1975). With the passing of this law, the Federal government also mandates that children be taught in their least restrictive environment whenever possible. It was in the late 1980s that inclusive education appeared in literature and was framed as an alternative to special education. It expanded the responsibilities of schools and the school system to increase access, participation, and opportunities to learn for students with disabilities (Yu & Kozleski, 2016). Even though the inclusion of children with disabilities became public policy, the guidelines for inclusion vary across schools and districts in the United States. The concept and framework of inclusive practices depend on the teacher, as teachers are the key to inclusive education. Since inclusion is a social construct, teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs impact what they do at the classroom level, ultimately shaping the learning students with and without disabilities experience (Carrington, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Federal law mandates that students with disabilities receive learning experiences in the general education classroom and their least restrictive environment (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Inclusion is an experience, not a placement; therefore, students with disabilities should be held to the same expectations and standards as students without disabilities. Each student should have access to the general education curriculum, assessments, and standards, with students with disabilities needing more exposure to grade-level content and

learning opportunities. The inclusion of students with disabilities comes with challenges, as one of the most significant concerns is the large number of students with disabilities and specialized learning needs. This number seems to grow each year, increasing the demand for the number of inclusive classrooms, practices, and special education teachers. With the growing number of classrooms and the growing teacher shortage across the United States, now more than ever, general education teachers need to be prepared for students with disabilities who will be in their classrooms (Lombardi & Hunka, 2001).

Even with growing needs for inclusive classrooms and practices, just placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom does not mean they become part of the classroom or will receive the education they need to succeed. Teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs still impact inclusive practices. Research shows that educators often express concern about including and accommodating activities for children with disabilities in high-quality programs (Frankel et al., 2019). When teachers have negative attitudes, lack of training experiences, and knowledge about the inclusion of students with disabilities, this can increase exclusionary practices alongside inclusive practices. The inclusion of students with disabilities is only successful when the students are included in the classroom, have access to the general education curriculum, and learn meaningful skills to be successful. The concept of inclusion can be challenging and overwhelming to educators who do not have experience working with students with disabilities. Educators must familiarize themselves with different types of disabilities, special education laws, and best practices to support the learners in their classrooms (The Importance of Inclusion Classrooms, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

Federal, state, and district guidelines enact guidelines on what inclusion looks like; however, teachers are the ones who make the most significant impact on student achievement. The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions and experiences teachers have in the general education classroom about the inclusion of special education students and how they provide supports and services to allow special education students to have access to the general education curriculum and be taught in a regular education to the maximum extent possible as determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. Data themes collected from this research are intended to fill a deficiency in current literature about what is and the perceptions about what might be happening in inclusion classrooms. Furthermore, this study sought to better understand how teacher experiences with training and instruction impact teacher experiences and access to general education by special education students.

Significance of the Study

The intent of this study is to contribute to the overall knowledge base about teacher experiences with professional development, curriculum, and instruction for the inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom. Specifically, this study focuses on the perceptions and experiences had by general education teachers as they relate to the concept of inclusion. Research shows that mere placement or proximity to typical peers and the general education curriculum may be beneficial, but it is insufficient in achieving an appropriate education for students with disabilities. Therefore, for inclusive placements to be successful, educators must have knowledge of and access to research-based strategies to assist them (Harrower & Dunlap, 2001). According to the Federal Government, children with disabilities must be fully taught in their least restrictive environment as much as possible (). Children with

disabilities who are in general education, must have access to the general education curriculum and must be held to the same standards as their peers.

Conceptual Framework

This dissertation is based on a three-part conceptual framework that includes the importance of teachers providing access to special education students, the federal law for children with disabilities, and research findings about teachers' perceptions of providing access to the general education curriculum. The inclusion of students with disabilities heavily relies on the actions of general education teachers to provide access and learning for all students to ensure their success. It is essential to align the actions teachers take in the classroom, what the federal special education law mandates, and what is supported by the district and schools.

1. The concept and framework of inclusive practices depend on the teacher, as teachers are the key to inclusive education. Since inclusion is a social construct, teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs impact what they do at the classroom level, ultimately shaping the learning students with and without disabilities experience (Carrington, 1999). Educating children with disabilities in general education settings requires careful planning and preparation to ensure full access to the general education curriculum.
2. *Federal Law*: Federal law mandates that students with disabilities receive learning experiences in the general education classroom and their least restrictive environment. The preferred placement is in the general education classroom and have adequate exposure to the general education curriculum. The inclusion of children with disabilities began in 1975, after the public law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) passed. This law required that all public schools accepting federal funds must provide equal access to education for children with physical and/or mental disabilities

(United States Congress, 1975). In 1990, 1997, and 2004, reauthorizations of this Act took place, and the law has now become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA mandates that individuals with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education tailored to their individual needs. There are no specific laws using the term “inclusion:”; however, it is implied through wording and least restrictive environment.

3. *Access to General Education Curriculum:* Each student should have access to the general education curriculum, assessments, and standards, with students with disabilities needing more exposure to grade-level content and learning opportunities. Students receiving instruction in general education classrooms are more likely to have access to general education standards as compared to their counterparts in self-contained classrooms. Students with disabilities in the general education classroom are more likely to progress in general education. Research shows academic gains such as improved performance in standardized tests, mastery of goals, grades, and on-task behavior compared to similar students in segregated classrooms (Whitbread, n.d.).

Summary of Methodology

The purpose of conducting this qualitative study was to explore the individualized perceptual philosophies of general education teachers who manage inclusion classrooms and the personal and professional implications that arise as a result. Therefore, it was necessary to utilize a qualitative methodology to be able to discover patterns relevant to the investigation. Open-ended and multiple-choice survey questions were used to collect data on teachers' experiences and perceptions. The themes that resulted from the analysis of the data obtained from the surveys are presented in Chapter four.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the experiences the research participants chose to share with the researchers and participant responses were based on their own unique experiences and personal bias. The number of research participants who responded to the survey and consented to participate limited the number of participants. Therefore, limited collection of information was gathered but remains within a number of participants for a purposeful sample size in qualitative research. The researcher utilized a qualitative survey research approach. The format of the survey may have resulted in missed information, as the researcher made decisions to not ask additional questions to follow-up or clarify participants answers, as well as eliminated body language and tone of voice due to the nature of online surveys. At the time of the research, the researcher served as a Special Education Teacher, at the elementary school within the district in which the research was collected.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to the teachers who are full-time educators in grades kindergarten through fifth grade at one elementary school settings. The teachers included in the research were employed at the same school, within the same district in Wilmington, Delaware, for the 2022-2023 school year. Additionally, the study was delimited to full-time teachers who were general education teachers, and some knowledge or experience working with special education students in an inclusive setting. A final delimitation of the study relates to the sample, which was obtained through a non-probability sample method. A sample size of ten teachers was decided upon for the research to be able to give necessary time to each participant to fill out the survey thoroughly. The intention of the smaller sample size was to understand each participant's experiences more deeply than would be possible with a larger sample size.

Definition of Terms

1. *Perceptions*: The thoughts or mental images teachers have about their students—are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences. These experiences might involve their family history or tradition, education, work, culture, or community (IRIS | Page 2: Influence of Teacher Perceptions, n.d.).
2. *Barriers*: The most mentioned barrier mentioned has been negative attitudes and the view that inclusion is an undesirable means of service delivery to support students in special education (Sposaro & Lensink, 1998).
3. *Experience*: The fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation (“Experience,” n.d.).
4. *Individualized Education Program (IEP)*: A prominent federal law that outlines precise guidelines enforcing evidence-based instructional practices for the purpose of educating all students within the general education setting (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).
5. *Inclusion*: Inclusion—the preferred term—involves supporting students with disabilities through individual learning goals, accommodations, and modifications so that they are able to access the general education curriculum (in the general education classroom) and be held to the same high expectations as their peers (IRIS | Page 1: What Is Inclusion?, n.d.).
6. *Special Education*: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education (IDEA, 2004).

7. *Student with a disability*: A student with a disability includes the following verified disabilities: intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as “emotional disturbance”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (IDEA, 2004).
8. *Supports*: Are any services, strategies or situations that may benefit a child in school (Supports for Special Education Students, 2019).
9. *Accommodation*: A change that helps a student overcome or work around the disability (Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students, 2020)
10. *Modification*: A change in what is being taught to or expected from the student (Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students, 2020)
11. *Professional Development*: The set of tools, resources, and training sessions for educators to improve their teaching quality and effectiveness. Professional development allows educators to further their knowledge in their subject area and allows for mentorship and the opportunity to learn new teaching techniques (Top Hat, 2020).
12. *Curriculum*: A standards-based sequence of planned experiences where students practice and achieve proficiency in content and applied learning skills. Curriculum is the central guide for all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to rigorous academic experiences. The structure, organization, and considerations in a curriculum are created to enhance student learning and facilitate instruction. Curriculum must include the necessary goals, methods, materials, and

assessments to effectively support instruction and learning (Curriculum Definition | Rhode Island Department of Education, n.d.).

13. *Instruction*: Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children (IDEA, 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the dissertation. Additionally, this chapter clarified the purpose of the study, stated the research questions, included definitions of terms, presented a conceptual framework, stated the research's limitations, explained the research's delimitations, and included a statement about the significance of the study. Chapter two reviews the literature about inclusion and inclusive education. The review focuses on the evidence-based information relevant to teachers' perceptions of inclusive practices in general education and the scope of inclusive practices educational professionals use for students with disabilities. Chapter three defines the method used for this qualitative research, describes participant information, details the development of the instrumentation utilized for the research, describes the instrument used to collect data, and details the data collection methods and analysis. Chapter four discusses the findings of this qualitative study. Chapter five provides conclusions and discussions about the implications of the study's findings. Finally, recommendations are made for the direction of future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

The forthcoming review of literature is intended to provide a comprehensive summary of evidence-based information relevant to teachers' perceptions of inclusive practices in general education. Inclusion, as universally defined, refers to the approach to education based on the premise that all students should be accepted and valued for their unique abilities and included as integral members of the school (IRIS, 2022). Over the years, considerable changes pertaining to the inclusion of students with disabilities prompted special education and general education teachers to review and refine inclusive practices while upholding the profession's integrity while simultaneously fostering critical special education mandates. These include, but are not limited to, evaluations, eligibility requirements, individualized education programs, and educational placements. According to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), the law states that children with disabilities throughout the nation are given a free appropriate public education and ensures special education and related services to those children (2022). Concerning the law justifies the importance of examining inclusive education pertaining to professional employees, specifically public-school teachers.

Information relevant to federal mandates emphasizes a distinct shift in the scope of inclusive practices educational professionals use for students with disabilities. Therefore, a historical review of content-specific documentation is necessary to understand how teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and misconceptions affect inclusive practices of students with disabilities and the perceived implications that arise as a result. Subsequent sections of this literature review provide readers with a clear understanding of the research topic and approach via descriptions of various constructs related to inclusive education. This review reflects ways schools and teachers

can improve and support inclusive practices for children with disabilities and assess the quality of inclusive practices.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) was introduced in 1997, proceeding with the reauthorization of P.L. 94-142. IDEA or Public Law 105-17 was designed to focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of children with disabilities by establishing free and appropriate education that emphasizes special education and related services while also narrowing the achievement gap and strengthening academic standards for students with disabilities (Johnson, 2005). Congress states that a disability is a natural part of the human experience and does not diminish the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Therefore, improving educational results for children with disabilities is essential to ensure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

According to Lauritzen and Friedman (1993), with the passing of IDEA and Public Law 105-17, data consistently shows a shortage of special and general education teachers. The shortage impacts instructional flexibility, as special educators are less mobile than general education teachers and may only be able to serve a small number of students at a time. When there are not enough qualified special education teachers to fill vacancies, it reduces the number of inclusive classrooms, as most teachers across the nation are not dual-certified. Even with federal funding, there is still a shortage of finding and providing resources for students with disabilities and serving them in their least restrictive environment. Even with guidelines from the law, the use of inclusive practices continues to expand between special and general education teachers.

Inclusive Education

The definitions and implementations of inclusive education vary immensely. According to Odom et al. (2011), the foundation of inclusion policy and practice was established in 1986 with the passage of P.L. 99-457. This amendment established early intervention for disabled children. The basis of inclusive education has been frequently defined as children with and without disabilities physically being placed in the same classroom. This definition does not focus on the specific measures used to teach the inclusion of children with disabilities. Therefore, high-quality inclusive education is a matter of instructional practice and institutional processes. A high-quality classroom does not always mean high-quality inclusive practices for students with disabilities. The conceptual definition of inclusive education should be a matter of instructional practice and meaningful social integration, not physical placement (Love & Horn, 2019).

The search for a uniform definition of inclusion is still underway. However, there is still a need to advance inclusive education and improve educational opportunities. According to Freytag (2008), most legislative initiatives tend to reflect a narrow view of excellence, where they suggest that the mastery of knowledge is of greater importance than the development of the whole person. Most initiatives and instructional practices do not recognize that all children, disability or not, have a unique set of needs that a one-size-fits-all education model cannot address. Inclusive practices allow participation and progress in the general education curriculum for students with disabilities.

Since there is no clear definition of inclusion and current initiatives reflect a narrow view of excellence, this, in return, causes educators to have a narrow inclusion focus. In research from Artiles and Kozleski (2007), the complexities of geography, cultural, historical practices, and interpretations of policy that maintain local customs and practices populate special education inclusion narratives. As equity dilemmas arise, educators can struggle with these issues and

implementing inclusive educational programs and practices. Educators are tasked and challenged to provide equitable educational systems for students with disabilities. When faced with these challenges, there is an increased idea of inclusive education; however, some educators remain confused about what this means. Ainscow says that to approach serving children with disabilities appropriately, educators must be knowledgeable and embrace the inclusive philosophy (2005).

Teacher's Attitudes and Perceptions of Students with Disabilities

When it comes to a functional classroom, teachers' attitudes, and perceptions about the children they teach, especially children with disabilities, can be an essential predictor of the overall success of their education and the general classroom community. In research by Cassady (2011), the severity of the disability can affect teachers' attitudes and willingness to accommodate certain students and diminish their confidence that they will effectively manage their classroom. Educators unfamiliar with teaching and including students with disabilities may find it challenging to deal with them (Rodríguez et al., 2012). Often, general education teachers have different views and perceptions on instructing this group of students compared to special education teachers.

Both general education teachers and special education teachers play an essential role in educating children with disabilities in an inclusive general education setting. When general education teachers have negative perceptions and attitudes towards children with disabilities, it can create barriers to teaching and learning. Often, inclusive teachers have expressed stronger attitudes of both concern and rejection toward their students with disabilities than toward their non-disabled peers and their teacher counterparts who did not have inclusive classrooms (Nah & Ng, 2022). Teachers are not always aware that they may be expressing negative and hostile attitudes towards their students. Even when teachers express positive attitudes towards their

students with disabilities, their perceptions and beliefs can change depending on the level of needs associated with the disability. Over time, these strong perceptions and attitudes can lead to the rejection of the student, creating a barrier to teaching and learning.

When general education teachers are not receptive to inclusive practices, it can make mainstreaming ineffective. Research from Cook et al. (2000) indicated that inclusion has not always had consistent positive outcomes because teachers' attitudes towards the concept of inclusion directly predicted the quality of inclusive education. Many inclusive placements have not had improved academic and social outcomes due to teachers' perceptions and desired outcomes for student success. Even if the teacher possesses a positive attitude towards inclusion, it does not always mean there will be demonstrated success of inclusive practices and improved teacher efficacy. A recurring theme in research shows that the concept of inclusion depends on the teacher's beliefs and how these beliefs turn into attitudes and change the educational practice of teaching students with disabilities.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

When inclusion is not successful, it can be because teachers lack the confidence, training, and professional development to implement the best educational practices for students with disabilities. One of the most challenging aspects of inclusion is when teachers have different levels of responsibility regarding the needs in their classrooms. Teacher training and professional development do not always highlight students with complex needs since students with mild and moderate conditions of a disability are often included in inclusive classrooms. However, when a complex student lands in an inclusive classroom, that can increase the level of responsibility on the teacher and impact the degree of preparedness.

Changing teaching practices and degree of preparedness effectively to teach students with a range of disabilities requires a high degree of initiative and responsibility. Teachers need to be able to spend a great deal of time and energy pursuing continuous professional development and adaptation of practice (Weiner, 2003). Professional development and training can occur inside and outside the school setting. They may look like continued graduate courses or sessions the district provides that target specific skills and strategies. School teams should determine how these specific skills and strategies work best with their special education population. Weiner also states that schools and districts should challenge each teacher to develop, apply and reassess beliefs and knowledge gained in professional development to integrate best practices in their classrooms (2003). The key to any successful classroom is the successful training of effective teachers. Without continuous learning, teachers may not be adequately trained to deliver the specialized instruction that students with disabilities require.

Currently, no amount of professional development or training can be effective if the teacher does not believe in the basis of inclusion. However, continuous learning can increase teacher confidence and observed practices in the classroom. Research from Stanovich and Jordan shows that teachers who can adapt their instruction help reduce barriers and allow students with special needs to participate and have multiple opportunities to learn in various ways (2002). Teachers who believe they are responsible for instructing students with special education needs tend to have a more effective inclusive classroom. They are more than likely to learn more about inclusive practices and seek out information about their students compared to their teacher counterparts who do not. During training and professional development sessions, there should be an emphasis on challenging teacher mindsets and beliefs and effective teaching practices. There

should also be several opportunities for discussion and reflection, as these could be the foundation for the development of an effective teacher.

Pre-service teacher programs also impact overall teacher training and preparedness. Suppose teachers are already entering the field with negative perceptions about the inclusion of children with disabilities. In that case, it ultimately could hinder future generations of learning. When negative perceptions and concerns about inclusion are not addressed in pre-service programs, educators cannot build confidence in their ability to teach these groups of students. They can become apprehensive about teaching in inclusive classrooms (Sharma & Sokal, 2013). There has been a troubling history of special education and how inclusion can remain in deficit when there are negative perceptions and beliefs about the instruction of students with disabilities. With the prevalence of inclusive classrooms, teacher educators are reconceptualizing pre-service education courses to highlight the inclusion of disability studies in education. Successful classrooms thrive on improving professional practice in pre-service programs, which help develop teacher educator identity, competence, and practice (Gilham & Tompkins, 2016). Overall, teacher confidence in inclusive classrooms requires new teachers to reflect, learn and understand the inclusion of students with diverse needs.

Misconceptions about Inclusive Education

Since inclusive education lends its success to the beliefs of the teachers in these classrooms, misconceptions about inclusive education and children with disabilities can sway beliefs in teaching diverse groups of students. Research by Woodcock et al. shows that teachers with high and low efficacy had a similar conceptual understanding of inclusive education, but their teaching practices differed. Teachers must be informed about the misconceptions about what inclusive education is. There needs to be more support in how teachers can apply the

concepts of inclusive education to practice and improve their beliefs and capabilities to teach inclusively (2022). According to Inclusion International, there seem to be several myths and misconceptions about inclusive education. These include inclusion as an unrealistic idea, it makes unrealistic demands on teachers, and inclusion is a one-size-fits-all approach that will not work (2022). These myths and misconceptions can be detrimental to the success of an inclusive classroom if not addressed.

Research from Hodkinson shows successful inclusion may depend first on teachers' attitudes to its implementation and upon perceived competence to deliver its important educational initiative. Other studies have suggested that even when teachers support inclusive practices, they do so with reservations. To move away from the "one-size-fits-all approach.", curriculum and teacher training should be formulated upon three core inclusionary principles. These include setting suitable learning challenges, responding to students' diverse needs, and overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals with disabilities (2005). When a school or individual teacher clearly defines an inclusive framework, the notion of inclusion being unrealistic and creating more demands can diminish.

These myths and misconceptions surrounding special and inclusive education are usually highly emotive because they are based on charitable benevolence or protective anxiety and are often the product of institutional resistance to change (Graham & Bruin, 2020). When teachers resist change, these misconceptions deepen and can c. While most special education teachers usually obtain more knowledge and have fewer misconceptions about teaching students with disabilities, there is still a gap between special education and general education teachers and their overall view of inclusive education (Sanz-Cervera et al., 2017). This gap has widened over time, creating a divide between what is best practice for the inclusion of students with disabilities.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions and experiences teachers have in the general education classroom about the inclusion of special education students in the general education classrooms. With guidance from the state and district on what inclusion classrooms are supposed to look like, it is up to the teacher to implement strategies for teaching children with disabilities. This study sought to better understand how general education teachers support and provide access to the general education curriculum to students in special education. Furthermore, this study sought to better understand teacher experiences with training and various professional developments about the teaching and inclusion of special education students in general education. The research plan, including the methodology, setting, participants, data collection and analysis methods are also primary components of this chapter.

Participants

The target population of this research was general education teachers who work in an elementary school setting. The general education teachers who were surveyed for this study work with students with and without disabilities and teach children with diverse skills and learning needs. The teachers who participated in this study teach kindergarten through fifth grade. The sample included both male and female teachers with various years of teaching experience. The target population of this study included teachers from one elementary school, Claymont Elementary, in a single school district, Brandywine School District.

Participants were recruited through the researchers existing place of work. The researcher emailed the district's supervisor of accountability and assessment and the site's principal to request permission to contact general education teachers. With permission, participants were

contacted via email and a post on the Claymont Elementary Schoology page. The participants remained anonymous; therefore, all individuals presented with relevant knowledge about inclusion were recruited for this sample and invited to fill out the survey.

Setting

Claymont Elementary had a total student enrollment of K-5 students of 849 students in the 2021-2022 school year. According to Delaware.gov snapshot of Claymont Elementary, 24.62% of the students are low-income, and 13.43% are students with disabilities. Of the total student population of Claymont Elementary, 34.63% identify themselves as White and 65.37% identify themselves non-white and/or multiracial. Over 90% of the teachers are experienced educators who have five or more years of experience (2021). Claymont Elementary a suburban Title-I public school where all students are eligible for free/reduced meals in 2021-22. Claymont includes various classroom styles supporting special education students, including inclusion and self-contained.

Claymont Elementary employs full and part-time individuals and has a total of 120 staff, 40 general education teachers, 9 special education teachers and 5 specialized autism program teachers, 2 school psychologist and 2 guidance counselors. Claymont Elementary also has 4 speech therapists, 1 occupational therapist and 1 physical therapist. There is currently not a special education steering committee, however there are 2 special education coordinators and 1 special education team leader. The district employs a Director of Special Education, a Director of Education Services, a Director of Curriculum and Instruction and a Supervisor of Accountability and Assessment who are all housed at the districts central office and provide supports and services to all the elementary schools in the district, including Claymont.

Claymont Elementary utilizes the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), the evidence-based framework to address students' academic achievement, behavior, and social-emotional well-being. This framework is used by the whole-school and is data driven and a prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for each student. Delaware has a state-wide implementation of MTSS, where all schools must implement and sustain an integrated multi-tiered system of support that addresses the needs of the whole child in accordance with Delaware MTSS Regulation 508. Every school in the state has Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 Supports.

Claymont Elementary shares its goals to the public and employees on the district website through its Claymont Elementary School Success Plan (2021). The key goals are for all educators to implement instructional practices aligned with Common Core Standards to improve student learning and to implement effective targeted population programming to close the gap. There is also a focus for students to graduate and for parents to be engaged and collaborate on student outcomes. Claymont Elementary also focuses on having data-based decisions and providing time for adequate professional development days for teachers and para-educators.

Site Permission

Site permission will be sought from the Supervisor of Accountability and Assessment for the Brandywine School District and the building principal of Claymont Elementary. All district personnel will be contacted by email, the requested letter for site permission is attached as Appendix D. All correspondence giving approval, such as letters and emails, will be saved electronically.

Research Design

A qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of this research is to explain a phenomenon by replaying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation (Stake, 2010). As outlined by Tenny et al. a qualitative research approach is appropriate when the researchers want to explore and provide deeper insights into real-world problems and ask open-ended questions to understand the processes and patterns of human behavior (2022). The end goal is to develop a deep understanding and examine the experiences and perceptions of teachers working in inclusion classrooms from an individual perspective.

This qualitative study was conducted using a qualitative survey research approach. A qualitative survey research approach is a less structured methodology that is used to gain in-depth information about people's underlying reasoning and motivations (Qualitative Survey Types & Examples, n.d.). Online surveys can be used as a tool for qualitative research, and can be an "exciting, flexible method with numerous applications and advantages for researchers" (Braun et al., 2020). The use of survey research has become more prevalent in research due to their design and quick implementation. The data collected from online surveys can be quantified quickly and can be presented concisely (Lakshman, 2000).

Research Questions

This qualitative study gained an understanding of general education teachers' perceptions and experiences with the inclusion of special education students in the general education classroom. The researchers examined themes that emerged from research to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the teacher experiences with the inclusion of special education students?

RQ2: What do teachers report as their role in providing supports and strategies for special education students to gain access to learning in the general education classroom curriculum?

RQ3: What teacher training, coursework and professional developments have been provided to understand the inclusion of special education students in general education?

Data Collection

The researcher utilized multiple data sources to obtain relevant information on general education teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education within the public-school setting. This study primarily focused on using digital surveys that targeted individualized experiences within the field of teaching, professional development, and curriculum and instruction of students with disabilities. Additionally, multiple choice and open-ended responses emphasized the perceived personal challenges and successes of teaching children with disabilities in general education. These questions allowed the co-investigator to implore basic demographic information such as grade level and years taught while examining perceptual certainties regarding personal philosophies on inclusion. They also provide the respondents more options and opinions to diversify the data.

The sample for this research was obtained through a non-probability sample. A non-probability, or convenience sample, occur when either the probability that every unit or respondent included in the sample cannot be determined, or it is left up to each individual to choose to participate in the survey (Fricker, 2012). A non-probability sample was selected to represent a sample of the general education teachers in the elementary setting. A sample size of ten teachers was decided upon for the research to be able to give necessary time to each participant to fill out the survey thoroughly. Even though Claymont has a large population of teachers, the intention of the smaller sample size was to understand each participant's experiences more deeply than would be possible with a larger sample size.

Digital Surveys

The chart below provides a comprehensive view of the survey questions that were used to explore this study's research questions. They are adapted from Sinclair (2017).

Demographic Survey Questions

QUESTION	
1	What grade do you teach?
2	How many years have you been teaching?
3	What is the current number of identified special education students in your classroom?
4	What is the total number of students on your class roster?
5	What is your college degree (s) in?

Field of Teaching Survey Questions

QUESTION	
1	Describe what it looks like to work with the special education teacher and what it looks like when they come into the classroom
2	Describe the general culture of your school around the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Professional Development Survey Questions

QUESTION	
1	What prior special education experiences, classes and coursework have you had?
2	Have you been trained and are you aware of the accommodations you can provide based on the IEP in the classroom?
3	Regarding professional development, are there monthly topics about students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum?

Curriculum and Instruction Survey Questions

QUESTION	
1	What has been your experience with special education students having equal access to the general education curriculum?
2	Describe your most positive and negative experience with inclusion
3	What evidence-based instructional practices and curriculum adaptations do you use to support the special education students in your classroom?

Procedure Followed

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought from Slippery Rock University. Once approval was given, the co-investigator emailed individuals within her place of work and school district, using the Email to Potential Participants (see Appendix A). Any general education teacher at Claymont Elementary met the criteria and were selected to fill out the survey. An informed consent form was required for each participant prior to participating (see Appendix D). Participants were sent the link via email; therefore, the participants could respond to the questions on their own time.

The surveys were recorded electronically using the Qualtrics Surveys platform. No survey was conducted without confirming the written informed consent of the participant. Participants were exposed to open-ended and multiple-choice questions pertaining to demographic characteristics, training, instructions, barriers, supports and best practices. Throughout the course of this study, participants were respectfully referred to as P# (1,2,3 etc.) in order maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Additionally, the researcher will not ask, store, or keep any identifiable documentation, and any information will remain classified. Participants were provided the opportunity to withdraw from the study without penalty. Minimal risk for coercion was noted given the researchers currently level of employment at the school as a certified special education teacher; however, all necessary measures were taken to reduce the presence of coercive behaviors during asynchronous survey sessions.

Data Analysis

Data for this study was analyzed using an iterative coding process. Iterative analysis alternates between emic or emergent readings of qualitative data and an etic use of existing models, explanations, and theories, while coding refers to labeling and systematizing the data (Tracy, 2013). In the case of this study, specific data points from the survey responses were

organized and coded to identify themes and/or patterns in the responses. This method of analysis supported the interpretation of survey responses and increased the authenticity and validity of the research.

The steps for iterative analysis are as followed:

1. Familiarizing oneself with the data that was collected
2. Generating an initial set of codes for the data
3. Searching for themes within the codes
4. Reviewing the themes
5. Defining the themes
6. Producing the final report/write-up

To be fully immersed in the data, one of the first steps of iterative analysis is organizing the data and reading the data multiple times. Since the survey responses were open-ended as well as multiple-choice, there are limited chances for transcription errors, therefore the codes found were identified directly from the participants' own words. Due to the relatively low number of participants that participated in this study and the nature of the information being presented, the data will be coded manually by hand through marking-up hard copies of the data.

The data will go through two main cycles of coding. In primary cycle coding, the data will be grouped by descriptive first-level codes, an *in vivo* code, which answer the questions "what's going on here?". This will provide a summary of the data content. Throughout this coding process, there will be a constant comparative method to make modifications in the coding scheme and create new codes. The second cycle, known as secondary coding, goes beyond asking "what" to asking "why and how" the data are interesting and significant. In this cycle, the data is categorized by those first-level codes into larger hierarchical codes that serve as conceptual bins for emergent claims (Tracy, 2013).

For primary coding, each question of the survey will be analyzed, and the answers will be reviewed to determine if there are multiple responses with the same or similar responses.

Through this preliminary review, the different experiences of the general education teachers will be examined, and common themes will be determined. Following the review, the data will be re-examined to determine which specific factors lead to these overall experiences expressed by the general education teachers.

After re-examination, through several rounds of secondary coding, the data was coded to show specific keywords that are common across each question. Specific code words will be selected by the researcher and will determine why and how the experiences contribute to specific perceptions about students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Selecting themes as codes allows the researcher to determine which general factors are having the greatest impacts on general education teachers.

A loose analysis outline of the data will be created and will determine if more data will need to be collected to define a theoretical contribution. If the results are satisfactory, and emerge confirming evidence, they will be shared in a means that accurately represent the information received.

Conclusion

The purpose of conducting this qualitative study was to explore the individualized perceptual philosophies of general education teachers who manage inclusion classrooms and the personal and professional implications that arise as a result. Therefore, it was necessary to utilize a qualitative methodology to be able to discover patterns relevant to the investigation. Open-ended and multiple-choice survey questions were used to collect data on teachers' experiences and perceptions.

The sample for this research was obtained through a non-probability sample. The researcher created a recruiting email that was sent and posted to research participant candidates. Those who responded and consented, were able to fill out the survey for the research. The survey questions were transcribed and coded for analysis. The themes that resulted from the analysis of the data obtained from survey are presented in Chapter four. Chapter four presents an introduction of the data, demographic information of the research participants and present each theme with research findings from each research participant.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

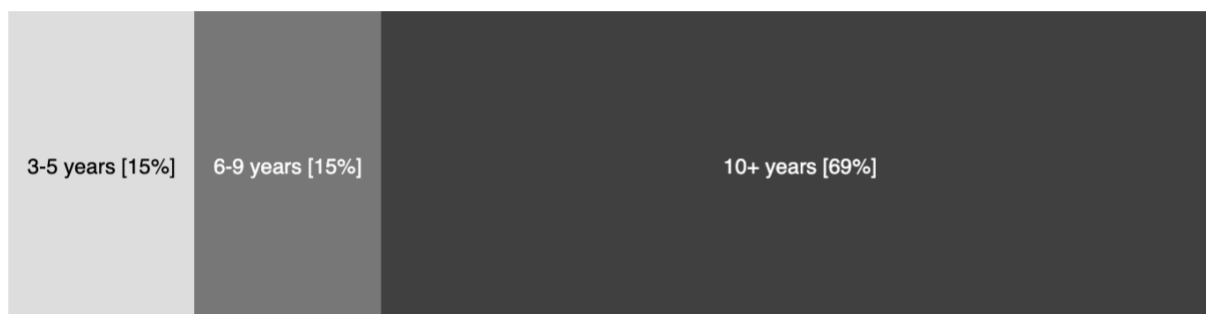
As mentioned, federal and state legislative actions have laws around special education and inclusion. As a result, general education teachers are seeing an increase in special education students and inclusion classrooms. Therefore, this qualitative study sought to better understand the misconceptions of inclusion by exploring the perspectives of current general education teachers. Using a qualitative survey approach allowed the co-investigator to gather data relevant to general education teachers' knowledge, viewpoints, and attitudes related to teaching students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. Proceeding with the descriptive statistics outline, common codes and themes that emerged from the survey will be addressed.

Descriptive Statistics

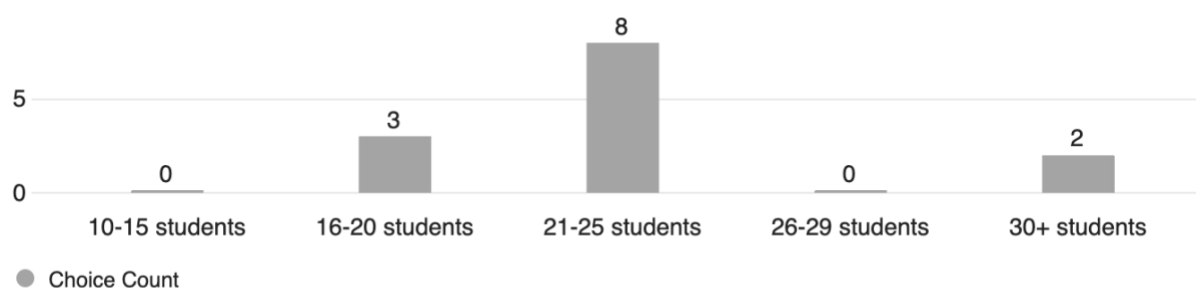
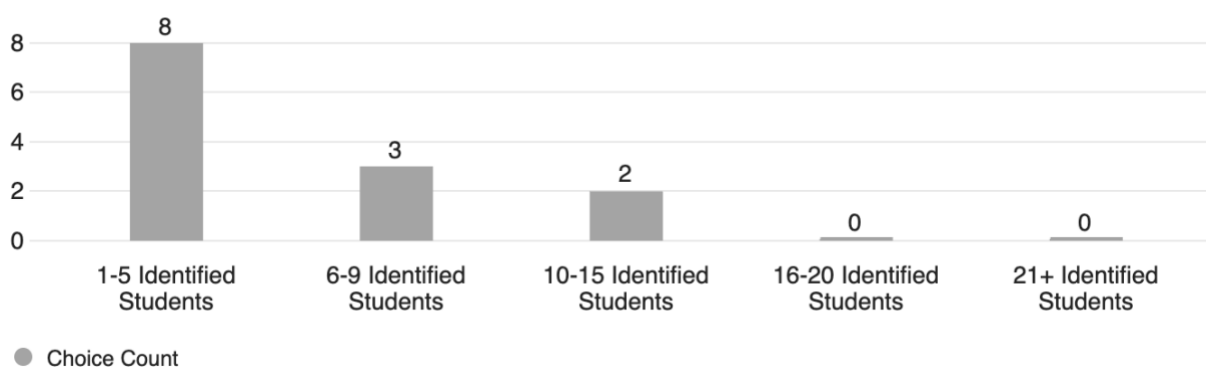
A total of 15 participants were invited to complete the survey questionnaire. A total of 2 participants did not complete the questionnaire and left their survey response null. These participants were removed from further analysis. The final sample consisted of 13 participants. The sample consisted of 2 kindergarten teachers (15.38%), 3 first grade teachers (23.08%), 2 second grade teachers (15.38%), 3 third grade teachers (15.38%), 3 fourth grade teachers (23.08%) and 1 fifth grade teacher (7.69%). Many of the participants indicated that they 10+ years (69%) of teaching experience. Percentages and numbers of the variables are presented in the following figures: Figure 1, Figure 2.

Figure 1: *Grade Level Responses*



Figure 2: Teaching Experience

In the classroom, most participants indicated they had 21-25 students on their class roster (61.54%). Of those students, most of the participants indicated they had 1-5 identified students (61.54%) that receive special education services. Numbers of the variables are presented in the following figures: Figure 3, Figure 4.

Figure 3: Student Count**Figure 4: Identified Students**

In training/professional development, most participants majored in Elementary Education (55%) and majority of the participants had a combination of prior special education experiences, classes, and course work, and indicated they were familiar with Managing ADHD, Autism, Learning Disabilities in School (23.08%) and only small percentage indicated that that have had Other/None (2.56%) of prior special education experiences.

Collectively, majority of the participants indicated that yes (53.85%), they were trained and are aware of the accommodations and modifications that can be provided based on the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan). Most participants indicated that there were Never (38.46%) monthly topics about students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum. Percentages and numbers of the variables are presented in the following figures: Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8.

Figure 5: Teacher Majors & Certificates

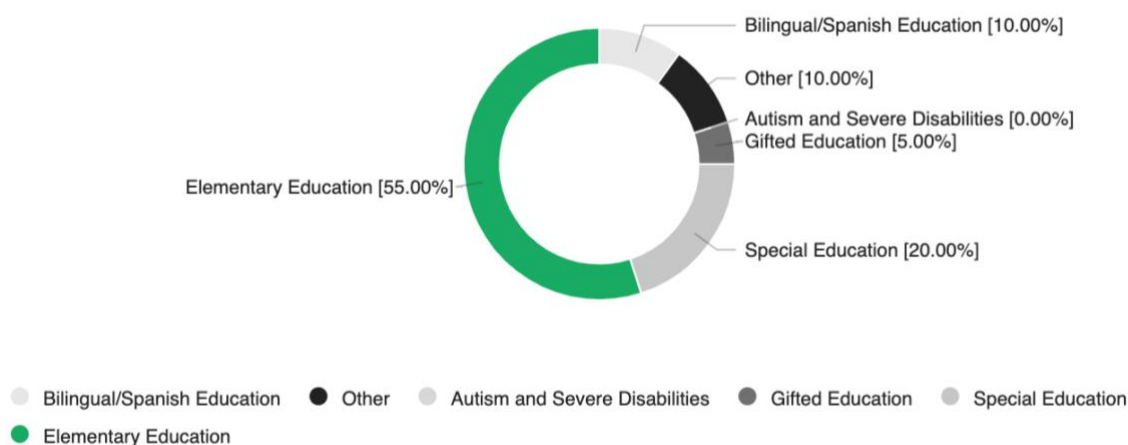


Figure 6: Prior Special Education Training

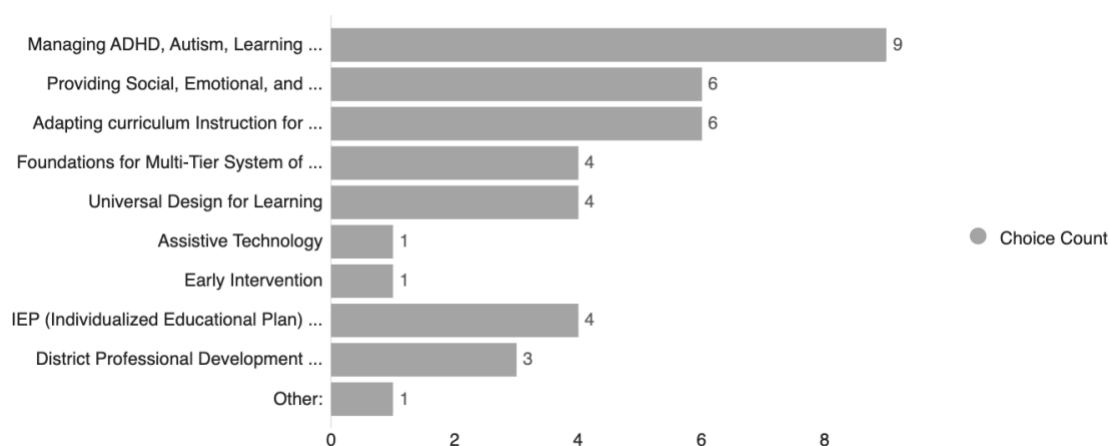
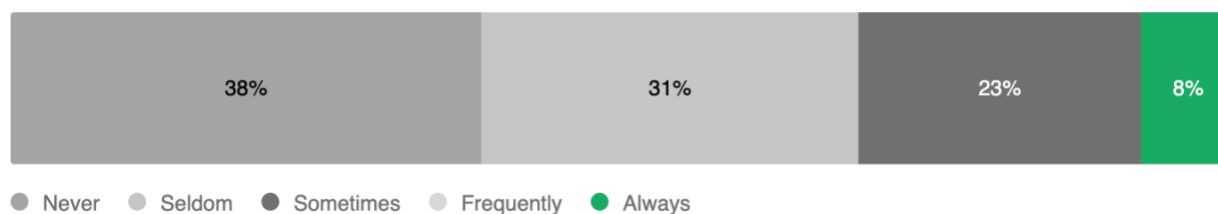


Figure 7: Training on Accommodations/Modifications

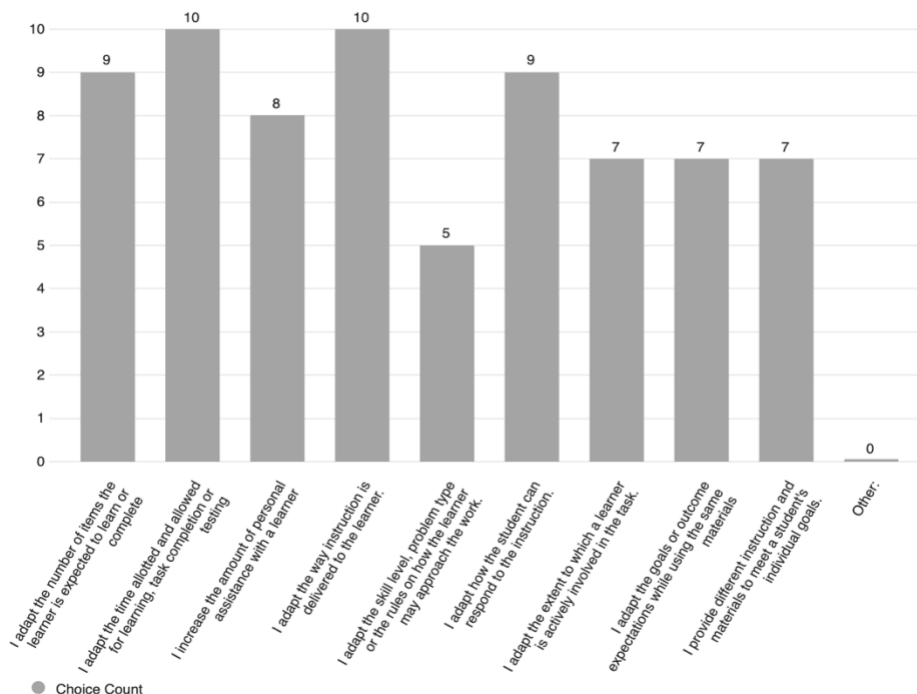


Figure 8: Monthly Topics



In curriculum and instruction, majority of the participants selected more than one of the nine instructional practices and curriculum adaptations they currently use to support the special education students in their classroom. The two that teachers indicated they use the most are that they adapt the amount of time allotted and allowed for learning, task completion or testing (13.89%) and that they adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner (13.89%). Numbers of the variables are presented in the following figures: Figure 9.

Figure 9: Instructional Practices and Curriculum Adaptations



Codes

The iterative process of coding involved systematically identifying patterns, themes, and categories in the data and labeling them with codes that capture their essence. The following codes and themes have been created and are displayed in the following figures: Figure 10.

Figure 10: *Codes and Themes*

Inclusive Education Practices	Collaborative Teaching Co-Teaching Differentiated Instruction Small Group Direct Instruction
Attitudes and Beliefs	Positive Attitudes Negative Attitudes Stereotypes Ableism
School Policies and Practices	Inclusive School Culture Professional Development Training Accessibility

Theme 1: General Education Teachers Perceptions of Co-Teaching with a Special Education Teacher

To effectively evaluate General Education teachers' perceptions of working with a special education teacher, obtaining data relevant to participants' understanding of co-teaching and support was necessary. An open-ended level of inquiry was used and allowed the participants to share explicit characteristics based on personalized experiences. Many participants indicated they work with a special education teacher in some capacity by recounting specific supports, including pulling students from the classroom for individual goals and minutes, pushing into the classroom to support the class, and co-planning and co-teaching differentiated lessons to the whole group and small groups. The amount of time needed to teach, and plan was also an important topic of interest regarding co-teaching. P1, P4, P6, P7, P8, and

P13 perceived a positive outlook on co-teaching, even if the amount of time allowed to do so was limited. Specifically, special education teachers with smaller caseloads and not spread between several grade levels and groups could co-teach and plan more than their counterparts.

P4 asserts:

The lead and special education teacher use the co-teaching model to support the diverse learning needs within the classroom. The lead teacher will provide direct instruction to the whole group, while the special education teacher helps students at their seats or pulls small groups to assist students with various tasks.

P4's recollection demonstrates an accurate co-teaching model and the need or level of support required to support the students within the same classroom. They appreciate the additional support and expertise of the special education teacher and see the collaboration as an opportunity to improve student learning outcomes and promote a more inclusive classroom culture.

The participant said it was of great help to have another teacher focusing on the special education students but also helping the rest of the students. Another general education teacher, P13, further contends a positive outlook on co-teaching. P4's and P13's responses further validate the significance of the general education teacher and special education teacher playing an essential role in educating children with disabilities in an inclusive general education setting (Nah & Ng, 2022).

Most of the participants' responses appeared to align with positive viewpoints surrounding working with a special education teacher, however, other participant responses suggest a neutral or negative perception. Multiple participants indicated they had to be the general education teacher and the case manager, that the special education teacher only picks the students up twice a week and never enters their classroom, and that every time the special

education teacher comes in, it is only for 5 minutes at a time and that it takes much time coming to together to meet the goals of the students.

P9 asserts:

Working with a special education teacher requires coming together as a team to meet student goals. A combination of co-teaching techniques is utilized and ultimately depends on time, the number of students in the classroom, and the needs of the students.

P9's recollection demonstrates a neutral perception of co-teaching, where they see co-teaching as a practical solution for meeting the needs of diverse learners but also recognized that it can be challenging and requires a significant amount of time, communication, and collaboration.

Another participant, P2, described that no special education teacher is assigned to their classroom and that they are expected to be the classroom teacher and the special education case manager. P9's and P2's responses validate one of the most challenging aspects of inclusion, which is when teachers have different levels of responsibility and demonstrate the expectation that the general education teacher must take on the work of two people while also maintaining behaviors and the classroom community (Weiner, 2003). These findings offer insight into the relationship between the general education teacher and the special education teacher, specifically the perceptions of special education support in the classroom.

Theme 2: General Education Teachers Perceptions of Inclusion

Inclusion is essential for children with disabilities because it promotes social, emotional, and cognitive development. Inclusion ensures that all children can participate fully in all aspects of life, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Addressing perceptions and misconceptions helps create a more inclusive and accepting society. It also requires a commitment to ongoing training and education for teachers and other professionals to ensure they have the skills and

knowledge to support children with disabilities effectively. The findings below offer insight into promoting inclusion, specifically in a whole school model, and what inclusion looks like in individual classrooms.

Positive Perceptions (*Whole School*)

The inclusion of children with disabilities refers to the practice of ensuring that children with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of life, including education, socialization, and other activities. This may include providing assistive technology, specialized equipment, or additional personnel support to create an environment that is welcoming and accessible to all children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Some participants shared that the school is very inclusive, and inclusion is highly encouraged to allow students to learn and participate in school-wide activities.

P8 asserts:

We work hard not to group the kids as “your kids” and “my kids”. They are all our kids.

When we work with groups, we work with both regular education students and general education students.

P8’s response demonstrates the inclusive ideology that students should not be labeled and grouped based on their disability classification. When students are grouped into “your kids,” referring to special education students, and “my kids” referring to general education students, or vice versa, this does not promote an equal learning environment. This recognizes that inclusion should not be a grouping and that attitudes and perceptions can be a predictor of the overall success of the education of children with disabilities.

Another general education teacher, P9, expressed that the school culture is a natural environment for all students, with the feeling that everyone is included. P8’s and P9’s responses display a positive perception of school culture around the inclusion of students with disabilities.

These findings show that the school does try to help students with disabilities feel valued and accepted and allow them to develop a sense of belonging and connection to their peers and community, which validates the concept that inclusive education is a matter of instructional practice and meaningful social integration, not a physical placement (Love & Horn, 2019).

Negative Perceptions (*Whole School*)

Inclusion also promotes the development of positive attitudes and empathy towards people with disabilities, which can help to reduce stigma and discrimination. Most participants indicated that although inclusion is “highly encouraged,” it does not look the same across the board. Most participants indicated that there is an overall positive culture around the inclusion of disabilities. However, more could be done as a school to support students with diverse learning needs, such as modified curriculum materials, additional training, and consistent classroom support.

P2 asserts:

Students with disabilities seem to be “clumped” into the same regular inclusion classes each year so that the same teachers always have the heaviest caseloads in their classrooms as opposed to gifted and immersion classrooms.

P1, shared a similar view:

Most teachers do not have special education teachers in their room, and that they are not spread between all the classrooms to promote proper inclusion.

P1’s and P2’s recollection demonstrates that most of the time, the special education students are “clumped” in one classroom per grade level. P1’s and P2’s responses validate that the basis of inclusive education has been frequently defined as children with and without disabilities physically being placed in the same classroom (Odom et al., 2011) and not a matter of creating a high-quality classroom using inclusive instructional practices and institutional processes.

These perceptions challenge how inclusion is presented and displayed in education. Placing all the special education students in one general education classroom in each grade level can lead to missed opportunities and encourage inclusion teachers to have stronger attitudes of both concern and rejection toward their students with disabilities than toward their non-disabled peers and their teacher counterparts who do not have inclusive classrooms (Nah & Ng, 2022).

Positive Perceptions (*Classroom*)

Inclusion provides opportunities for students with disabilities to learn from their peers without disabilities, access to the general education curriculum, and exposure to a variety of learning experiences. This can improve their academic outcomes, social skills, and self-esteem. Participants acknowledged that inclusion could benefit all students and allows all kids to feel included and promote student growth. Majority of the participants responses appeared to align with viewpoints around seeing student strengths as well as that inclusion allows students the opportunity to learn what their peers are learning, while also giving students the opportunity to be a socially regular kid, even if there are some challenges.

Multiple participants indicated that all students can be exposed to the general education curriculum, and that students without disabilities can learn from their peers with disabilities and develop a better understanding of the diverse needs and abilities of others. Participants believed that inclusion could provide a quality education for all students, and it is essential that we continue to work towards creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for everyone.

Negative Perceptions (*Classroom*)

Inclusion as an approach to special education has been widely criticized as it can lead to stigmatization and negative perceptions. Participants acknowledged the potential negative

aspects of inclusion, such as many students with disabilities in the classroom, lack of consistency from the qualified special education teacher providing services, and some students requiring much heavier support and more direct instruction for more extended parts of their day. These strong perceptions and attitudes can create a barrier to teaching and learning.

P12 asserts:

Inclusion is a struggle and can cause the students with disabilities to feel worthless.

P12's response demonstrates a negative perception and stereotype that children with disabilities in inclusion classrooms are unable to learn or contribute to the classroom environment. These stereotypes can negatively impact students with disabilities self-esteem, confidence, and self-concept, impacting their overall social development.

Another general education teacher, P2, expressed that often, students with disabilities exhibit poor behaviors due to feelings of inadequacy. P2's and P12's responses reflect a narrow view of excellence, which validates that many educators are unfamiliar with teaching and including students with disabilities and may find it challenging to deal with them (Rodríguez et al., 2012). These views can cause teachers to set low expectations for students with disabilities and use a one-size-fits-all model of instruction.

Theme 3: General Education Teachers Perceptions of Professional Development and Training to Provide Equal Access

Teacher training and professional development are essential for improving the quality of education, adapting to new technologies and trends, and increasing student success. It is an investment in the future of education and the success of our students. Most participants indicated they had had experiences, classes, or coursework on special education topics in some capacity by recounting specific training such as managing children with disabilities, providing social,

emotional, and behavioral support, and adapting curriculum and instruction for students with disabilities. Most participants expressed that they were trained in providing accommodations and modifications to students with disabilities; however, ongoing training, professional development, and discussions rarely happen.

A large part of inclusion is allowing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum, which requires teachers to have ongoing training on implementing best practices. Many of the participants indicated that access to the general education curriculum might look like small group instruction, trained support teachers, direct instruction, and differentiation.

P4 asserts:

To ensure that students have equal access to the general education curriculum I provide direct instruction and pull small groups (when possible). Also, I differentiate writing assignments and spelling tests to help learners' complete tasks.

P4's response demonstrates a best practice for an inclusive classroom when there is not a special education teacher readily available to provide additional support.

Other participants did not express how they provided access to the students with disabilities but instead shared how the special education teacher provided them access. Several participants relied on the support of their special education teacher to pull small groups, accommodate, and modify the curriculum, and are expected to support whole group instruction to provide equal access to learning for all students.

P2 asserts:

My experience has been that even though my caseload is included in the regular education classroom, many times, I've had to pull them for direct, small group instruction

as they struggle to keep pace with their peers. Many of my students are at such a low level of reading that they simply cannot read the grade level curriculum on their own. Not sure if this is the place, but I fully believe that we need a true B setting for these students.

We are missing reaching ALL students because of this gap.

P2's response is like P4's in that both have special education students in their classrooms and provide additional support when needed. However, P2's response alludes to the deeper separation between students who can "keep pace" and students who cannot. Educators need to consider each student's individual needs and strengths when making placement decisions. Moving students from inclusion into a self-contained classroom who should not be there may limit social interaction, increase the stigmatization of students with disabilities and decrease the lack of exposure to the general education curriculum.

Both responses validate that changing teaching practices and degree of preparedness effectively to teach students with a range of disabilities requires a high degree of initiative and responsibility (Weiner, 2003). The key to a successful inclusion classroom is continuous learning and adequate training to deliver specialized instruction, as well as teachers who believe they are also responsible for the teaching and learning of students with disabilities.

Misconceptions

There is a misconception that inclusion and mainstreaming are the same things. This misconception reflects the notion that the definition and implementations of inclusive education vary immensely. Multiple participants expressed that they enjoyed it when the students with severe disabilities joined their class for parts of the day, and their students enjoyed working with them.

Inclusion in education refers to providing students, including those with disabilities, with equal opportunities to learn and participate in the same classroom all day. Inclusion requires accommodations and modifications to the curriculum and teaching methods to ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate and learn alongside their typical peers.

On the other hand, mainstreaming in education emphasizes the value of diversity and the importance of creating a learning environment where all students feel valued and supported. The goal of mainstreaming is to provide students with disabilities with access to the same educational opportunities and experiences as their typical peers. Mainstreaming education may require teaching methods, curriculum, and classroom management changes to ensure that all students can participate and learn.

In summary, inclusion and mainstreaming in education both aim to provide students with disabilities with equal opportunities to learn, but in inclusion, special education students spend all their day in general education classrooms. In contrast, mainstreaming emphasizes the value of diversity and creating a supportive learning environment for all students where they spend a part of their day in the general education classroom.

Conclusion

This qualitative study aims to research the perceptions of general education teachers toward the successful implementation of inclusion practices within a general education setting. Analyses of qualitative data revealed several major themes regarding general education teachers' perceptions of students with disabilities within the general education classroom.

Generally, general education teachers understood and were optimistic about inclusion; however, negative perceptions often emerge because of misconceptions, pre-existing beliefs, and opinions about students with disabilities. Further, professional implications, including those

related to instructional practices and students' progress, are perceivably impacted by years of experience and the amount of available professional development and training opportunities. Lastly, general education teachers' misconceptions about the roles and responsibilities related to special education teachers influence which instructional practices are used in the classroom.

The overall findings indicate that general education teachers' perceptions about children with disabilities can vary depending on their experience, training, and knowledge. While many teachers value inclusion and recognize the importance of collaborating with the special education teacher, they still have reservations and concerns about how to effectively teach children with disabilities in their classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This final chapter discusses the study findings presented in the previous chapters to develop a deeper understanding of general education teachers' perceptions of students with

disabilities in their classrooms. This chapter also presents the implications based on the research study findings and makes recommendations for future research in this area. Overall, this chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the research and offers insights into the perceptions of general education teachers responsible for teaching and learning of students with disabilities. By shedding light on their experiences, this research aims to better understand the challenges and support systems that can improve the quality of education for students with disabilities.

Discussion

This research aimed to examine general education teachers' perceptions of teaching students with disabilities. Often, people have individual perspectives and presumptions regarding individuals with disabilities. These attitudes may evolve from exposure, lack of knowledge, ignorance, or past experiences. These differences are why educators must build and create an environment beneficial to address these uncertainties and opinions.

The study focused on general education teachers' perceptions by administering an electronic survey of qualitative questions. The 13-item survey measured general education teachers at the elementary school level. Using iterative and survey methodology, the perceptions of these teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were assessed in three areas: Collaboration/Co-Teaching, Classroom/School Environment, and Resources/Support/Professional Development. The responses gathered from the survey were studied, and then comparisons were made between the attitudes and beliefs of the participants. Participant demographics, including educational level, years of teaching experience, major and certificates earned, any prior special education experience, and positive and negative thoughts on teaching inclusion, were included in the summary of results.

This research study had three research questions:

RQ1: What are the teacher experiences with the inclusion of special education students?

The findings indicated that teachers who have received specialized training and support for working with special education students reported more positive experiences with inclusion compared to teachers who have not received such training and support.

RQ2: What do teachers report as their role in providing supports and strategies for special education students to gain access to learning in the general education classroom curriculum?

The findings indicated that teachers who have a strong understanding of the individual needs and learning styles of their special education students reported having a greater sense of responsibility and effectiveness in providing supports and strategies for those students to access learning in the general education curriculum.

RQ3: What teacher training, coursework and professional developments have been provided to understand the inclusion of special education students in general education?

The findings indicated that teachers who have received more extensive and targeted training, coursework, and professional development on inclusive practices for special education students reported feeling more prepared and confident in implementing those practices in the general education classroom.

Implications

The implications of this study were compared to previous research in this field. This study's findings supported the findings of multiple studies that utilized a similar question set. The findings were what the researcher expected to see represented. The overall perception of general education teachers towards inclusion was positive. While general education teachers saw inclusion as a positive, they still acknowledged that inclusion could come with challenges.

General education teachers must take responsibility for their part in educating the whole child and the whole classroom. By acknowledging the positives and negatives, teachers and administrators can then utilize these strengths and weaknesses to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners.

School administration must begin supporting special and general education teachers by creating an environment conducive to collaboration. Common planning time is essential to the success of an inclusive classroom, especially at the elementary level. Administrators should also consider providing more tools and resources for collaboration, such as various training and professional developments, as well as the number of classes in which they expect collaboration to occur. When teachers are in several different settings and classrooms with several different partners, obtaining a true level of collaboration is impossible. Administrators should also be mindful when pulling teachers to cover other classrooms and complete other tasks, as this limits the number of collaborative lessons, projects and teaching that can be completed.

Minimizing misconceptions about students with disabilities is essential to creating an inclusive school environment. A large part of inclusion is encouraging open communication between teachers, students, and staff by creating opportunities for people to share their ideas, concerns, and feedback to minimize misconceptions about inclusion and students with disabilities. Implementing inclusive policies and practices ensure that all students have access to the same resources and opportunities, creating a welcoming environment for students with disabilities and promoting equity. Creating this environment should include inclusion committees and provide opportunities for teachers to share their experiences and perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of inclusion.

Colleges should better prepare teachers to teach special education students. Preparing teachers to teach special education students requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. Teacher preparation programs should include comprehensive coursework covering a range of special education topics. This coursework can include courses on disability laws, instructional strategies, behavior management, and assistive technology. Colleges should also provide training on working collaboratively with parents, school administrators, and other professionals involved in the education of students with disabilities and offer practical experiences that allow future teachers to work with special education students in real-world settings. By taking these steps, colleges can better prepare teachers to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, resulting in improved outcomes for these students and a more inclusive education system.

Limitations

Several limitations associated with this study may have influenced the outcome and results of the survey. Due to school district demands, the survey only reached people within one school or district. This causes a limited sample size of teachers within a single school, which needs to be more significant to make generalizations about a larger population. This can limit the external validity of the study. Another limitation might be time constraints, as the participants may have needed more time to complete the survey based on their schedule, limiting the amount of data that can be collected. One last limitation may also be selection bias. The teachers who participated in the study may be different from the population of teachers who have inclusion classrooms within the school. For example, teachers who understood and were aware of what inclusion is; however, they were not responsible for teaching in an inclusion classroom. Due to these limitations, the sample size was less robust than the researcher had hoped. While the

sample size was within the minimum required for the study, a larger sample size would have been preferred. There were no concerns regarding the instrument used for research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs about disability and inclusion can influence their instructional practices, classroom management strategies, and interactions with students with disabilities. This study's results show that teacher perceptions of children with disabilities can significantly impact inclusive teaching practices. Multiple studies could be implemented using the information gathered from this study and previous studies using the General Education Teachers' Perceptions on Inclusion Survey. Overall, future research should focus on identifying effective strategies to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education, addressing barriers to inclusion, and exploring the impact of inclusive education on the academic, social, and emotional outcomes of students with disabilities. Below is a list of those recommendations for future research.

1. Longitudinal studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of inclusive education on the academic, social, and emotional outcomes of students with disabilities.
2. Teacher training and support: Investigate the impact of teacher training and support on inclusive education practices and student outcomes.
3. Parent and family involvement: Explore the role of parent and family involvement in the success of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.
4. Collaborative teaching: Investigate the impact of collaborative teaching models, where general education and special education teachers work together to plan and deliver instruction.

5. Peer support: Examine the impact of peer support programs on the social inclusion and academic achievement of students with disabilities in general education settings.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**EXPLORING GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS**

Dr. Christopher Tarr, Ed.D. | cwtarr@hotmail.com | 724-344-5869

Erika Komp, M.Ed. | exk1026@sru.edu | 302-864-89398

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Dear Participant,

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled “Exploring General Education Teachers’ Perceptions of Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms”. To participate, you must be at least 18 years of age, a practicing general education teacher within Claymont Elementary, and hold a certificate of teacher from the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Important Information about the Research Study

Things you should know:

- The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived personal and professional experiences of teaching in an inclusion classroom. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to engage in an asynchronous survey via Qualtrics Surveys on your own time and must be completed on a mutually agreed upon day and time. This survey will approximately take a maximum of one hour.
- Risks or discomforts from this research include breach of confidentiality and coercion; however, the researcher will take all proper steps to minimize the potential for risks and discomforts that participants of the study may encounter during this investigation.
- The study will offer no direct benefit; however, participants may feel a sense of accomplishment should outcome measures align with internal perceptions.

- Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time. Further, it is acknowledged that you may feel obligated to participate based on the professional relationship with the researcher; however, please know that your non-participation in this project will have no effect on this professional relationship moving forward.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

What is the Study About and Why are We Doing it?

The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions and experiences teachers have in the general education classroom about the inclusion of special education students in the general education classrooms. A comprehensive examination of the perceptual deviations and conceptual misunderstandings of participating general education teachers within Claymont Elementary in Brandywine School District located in New Castle County, Delaware could reveal relevant findings to alter teacher training and instruction. Additionally, evidence-based findings may be of significant interest to educational stakeholders, including school administrators, district policy advisors, seeking to revise and refine school-based procedures and policies. Furthermore, data may be potentially impact valuable methods of service delivery and student progress for children with disabilities.

What Will Happen if You Take Part in This Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an online survey of 13 open-ended questions which will include pertaining to professional teaching experiences. Specific questions may include but are not limited to the following:

- Describe what it looks like to work with the special education teacher and what it looks like when they come into the classroom
- Have you been trained and are you aware of the accommodations you can provide based on the IEP?
- What has been your experience with special education students having equal access to the general education curriculum?
- Describe what evidence-based instructional practices and curriculum adaptations you use to support the special education students in your classroom

The survey should take about one hour and can take place at a time that is convenient to the participant. It must be completed by a mutually agreed up day and time. To preserve the integrity of the participants' responses, the survey can be completed outside of professional work hours.

How Could You Benefit From This Study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because the data collected may potentially impact methods of service delivery and student progress of students with disabilities.

What Risks Might Result From Being in This Study?

You might experience some risks from being in this study. They are coercion, breach of confidentiality and the possibility of negative emotions. There is minimal risk for coercion given the researchers current level of employment as a certified special education teacher however, all necessary measures will be taken to reduce the presence of coercive behaviors during asynchronous survey sessions. Additionally, to reduce the risk of breach of confidentiality, qualitative data will be classified. Participants will not be explicitly identified. If there are any negative emotions regarding the survey, please contact the Delaware Employee Assistance Program (EAP)-ComPsych Guidance Resources who will answer questions, and if needed, refer you to a counselor.

How Will We Protect Your Information?

We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, we will not include information that could directly identify you.

How Will We Protect Students' Information?

We plan to publish the results of this study. To protect the privacy of the students, please do not share any sensitive confidential information or information that can directly identify your students in the open-ended responses for the surveys. To ensure the protection of any student information that may be shared, those results will not be published.

What Will Happen to the Information We Collect About You After the Study is Over?

We will protect the confidentiality of your research by not asking for any identifiable information. Any data will be stored on a password protected laptop exclusively owned and utilized by the researcher and the results and survey can only be accessed to those who have directly been given the link. Any confidential data that is not sure for data analysis purposed will be deleted and/or destroyed. Specifically, email correspondence will be deleted from the server's "trash" folder and paper documentation will be shredded. If given, your name and any other information that can directly identify you will be stored separately from the data collected as part of the project.

How Will We Compensate You for Being Part of the Study?

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

What Other Choices do I Have if I Don't Take Part in this Study?

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw prior to the completion of this study, then you may choose to have any provided data deleted or destroyed or you may allow the investigators to utilize the data for the good of the study. If you choose not to participate, there are no alternatives. There will be no consequences for choosing not to participate in this study.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact

Dr. Christopher Tarr, Ed.D. | cwtarr@hotmail.com | 724-344-5869

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Institutional Review Board
Slippery Rock University
104 Maltby, Suite 008
Slippery Rock, PA 16057
Phone: (724)738-4846
Email: irb@sru.edu

Your Consent

If you consent to participation in this study and agree to move forward, please click the "I agree" button at the bottom. That will act as your signature of consent and will then take you to the next page where you may begin the survey. You will not be able to access the survey if you do not agree to this consent form. I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study. I understand that I can withdraw at any time.

APPENDIX B**LETTER TO POENTIAL PARTICIPANTS****SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY**

1 Morrow Way
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Erika Komp (Rybak), and I am currently a Special Educational teacher here at Claymont Elementary in New Castle County, Delaware. I am also pursuing my Doctorate in Education, with a concentration in Special Education, at Slippery Rock University with Dr. Christopher Tarr. My topic is Exploring General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms. I am looking into ways to better understand the perceptions and experiences teachers have in the general education classroom about the inclusion of special education students in the general education classrooms.

I have compiled a survey that I am distributing to general education teachers who teach in an inclusion classroom here at Claymont Elementary. This survey should take a maximum of one hour to complete. You will not be asked to identify yourself on the survey, as you will remain anonymous.

If you are willing to participate in this survey, please follow the link provided below. There will be a consent to participate, which must be agreed to before the survey will open.

GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at exk1026@sru.edu. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study!

Sincerely,

Erika Komp (Rybak), M.Ed.

Candidate for Doctor of Education, Concentration in Special Education

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

APPENDIX B.1**REMINDER LETTER TO POENTIAL PARTICIPANTS**

Dear Colleague,

Thank you again for those of you who agreed to participate in my survey for my doctoral thesis! The survey was sent one week ago on 2/28/2023. This is a friendly reminder that the survey will close in one week's time and is due on 3/15/2023.

If you have any questions, or if you need any technical assistance with the survey, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email.

Thank you again!

Sincerely,

Erika Komp (Rybak),

Candidate for Doctor of Education, Concentration in Special Education

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

APPENDIX C

SURVEY

Table I: *Demographic Survey Questions*

QUESTION	
1	What grade do you teach?
2	How many years have you been teaching?
3	What is the current number of identified special education students in your classroom?
4	What is the total number of students on your class roster?
5	What is your college degree (s) in?

Table II: *Field of Teaching Survey Questions*

QUESTION	
1	Describe what it looks like to work with the special education teacher and what it looks like when they come into the classroom
2	Describe the general culture of your school around the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Table III: *Professional Development Survey Questions*

QUESTION	
1	What prior special education experiences, classes and coursework have you had?
2	Have you been trained and are you aware of the accommodations you can provide based on the IEP in the classroom?
3	Regarding professional development, are there monthly topics about students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum?

Table IV: *Curriculum and Instruction Survey Questions*

QUESTION	
1	What has been your experience with special education students having equal access to the general education curriculum?
2	Describe your most positive and negative experience with inclusion
3	What evidence-based instructional practices and curriculum adaptations do you use to support the special education students in your classroom?



INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Q1.

Please click the link below to access the consent form. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18gzhQ4lqFbWQxy2djm2HTKZD9G-s4MUDonvk5LkO4Ho/edit?usp=sharing>

Your Consent

If you consent to participate in this study and agree to move forward, please click the “I agree” button at the bottom. That will act as your signature of consent and will then take you to the next page where you may begin the survey. You will not be able to access the survey if you do not agree to this consent form. I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study. I understand that I can withdraw at any time.

- I consent to participation in this study
- I do not consent to participation in this study

Q2. What grade do you teach?

- Kindergarten
- 1st grade
- 2nd Grade
- 3rd Grade
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade

- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10+ years

Q8. Please describe the general culture of your school around the inclusion of students with disabilities:

Q9. What prior special education experiences, classes, and coursework have you had?
(please check all that apply)

- Managing ADHD, Autism, Learning Disabilities in School
- Providing Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Special Education Supports
- Adapting curriculum Instruction for Children with Disabilities
- Foundations for Multi-Tier System of Supports
- Universal Design for Learning
- Assistive Technology
- Early Intervention
- IEP (*Individualized Educational Plan*) Development
- District Professional Development Courses around Special Education
- Other:

Q10. Have you been trained and are you aware of the accommodations and modifications you can provide based on the IEP (*Individualized Educational Plan*) in the classroom?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- I do not know

Q11. Regarding professional development, are there monthly topics about students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum?

- Never
 Seldom
 Sometimes
 Frequently
 Always

Q12. What has been your experience with special education students having equal access to the general education curriculum?

Q13. Please describe your most positive and negative experience(s) with inclusion:

Positive

Negative

Q14. Please select what instructional practices and curriculum adaptations you currently use to support the special education students in your classroom (*select all that apply*):

- I adapt the number of items the learner is expected to learn or complete
 I adapt the time allotted and allowed for learning, task completion or testing
 I increase the amount of personal assistance with a learner
 I adapt the way instruction is delivered to the learner.
 I adapt the skill level, problem type or the rules on how the learner may approach the work.
 I adapt how the student can respond to the instruction.
 I adapt the extent to which a learner is actively involved in the task.
 I adapt the goals or outcome expectations while using the same materials
 I provide different instruction and materials to meet a student's individual goals.
 Other:

APPENDIX D

DISTRICT RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM



SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

1 Morrow Way
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Brandywine School Direct
Supervisor of Assessment and Accountability
Attention: Hope Moffett

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study within Claymont Elementary School. I am currently enrolled in Slippery Rock University's Doctor of Education in Special Education Program and am in the process of completing my dissertation.

The study is entitled: **EXPLORING GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the perceptions and experiences teachers have in the general education classroom about the inclusion of special education students in the general education classrooms. A comprehensive examination of the perceptual deviations and conceptual misunderstandings of participating general education teachers within Claymont Elementary in Brandywine School District located in New Castle County, Delaware could reveal relevant findings to alter teacher training and instruction. Additionally, evidence-based findings may be of significant interest to educational stakeholders, including school administrators, district policy advisors, seeking to revise and refine school-based procedures and policies. Furthermore, data may be potentially impact valuable methods of service delivery and student progress for children with disabilities.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit qualifying general education teachers within Claymont Elementary to participate in an asynchronous survey sessions pertaining to the premise of the investigation. Interested general education teachers who volunteer to participate will be given a consent form to be signed/checked and returned to the researcher prior to the onset of the survey process (copy enclosed).

The survey consists of 14 questions, and the participants can complete on their own time and will complete the survey on a mutually agreed upon day and time. Additionally, in order preserve the integrity of the participants response, these survey sessions can occur outside of professional work hours.

If approval is granted, please add district letterhead, and signature to an approval letter and return via email. Do not hesitate to reach out regarding questions and/or concerns. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

With Appreciation,
Erika Komp



BRANDYWINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
1311 Brandywine Boulevard
Wilmington, DE 19809-2306

(302) 793-5000

LINCOLN HOHLER
Superintendent

JOHN A. SKROBOT, III
President, Board of Education

KRISTIN PIDGEON
Vice President, Board of Education

December 19, 2022

Dear Erika Rybak:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal and relevant materials for review. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I am granting tentative authorization to pursue your research proposal on inclusion education in Brandywine School District. After completing the IRB process at Slippery Rock University and in order to begin active research work, you will need to provide both the district and schools with a copy of your IRB approval or waiver. This authorization will expire on 6/30/2024 and must be renewed if research is anticipated to continue beyond that date.

District authorization, which is the first step in the research approval process, does not guarantee school, staff, or student participation, but does confirm to potential participants that your research proposal meets district and professional standards for educational research, including:

1. human subject protections,
2. confidentiality protections,
3. minimal impact on delivery of education,
4. minimal time and effort demands on school and district resources.

Final approval rests with school principals. In order to proceed, you will need to procure a site approval letter from the principal at each intended research location. Please provide them with this letter to demonstrate district review and approval and to notify them that they will receive a copy of your IRB approval or waiver before research begins.

This letter also serves as assurance that this district complies with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

Hope Moffett
Supervisor of Accountability & Assessment
Brandywine School District
1311 Brandywine Blvd.
Wilmington, DE 19809
302-793-5060

APPENDIX D.1

SITE SPECIFIC AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



BRANDYWINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
1311 Brandywine Boulevard
Wilmington, DE 19809-2306

(302) 793-5000
www.brandywineschools.org

LINCOLN HOHLER
Superintendent

JOHN A. SKROBOT, III
President, Board of Education

KRISTIN PIDGEON
Vice President, Board of Education

Date: 1/4/2023

Dear Institutional Review Board:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Erika Komp permission to conduct the research titled Exploring General Education Teachers' Perceptions of Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms at Claymont Elementary, under the assumption that the data will be coded to eliminate the risk of disclosure of identifiable information for the research to be released. This also serves as assurance that this school complies with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

I understand that Erika Komp will receive consent for all participants. Erika Komp has agreed to provide my office a copy of all IRB-approved, stamped consent documents before she recruits participants on site. Any data collected by Erika Komp will be kept confidential and will be stored and destroyed securely. Erika Komp has agreed to provide to us a copy of the aggregate results from her study.

Sincerely,

Tamara Grimes-Stewart
Principal
Claymont Elementary
3401 Green St
Claymont, DE 19703
302-792-3880

APPENDIX F

INTUITIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



TO: Dr. Christopher Tarr
Special Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Holmstrup", written over a light yellow rectangular background.

FROM: Michael Holmstrup, Ph.D., Chairperson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DATE: February 28, 2023

RE: Protocol #: 2023-072-88-A
Protocol Title: Exploring General Education Teachers' Perception of
Children with Disabilities in General Education

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Slippery Rock University received the requested modifications to the above-referenced protocol.

The IRB has reviewed the modifications and approved the protocol under the EXEMPT category of review.

You may begin your project as of February 28, 2023. Your protocol will automatically close on February 27, 2023 unless you request, in writing, to keep it open.

Please contact the IRB Office by phone at (724)738-4846 or via email at irb@sru.edu should your protocol change in any way.